

Le Ministre Plénipotentiaire  
Conseiller Spécial de S.A.S. le Prince Souverain  
Chargé des questions d'environnement



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**Subject:** Interim Contribution of the International Coral Reef Initiative to the Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework following the 34th ICRI General Meeting

For the attention of the Elizabeth Maruma Mrema, acting Executive Secretary of the Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity and the Co-Chairs of the Post-2020 process

1. Since December 2018, the International Coral Reef Initiative (ICRI) has been coordinating work to contribute to the Post-2020 process for developing a Global Biodiversity Framework, in response to CBD COP Decision 14/34, specifically with regard to a recommendation for a coral reef related target.
2. At its 33rd General Meeting in December 2018, ICRI concluded there is an urgent and continued need for action to address coral reef issues in the Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework. This work is being led by a group of ICRI member countries and territories, including Australia, France, Indonesia, Japan, Monaco, New Caledonia, Seychelles, UK and the US, and member organisations, including Cordio, International Coral Reef Society, Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme (SPREP), UN Environment, UNEP-World Conservation Monitoring Center, Vulcan Inc., Wildlife Conservation Society, World Resources Institute and World Wildlife Fund - International.
3. This letter provides an update on this work. The information provided is still a work in progress and does not represent a final statement of policy or position by ICRI or its members, nor does it prejudice future negotiation positions.
4. To date, ICRI has engaged in the Post-2020 process by providing written submissions and participating in regional, global and thematic consultations in 2019, including the first Open Ended Working Group meeting in July and the marine and coastal thematic consultation in November. ICRI also hosted a well-attended side event at SBSTTA 23 on opportunities for including a coral reef-related target in the Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework.

5. Progress in developing a coral reef-related target:
- a. There is an urgent need to address the global decline of coral reef ecosystems. The Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework provides an important opportunity for focused strategic action to reduce the multiple pressures on these sentinel ecosystems. A draft narrative has been developed to articulate the importance of addressing coral reef decline through the post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework for the conservation of this ecosystem and its significance to human health and well-being (see Annex 1). This text draws on recent scientific evidence and elaborates the links to other important global frameworks and policy areas, including sustainable development and climate change.
  - b. Objective of a coral reef-related target. ICRI is considering language for a coral reef-related target that focuses on “maintaining the integrity and function” of coral reef ecosystems by 2030 (i.e., there should be no further loss; integrity and function relate to both the ecological perspective and the ability to continue to provide benefits to people). There are ongoing discussions about whether the target should be a response target, an outcome target, or a combination of both. We are also considering whether a target for coral reef ecosystems could provide a model for a broader ecosystem target, and include language relating to drivers/pressures and/or responses supported by appropriate, operational indicators.
  - c. How could this target be achieved? This target could be achieved through different types of actions in response to local and global stressors, depending on the national context/current state of the coral reef and available resources available (e.g., conservation, protection, regulation of human activities, coral reef recovery or appropriate restoration). A key ambition would be to build resilience for communities that rely on coral reefs.
  - d. How to measure progress? Progress will be measured by using key metrics of reef health against appropriate benchmarks. There are both indicators and tools already being used to measure progress. There are existing coral reef monitoring protocols being applied at global, regional scales and national scales; there is already coordination at global and regional scales and also active development of data collection and management standards to improve usability of data for assessments. The revitalized Global Coral Reef Monitoring Network (GCRMN) is working at national, regional and global levels and, as part of its mission, GCRMN will deliver a status report on the world’s coral reefs in 2020, as well as producing regional assessments, which will provide useful insights on a coral reef-related target.
  - e. There is a high level of organization and networking across the coral reef community. The coral reef community has mobilized on national, regional and global scales to leverage policy, conservation management, and scientific expertise across a range of stakeholder communities to be able to support implementation of a strong, actionable coral reef target for the Post-2020 Framework.
  - f. Application of new technology for improved decision making. ICRI notes that rapid progress is being made to harness new and emerging technologies that will make step and possibly dramatic -- improvements to support coral reef monitoring, and management and policy decisions over the next several years.

6. Next steps in 2020: At its 34th General Meeting in December 2019, ICRI has agreed that it would:

- continue to contribute to the Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework, working to convene relevant countries and organizations around issues related to coral reefs;
- prepare a response to the Notification 2019-18 on the Submission of views on possible targets, indicators and baselines for the post-2020 global biodiversity framework and peer review of a document on indicators;
- support its member countries and territories, who are Parties to the CBD; and
- provide a recommended target and associated metrics as a contribution to the Post-2020 process in April 2020.

Thank you for your consideration. Should you have any questions and request further information, please contact the ICRI secretariat.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Bernard Fautrier', is written over a large, stylized blue scribble that resembles a signature or a large mark.

H.E. Bernard Fautrier  
ICRI Co-chair  
Special advisor of HSH the Sovereign Prince of Monaco  
for environment

## Annex 1: Narrative for a post-2020 coral reef related target

- i. Significance of coral reefs: Retaining and improving the health and function of coral reefs is an important key to realizing the Sustainable Development Goals of Agenda 2030. Shallow, warm water coral reefs occur in the waters of more than 100 countries with 85% of these reefs under the jurisdiction of just 25 states and underpin the well-being, food and economic security of hundreds of millions of people.
- ii. Coral reefs and links to the SDGs<sup>1</sup>: Coral reefs {G14}, their health described by measures of coral and fish diversity and abundance, provide key services and benefits to people. These services directly support tens of millions of jobs in multiple economic sectors {G8} in coastal and distant states, protect and harbor communities and cities {G11} across tropical coastlines, sustain use of living and non-living resources {G12}, provide transport infrastructure and valuable natural products {G9}, and in the future may provide energy solutions {G7}. Through these multiple benefits, coral reefs contribute to reducing hunger {G2} and poverty {G1}, thus improving health {G3}, and potentially strengthening gender {G5} and social equality {G10}. However, access and use result in pressures that may drive decline in coral reef health. Broader land and seascape factors also affect reef health, including land-use change {G15} and altered freshwater flows {G6}, as well as climate change {G13}. Managing this complex system requires appropriate awareness and knowledge {G4}, governance mechanisms {G16} and investments by stakeholders {G17}.
- iii. Status and trends of coral reefs: All recent global assessments show coral reefs to be on a catastrophic trajectory<sup>2,3,4,5,6,7,8,9</sup>. Almost 50% of living coral has been lost since 1870 and these losses are accelerating<sup>10</sup>. In the light of predicted global population growth<sup>11</sup> and global climate change scenarios<sup>12</sup> the direct and indirect pressures on coral reefs will continue to increase over the next 30 years up to 2050 and beyond.
- iv. What can we learn from the 2011-2020 Strategic Plan for Biodiversity: Aichi Biodiversity Target 10 stated that, “By 2015, the multiple anthropogenic pressures on coral reefs, and other vulnerable ecosystems impacted by climate change or ocean acidification are minimized, so as to maintain their integrity and functioning.” Whilst it succeeded in drawing attention to coral reefs, and stimulated increased activity and funding for marine conservation, Aichi Target 10 (AT10) is not appropriate to carry forward in its current form. The implementation of AT10 was among the worst of the Aichi targets. Since 2010, the pressures on coral reefs have increased and the status of the ecosystem has declined. Poor implementation has been attributed to vague, complex, ambiguous wording without clear ambition<sup>13</sup> and challenges in addressing the multi-sectoral pressures. The target timeline was unrealistic and supporting guidance and tools such as indicators were late; limitations in monitoring and data made the target impossible to measure progress.

<sup>1</sup> Obura, DO. 2019. A plot for sustainability – the Sustainable Development Goals as a narrative. PLOS ONE PrePrints <https://www.preprints.org/manuscript/201910.0157/v1>

<sup>2</sup> ISRS 2018 Consensus Statement: [https://www.icriforum.org/sites/default/files/2018%20ISRS%20Consensus%20Statement%20on%20Coral%20Bleaching%20Climate%20Change%20final\\_0.pdf](https://www.icriforum.org/sites/default/files/2018%20ISRS%20Consensus%20Statement%20on%20Coral%20Bleaching%20Climate%20Change%20final_0.pdf)

<sup>3</sup> FAO (2019) State of the world’s biodiversity for food and agriculture <http://www.fao.org/3/CA3129EN/ca3129en.pdf>

<sup>4</sup> OECD (2019) Biodiversity: Finance and the Economic and business case for action <http://www.oecd.org/environment/resources/biodiversity/G7-report-Biodiversity-Finance-and-the-Economic-and-Business-Case-for-Action.pdf>

<sup>5</sup> IPBES Global Assessment 2019 <https://www.ipbes.net/news/Media-Release-Global-Assessment>

<sup>6</sup> Living Planet Report (2018) <https://www.worldwildlife.org/pages/living-planet-report-2018>

<sup>7</sup> IPCC 2018 - <https://www.ipcc.ch/2018/10/08/summary-for-policymakers-of-ipcc-special-report-on-global-warming-of-1-5c-approved-by-governments/>

<sup>8</sup> GEO6 (2019) <https://www.unenvironment.org/resources/global-environment-outlook-6>

<sup>9</sup> IPCC Special Report on Oceans and Cryosphere, 2019 <https://www.ipcc.ch/srocc/home/>

<sup>10</sup> IPBES Global Assessment 2019

<sup>11</sup> UN (2017). <https://population.un.org/wpp/>

<sup>12</sup> IPCC 2018

<sup>13</sup> Timpte, Marquard & Paulsch, (2018); Butchart et al., 2016; Hagerman and Pelai, 2016

- v. Helping to overcome the implementation gap: There are a lot of existing policies with more than 230 international policy instruments that relate to coral reefs, 73 binding instruments at the global and regional scale, and 591 commitments<sup>14</sup>. These tools have not, however, reversed the decline of coral reef ecosystems. A coral reef-related target would help ensure more coherent policy implementation, as called for by States through UNEA Resolution UNEP/EA.4/13<sup>15</sup>.
- vi. Opportunities for including coral reefs in the post-2020 biodiversity framework - what is different this time? It has been shown that proactive policies to protect and restore the health of the world's coral reefs can be an effective way to retain coral reef integrity and function. Functional coral reefs have the potential to generate substantial economic, societal and ecological benefits and help deliver the UN Sustainable Development Goals<sup>16</sup>.
- vii. Recent advances will result in a better target: There is an active, engaged community of countries, organisations and experts that have been working on coral reef conservation and protection, in particular through the International Coral Reef Initiative (ICRI)<sup>17</sup> and its associated networks, including the Global Coral Reef Monitoring Network (GCRMN), as well as regional and national initiatives. Since 2010, there have been substantial developments in terms of technology and knowledge development that provide the opportunity to develop a target for coral reefs that is measurable, with an ambitious but realistic timeframe, that has a holistic view of coral reefs within the broader marine system relevant to the broader sustainable development agenda, with clear cross-reference to other global and regional policy instruments and commitments relevant to coral reefs.

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<sup>14</sup> UNEP/EA.4/23 and UNEP/EA.4/INF/6 for the full analysis

<sup>15</sup> UNEA Resolution UNEP/EA.4/13 on "Sustainable coral reefs management"

<sup>16</sup> UN Environment, ISU, ICRI and Trucost 2018. The Coral Reef Economy: The business case for investment in the protection, preservation and enhancement of coral reef health. 36pp  
[https://www.icriforum.org/sites/default/files/The%20Coral%20Reef%20Economy\\_0.pdf](https://www.icriforum.org/sites/default/files/The%20Coral%20Reef%20Economy_0.pdf)

<sup>17</sup> [www.icriforum.org](http://www.icriforum.org)