



For release November 13, 2018

The fate of coral reefs at stake as key UN talks begin in Egypt: New coalition urges action to save reefs

SHARM EL SHEIKH, EGYPT – A new coalition of inter-governmental organizations, international conservation organizations, and private foundations is converging in Egypt this week to send a message about the need for bold leadership to save coral reefs from near-extinction by mid-century.

Representatives from more than one hundred countries that are parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) are meeting to begin a two-year process to adopt a global framework for protecting biodiversity, including coral reefs, around the world.

A new partnership, which includes UN Environment, the International Coral Reef Initiative (ICRI), WWF, The Nature Conservancy, Wildlife Conservation Society, Vulcan Inc., a Paul G. Allen company, The Ocean Agency, and the CBD Secretariat, will be unveiled in Sharm El Sheikh to raise awareness about the coral reef crisis and urge governments to take greater action.

“It’s clear to anyone who puts their head below the waves that the fate of the world’s coral reefs is hanging in the balance,” said Erik Solheim, head of UN Environment. “At the moment these undersea explosions of color and life face an extremely bleak future. The expectations for this coalition could not be higher. Coral reef protection must become a global priority. Coral reefs need a better deal.”

Coral reefs provide food and livelihoods for hundreds of millions of people around the world, support more than a quarter of all marine life, and protect communities and coastlines from natural disasters—and if urgent action is not taken, they could be lost forever.

The latest IPCC report published in October 2018 predicts that even with the strongest actions required to stabilize global surface temperature to 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels, 70 to 90 percent of coral reefs will be lost in the next few decades. Further failure to take action on climate change will result in even greater losses. However, reducing non-climate threats has the potential to improve the recovery of the most resilient coral reefs after impacts like bleaching events, and to help conserve reefs as they face unprecedented thermal stress.

Climate change is not the only major threat that reefs face. Over-fishing, pollution and coastal development have all caused major losses of coral reefs over the last 30 years. Ambitious actions at the global, national and local levels, to deliver on meaningful policy targets for protecting coral reefs, are essential to saving coral reefs from collapse.

“I am delighted to see that the issue of coral reefs is receiving the attention it deserves. We are now approaching the 2020 horizon and need to sharpen the focus on strategies for effective coral reef conservation and to support people who depend on them,” said HSH Prince Albert II of Monaco. “The International Coral Reef Initiative General Meeting, which I will be hosting in Monaco this December, will be an important step and My wish is that it will lead to the adoption of a practical, effective, ambitious and realistic program of action.”

The new coral reef coalition to be announced at the CBD meeting this week is building an advocacy and communications approach to activate a global constituency to support bold action from leaders in government and the private sector.

###

CONTACTS

UN Environment: Janna Hamilton; janna.hamilton@un.org

WCS: Mary Dixon; mDixon@wcs.org

Vulcan Inc.: Janet Greenlee; janetg@vulcan.com

TNC: Nathalie Chalmers, n.a.chalmers@tnc.org

The Ocean Agency: Melissa Smith: melissa@theocean.agency

WWF: Paul Gamblin; pgamblin@wwfint.org

PHOTOS

Please visit the [Coral Reef Image Bank](#) for high res images, including a 360 image dive for media use.

ABOUT THE PARTNERS

The International Coral Reef Initiative (ICRI)

ICRI is an informal partnership between nations and organizations which strives to preserve coral reefs and related ecosystems around the world. The initiative is jointly co-chaired by Monaco, Australia and Indonesia until mid-2020. [ICRI](#) has declared 2018 the third [International Year of the Reef](#) (IYOR). This year-long celebration is a great opportunity to come together to raise and strengthen awareness on the plight of coral reefs, and to step up and initiate conservation efforts. Visit icriforum.org and iyor2018.org and on Twitter [@IYOR2018](#) and [@ICRI_coral_reef](#).

UN Environment

UN Environment is the leading global voice on the environment. It provides leadership and encourages partnership in caring for the environment by inspiring, informing, and enabling nations and peoples to improve their quality of life without compromising that of future generations. UN Environment works with governments, the private sector, civil society and with

other UN entities and international organizations across the world. Visit unenvironment.org and twitter [@unenvironment](https://twitter.com/unenvironment)

The Ocean Agency

The Ocean Agency is nonprofit dedicated to supporting ocean science and conservation through creative communication and technology innovation, providing media with stories and imagery to help raise awareness of ocean issues. Visit theocean.agency.

Vulcan Inc., a Paul G. Allen company

Microsoft co-founder and philanthropist Paul G. Allen was deeply committed to ocean health. His team at Vulcan works with Paul G. Allen Philanthropies to manage a diverse portfolio of programs targeted at the protection of marine ecosystems, including coral reefs. Since 2013, Mr. Allen's team has supported research led by the Hawai'i Institute of Marine Biology and Australian Institute of Marine Science (AIMS) to develop coral that is resilient to changing ocean conditions. More recently, the team has launched the [Allen Coral Atlas](#) and committed, with Monaco, to establish a global fund for corals. For more information, please visit vulcan.com and pgaphilanthropies.org/.

WWF

WWF is one of the world's largest and most respected independent conservation organizations, with over 5 million supporters and a global network active in over 100 countries. WWF's mission is to stop the degradation of the Earth's natural environment and to build a future in which humans live in harmony with nature, by conserving the world's biological diversity, ensuring that the use of renewable natural resources is sustainable, and promoting the reduction of pollution and wasteful consumption. Visit panda.org/news for latest news and media resources and follow us on Twitter [@WWF_media](https://twitter.com/WWF_media).

The Nature Conservancy

[The Nature Conservancy](#) is a global conservation organisation which believes in creating a world where people and nature thrive. Through a unique mix of open-source science and innovation, real-world solutions, and local-to-global partnerships, our goal is to unlock investment for nature. We are tackling climate change; conserving lands, waters and the ocean at an unprecedented scale; providing food and water sustainably, and helping make cities more sustainable. On Twitter [@nature_org](https://twitter.com/nature_org).

Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS)

WCS is an international conservation organization that works to save wildlife and wild places worldwide through science, conservation action, education, and inspiring people to value nature. To achieve our mission, WCS harnesses the power of its Global Conservation Program in about 60 countries and in all the world's oceans and its five wildlife parks in New York City, visited by 4 million people annually. Our Marine Program invests in ocean protection, sustainable fisheries, and marine species conservation across the waters of 23 countries; with several hundred marine scientists and conservationists on staff, WCS tests and applies innovative solutions for measurable conservation outcomes. Visit: newsroom.wcs.org and follow us on [@WCSNewsroom](https://twitter.com/WCSNewsroom).