Initial draft proposal for the ICRI “renewed” Call to Action

Presented by the ICRI Secretariat

Background

At the 24th ICRI General Meeting, held in Monaco (in 2010), it was agreed to review the Call to Action to integrate the new scientific findings as well as new challenges and emerging threats. The ICRI secretariat contacted the ICRI members and asked them inputs and comments in order to formulate a draft proposal. This initial draft proposal, attached as an annex, will be discussed during the General Meeting.

Following the meeting, and taking into consideration all the comments made, a new proposal will be share with all the ICRI Members. The ICRI secretariat would like to release this document in March 2011.

Action Requested

The ICRI secretariat requests:

1. ICRI members to provide comments on this proposal, in order to release this document in March 2011.

• Annex: Draft proposal
International Coral Reef Initiative

The International Coral Reef Initiative (ICRI) is a partnership among nations and organizations seeking to mobilize governments and a wide range of other stakeholders in an effort to improve management practices, increase capacity and political support, and share information on the health of coral reef and related ecosystems.

The initial “Call to Action” was adopted in 1995, and a “Renewed Call to Action” in 1998. Since the first workshop significant progress has been made in implementing the elements of the ICRI Call to Action and Framework for Action. At the 24th ICRI General Meeting, held in Monaco (in 2010), it was agreed to review this document to integrate the new scientific findings as well as new challenges and emerging threats.

The content of this document was endorsed by XXX. This document aims to offer a long term vision and a coordinated strategy for the Initiative and its members.

The Global Problem

Coral reefs are in serious decline globally, especially those near shallow shelves and dense populations. It has been estimated that 19 percent of the earth's coral reefs have already been seriously degraded and a much greater percentage (35%) is threatened if corrective action is not successful¹. This decline is likely to lead to the loss of most of the world's reef resources during the next century and seriously affect the lives of 500 million people, of which 30 million are largely dependent on reefs for their livelihoods².

The Threats to Coastal Ecosystems

The reasons for the decline in reef health are varied, complex, and often difficult to accurately determine. However, unsustainable human activity has become the primary agent of degradation during the last 50 years. Contributing factors include:

- Direct impacts from human activities such as resource extraction, over-harvesting (including aquarium trade), destructive fishing, tourism activities, shipping activities
- Inadequate planning and management of coastal land use, including upland activities, which result in sedimentation, and nutrient and toxic chemical pollution;
- Population growth and increasing coastal concentration.

ICRI recognized the new adverse impact of climate change on coral reefs and related ecosystems (e.g. sea level rise, ocean acidification, coral bleaching).

The Significance of Coral Reef and Related Ecosystems

Coral reef ecosystems are among the most biologically productive and diverse in the world containing a third of all described marine species and they also serve as indicators of environmental health. These facts were recognized at the 1992 United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, where coral reefs and associated systems were accorded a high priority for protection in Agenda 21.

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¹ GCRMN 2008
² Add source
Coral reef ecosystems offer benefits to humankind beyond those realized by shoreline protection, for food production, tourism, recreation, aesthetics, and the potential of new pharmaceutical compounds.

Coral reefs are critically connected to other coastal and marine ecosystems such as mangroves and seagrass beds, which provide nursery grounds for many marine species, nutrient cycling, and the removal or storage of wastes from human activities.

Capable of sustaining innumerable coastal communities worldwide, many of whom still live in subsistence economies, these ecosystems also have great economic, social, and cultural importance to developing and island nations, and to entire regions. As competition among multiple uses of reef resources increases, so too will their significance to the human populations that depend on them.

More than 100 countries have coastlines with coral reefs and half a billion people depend to some degree on the goods and services provided by them. Coral reefs have an estimated value of US$172-375 billion per annum. They provide food and raw materials (e.g. 10% of the world's marine fisheries landings), a physical barrier to protect coasts from extreme weather events, help to regulate climate and generate substantial tourism revenue. At least 30 million of the world’s poorest and most vulnerable people in coastal communities are completely dependent on coral reefs as their primary means of food production, income and livelihood.

Reducing the Threats

Threats from human-related impacts can be minimized or eliminated through:

- Improved and sustained management practices;
- Increased national and local capacities for coral reef ecosystem management;
- Increased political support for managing coral reef ecosystems;
- Concerted global action to reduce greenhouse gas emissions combined with capture and storage mechanisms to reduce CO$_2$ concentrations in the atmosphere; and
- The sharing of existing important and new information related to maintaining the health of these ecosystems.

In order to reduce these threats, the ICRI members endorse the following measures, to be implemented at all levels (global, regional, national, and local):

Integrated Coastal Management

- Implement long-term integrated coastal management at all levels.
  - Cross-sectoral collaboration
  - Participation of all relevant stakeholders

- Increase the efforts on sea areas, that are affected by multiple direct and indirect anthropogenic influences originating from the watershed area , and where the biodiversity issues require an integrated holistic approach aiming to improve the water quality and restore the health and functioning of the whole ecosystem

- Encourage ICRI Members to adopt, in accordance with international law, complementary measures to prevent significant adverse effects by unsustainable human activities to marine and coastal areas,
- Develop and/or reinforce coral reef initiatives (regional, national and/or local). These should use integrated approach that encourages participation and includes programs for community-based management or co-management of reef resources.

- To continue efforts on minimizing the impacts of destructive fishing practices, unsustainable fishing

- To further integrate climate-change-related aspects into relevant national strategies, action plans and programmes

- To better integrate the role of traditional marine resources management in meeting both the goals of communities and those of national and international conservation strategies

- Promote indigenous involvement in the management of coral reefs.

**Capacity Building and Awareness Raising**

- Increase the capacity of countries and regional group to effectively and sustainably manage coral reef.

- Develop and/or reinforce regional networks to share knowledge, skills, and information

- Develop and/or reinforce innovative educational and informational actions

- Improve the access to bilateral, multilateral, and other forms of financial and technical support for coral reef conservation by developing nations

**Research, Monitoring**

- Use regional networks to achieve better coordination and cooperation among national research programs

- Promote and better disseminate key scientific findings (*translated into “understandable language”*)

- Encourage research, programs, projects, or activities identified as essential to manage coral reef ecosystems and in identifying current scientific and policy gaps

- Support the Global Coral Reef Monitoring Network (GCRMN) in all coral reef areas of the world

**Review**

In order to improve the effectiveness of the initiative and capitalize on its outputs as well as to strengthen the membership and reinforce the ICRI visibility, the ICRI members will undertake periodically review of implementation of actions identified in the Initiative.

To this end, ICRI members report annually on their actions for coral reef and associated ecosystems conservation to the ICRI General Meeting. The reports present the activities undertaken and plan and evaluate the impact of their actions.

Each five year, ICRI undertake an external review of its actions with regard to its goals and results are discussed at the General Meeting in order to prepare the next five year action plan.
Every ten years, ICRI update the Call to Action in order to fit with new issues, challenges and ensure an effective action.

_The Nations and organizations supporting ICRI call upon all other relevant, international entities, governmental and nongovernmental organizations, including the private sector and scientific communities, to undertake the actions above._