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**United Nations
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United Nations Environment Assembly of the
United Nations Environment Programme
Fourth session
Nairobi, 11–15 March 2019

**Resolution adopted by the United Nations Environment
Assembly on 15 March 2019**

4/13. Sustainable coral reefs management

The United Nations Environment Assembly,

Recalling General Assembly resolution 65/150 of 20 December 2010 on protection of coral reefs for sustainable livelihoods and development, in which the General Assembly urged States, within their national jurisdictions, and the competent international organizations, within their mandates, given the imperative for action, to take all practical steps at all levels to protect coral reefs and related ecosystems for sustainable livelihoods and development, including immediate and concerted global, regional and local action to respond to the challenges and to address the adverse impact of climate change, including through mitigation and adaptation, as well as of ocean acidification, on coral reefs and related ecosystems,

Recalling also United Nations Environment Assembly resolution 2/12 on sustainable coral reef management, and noting the importance of strengthened implementation at the national and regional levels,

Recalling further the outcome document of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, entitled “The future we want”,¹ endorsed by General Assembly resolution 66/288 of 27 July 2012, which states, “We also recognize the significant economic, social and environmental contributions of coral reefs, in particular to islands and other coastal States, as well as the significant vulnerability of coral reefs and mangroves to impacts, including from climate change, ocean acidification, overfishing, destructive fishing practices, and pollution. We support international cooperation with a view to conserving coral reef and mangrove ecosystems and realizing their social, economic and environmental benefits, as well as facilitating technical collaboration and voluntary information-sharing.”,

Considering Aichi Biodiversity Target 10, which aims to minimize the multiple anthropogenic pressures on coral reefs and other vulnerable ecosystems impacted by climate change or ocean acidification so as to maintain their integrity and functioning, and deeply concerned that the 2015 deadline was not met,

Stressing the importance of fully implementing the priority actions to achieve the Aichi Biodiversity Targets for coral reefs, adopted at the twelfth meeting of the Conference of Parties to the

¹ General Assembly resolution 66/288, annex.

Convention on Biological Diversity, held from 6 to 17 October 2014 in Pyeongchang, Republic of Korea,

Bearing in mind the outcome document of the United Nations summit for the adoption of the post-2015 development agenda, entitled “Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development”,²

Recognizing that degradation and loss of coral reefs hinder achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals,

Recognizing also the benefits and potential negative impact of reef fisheries, in particular the live reef food fish trade, that require integration, implementation and enforcement of fisheries and coral reef protection policies,

Noting the Coral Reef Life Declaration,³ which has been signed by 18 countries and territories to date and covers more than 50 per cent of the world’s coral reefs,

Acknowledging the global participation in the 2018 International Year of the Reef, as designated by the International Coral Reef Initiative, with a tremendous outcome in terms of materials produced and events organized at all levels, from village children to international organizations,

Acknowledging also Member States that have made efforts to conserve coral reefs through the establishment of protected areas, other effective area-based conservation measures, marine spatial planning and other approaches,

Recalling the commitments made by Member States, the private sector, non-governmental organizations and multilateral organizations for the protection of coral reefs and marine ecosystems at the “Our Ocean” Conference, held in Nusa Dua, Bali, Indonesia, on 29 and 30 October 2018, which are in line with Environment Assembly resolution 2/12 on sustainable coral reef management in calling for national, regional and international initiatives, cooperation and commitments to conserve and sustainably manage coral reefs,

Noting the International Coral Reef Initiative plan of action for the period 2018–2020,⁴ adopted at its thirty-third general meeting, held in Monaco from 5 to 7 December 2018, which comprised four themes: promoting effective and adaptable solutions to improve the protection of coral reefs; understanding coral reef trends; addressing the live reef food fish trade; and helping to reduce anthropogenic threats to coral reefs,

Noting also the conclusions and recommendations from the analysis of global and regional policy instruments and governance mechanisms relating to the protection and sustainable management of coral reefs, prepared pursuant to its resolution 2/12, noting the identified policy pathways towards sustainable coral reef management, and acknowledging that “business as usual” is not a viable option for sustainable coral reef management,

Recognizing the potential but also the delicate nature of coral restoration, as well as the efforts and rapid progress being made thereon,

Noting the deep concern expressed by the International Society for Reef Studies in its Consensus Statement on Climate Change and Coral Bleaching⁵ that over recent decades between 33 and 50 per cent of coral reefs have been largely or completely degraded by a combination of local factors and global climate change, and that reefs in many regions have lost half or more of their live corals,

Recognizing that coral reefs provide goods and services worth at least 11.9 trillion United States dollars per year and, through activities such as fisheries and tourism, support at least

² General Assembly resolution 70/1.

³ <https://www.icriforum.org/sites/default/files/CORAL%20REEF%20LIFE%20Declaration.pdf>.

⁴ Contained in the document available at <https://www.icriforum.org/sites/default/files/ICRIGM33-Summary-Record.pdf>.

⁵ Available at <http://coralreefs.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/03/ISRS-Consensus-Statement-on-Coral-Bleaching-Climate-Change-FINAL-14Oct2015-HR.pdf>.

500 million people worldwide,⁶ and acknowledging that improvement of coral reef health can provide significant economic returns in both the private and public sectors,⁷

Recognizing also that healthy coral reef ecosystems reduce 97 per cent of wave energy, act as barriers to storms and are the first-line defence for millions of people globally, preventing catastrophic erosion, flooding and destruction,⁸

Recognizing further that coral reefs are often considered to be the medicine cabinets of the twenty-first century and that, in the future, coral reef ecosystems could represent an increasingly important source of medical treatments for various diseases, including cancer, of nutritional supplements and of other commercial products,⁹

Recognizing the many international coral-reef-related policies and the benefits to promoting integrated conservation policies and practices for the sustainable management of coral reef ecosystems,

1. *Calls* for enhanced streamlining and coordination of the numerous international policy instruments supporting the conservation and sustainable management of coral reef ecosystems, building, where possible, on existing regional mechanisms, such as the regional seas programmes and the International Coral Reef Initiative;

2. *Requests* the Executive Director of the United Nations Environment Programme, within the scope of existing resources and in collaboration with the International Coral Reef Initiative, and building, where possible, on existing regional mechanisms, such as the regional seas programmes and the Coral Restoration Consortium, to assist in the compilation of best practices for coral restoration, as appropriate, for the maintenance of ecosystem services, including for coastal defence and restoration of fish nursery areas;

3. *Takes note* of the report¹⁰ on progress in the implementation of Environment Assembly resolution 2/12 on sustainable coral reef management, recognizes that Member States may consider the findings therein in their efforts to sustainably manage coral reef ecosystems, and notes that Member States and coral reef organizations may also wish to review the analysis¹¹ of global and regional policy instruments and governance mechanisms related to the protection and sustainable management of coral reefs;

4. *Encourages* Member States and other entities to engage in the International Coral Reef Initiative Global Coral Reef Monitoring Network, including through participation in regional networks and the application of indicators and best practice identified through the Network, in order to produce a global report on the status of coral reefs in 2020;

5. *Requests* the Executive Director, in particular through the Coral Reef Unit and in collaboration with the International Coral Reef Initiative, to continue to develop and strengthen the Global Coral Reef Monitoring Network, including through integrated monitoring and new technologies, in line with the implementation and governance plan of the Network, to understand and communicate the status and trends of coral reefs globally;

6. *Encourages* Member States, in collaboration with the United Nations Environment Programme, the International Coral Reef Initiative and other partners, to build on the success of the 2018 International Year of the Reef and continue their efforts to build awareness of the ecological, economic, social and cultural value of, and critical threats to, coral reefs and their associated ecosystems.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ See https://wedocs.unep.org/bitstream/handle/20.500.11822/26694/Coral_Reef_Economy.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y.

⁸ Filippo Ferrario and others, "The effectiveness of coral reefs for coastal hazard risk reduction and adaptation", *Nature Communications*, vol. 5 (2014). Available at <https://www.nature.com/articles/ncomms4794.pdf>.

⁹ United States of America National Ocean Service website "What does coral have to do with medicine?", available at https://oceanservice.noaa.gov/facts/coral_medicine.html.

¹⁰ UNEP/EA.4/23.

¹¹ UNEP/EA.4/INF.6.