



Report of the Mexico-U.S. Secretariat

1 July 2007 – 30 June 2009

Background

From 1 July 2007 to 30 June 2009, Mexico and the United States served as Co-Secretariat of the International Coral Reef Initiative (ICRI). During this time, three General Meetings were held (Washington, DC January 2008; Ft. Lauderdale, FL July 2008; and Phuket, Thailand, April 2009), during which several actions were taken by ICRI members on a wide-range of issues related to coral reef conservation. Additionally, a number of side events, regional meetings, partnerships and awareness-raising initiatives were launched and facilitated by the ICRI Secretariat.

ICRI Members adopted the Mexico-U.S. Action Plan during the first General Meeting in Washington, DC. The mission for the two-year term was to ensure the long-term survival, productivity, and recovery of coral reefs and related ecosystems by fostering and maintaining their resiliency through awareness, conservation and management. Major themes included:

- Promote ecosystem based approaches to fisheries resource use and discourage destructive or unsustainable fisheries, extraction or trade.
- Promote understanding and recognition of the environmental services coral reefs provide and their role in sustainable development in coastal communities.
- Encourage integrated ecosystem management from watershed to reef slope.
- Enhance the application of monitoring and research to support improved understanding and adaptive management of coral reefs and related ecosystems.
- Strengthen enforcement capacity and encourage compliance.

Furthermore, action elements designed to serve as goals for ICRI and the Mexico-U.S. Secretariat during the term, included:

- Revitalize ICRI's regional focus, including through thematic ICRI regional workshops building on ITMEMS3 outcomes.
- Encourage better governance including through the development of regional/national coral reef working groups.
- Enhance Marine Protected Areas as a key conservation tool in ecosystem based management.
- Promote the International Year of the Reef 2008 campaign.
- Promote a successful 11th International Coral Reef Symposium.
- Work with ICRI Members to raise the profile of coral reef related fisheries in FAO and regional fisheries management organizations and arrangements.
- Support enforcement training and capacity building at regional and national levels.
- Strengthen ICRI engagement with significant regional and global initiative and organizations focus on integrated ecosystem management.
- Promote Partnerships, particularly with the private sector.

Strengthening ICRI

The Mexico-U.S. Secretariat took several actions to strengthen ICRI. Two new member organizations were proudly welcomed: **Project AWARE Foundation** during the January

2008 Washington, DC general meeting and **Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS)** in April 2009 during the meeting in Phuket, Thailand. Project AWARE is dedicated to conserving underwater environments through education, advocacy and action. The organization works to conserve aquatic resources in 175 countries by working in partnerships with recreational and professional scuba divers and other water enthusiasts. WCS is a private, non-profit organization that focuses on seascapes and species, scientific monitoring and assessment, and participatory planning for conservation and management.

Five new ad hoc committees were created during the Mexico-U.S. ICRI Secretariat. Following extensive discussion during the January 2008 GM on efforts to value the services provided by coral reef ecosystems, the ad hoc **Committee on Economic Valuation of Coral Reef Ecosystems** was installed in an effort to position ICRI as a leading platform to move this issue forward. The terms of reference (ToR) created a mandate for the Committee to compile an inventory of key databases, tool kits, initiatives, etc. This effort was successful and the mandate for the Committee was extended in July 2008, with a revised ToR to further expand the compilation, develop a searchable on-line database, develop a web-based site to access literature and references, and create a coral community of practice. The ICRI Secretariat co-Chairs signed the forward of the first ever global compilation of the "Economic values of coral reefs, mangroves, and seagrasses", which was produced by Conservation International, The Ocean Foundation, World Resources Institute and NOAA, and launched during the World Conservation Congress in Barcelona in October 2008. The ad hoc **Committee on the East Asia Regional Workshops** was formed during the January 2008 GM with a view to assist with preparation, execution and follow-up on what has evolved into a longer term initiative on MPAs and the organization of several ICRI regional workshops on the issue of marine protected area networks in East Asia. Also created during the Mexico-U.S. Secretariat, was the ad hoc **Committee on the International Year of the Reef**, which was a critical coordinating body to oversee the successful IYOR campaign. The ad hoc **Committee on the Fourth International Tropical Marine Ecosystems Management Symposium (ITMEMS-4)**, formed during the April 2009 GM, will consider the organization of the symposium including content, themes, host and venue location, timing, budget and financing. And finally, the ad hoc **Committee on Coral Disease** was formed, following the adoption of a resolution on coral disease at the ICRI general meeting in Thailand in April 2009, to guide and inform collaborative action among ICRI members on issues relating to marine disease relevant to coral reef ecosystems.

During the Mexico-U.S. Secretariat, streamlined **revisions to the ICRI Organization and Management Procedures** were approved by the Members. The revisions included a streamlined motions process, condensing of the financial obligations sections, and creation of a broad, inclusive view of operational networks. With respect to **member reporting** by governments and organizations, the Mexico-U.S. Secretariat instituted a new process which was well-received by Members. The Secretariat compiled Member Reports into an overarching summary presentation highlighting initiatives and activities undertaken by ICRI Members, and opened the floor to additional information by ICRI members present at the meeting. The presentation was organized according to sub-topic of the Member Report (which was consistent with elements of the Secretariat Action Plan).

With respect to awareness-raising, the Secretariat undertook several initiatives. The IYOR campaign, along with several side events and activities, will be elaborated in a later section of the report. With respect to other initiatives, the Secretariat produced an **ICRI postcard** for distribution to raise awareness about ICRI. The postcards were produced in English, Spanish and French to increase their relevance and distribution throughout the coral reef regions of the world. The Secretariat also enabled a **re-design of the ICRI Forum**, which was launched during the April 2009 GM. The new and improved ICRI Forum will be easy-to-navigate, enable all speeds of Internet to access materials and will streamline both archived and current information in user-friendly format.

General Meetings

The United States and Mexico held three general meetings during their term as ICRI Secretariat. The first meeting was held in January of 2008 in Washington, DC. Meeting outcomes included the official launch of the International Year of the Reef 2008 along with a half-day symposium to celebrate the launch of IYOR at the Mexican Cultural Institute; formation of the Ad Hoc Committee on Economic Valuation of Coral Reef Ecosystems following an informative panel and break-out session which highlighted the need for ICRI to engage further on this issue; and formation of the 4th ICRI East Asia Regional Workshop Preparation ad hoc Committee for the purpose of preparing and executing a regional meeting on MPA networks in East Asia, a critical issue of import for ICRI members. Members also adopted the two-year Action Plan for the Secretariat.

The second general meeting was held in July of 2008 in Ft. Lauderdale, Florida, directly following the 11th International Coral Reef Symposium (ICRS) to capitalize on this critical meeting for coral reef conservation, management and science. Key outcomes from the Florida meeting included adoption of an ICRI recommendation on Improving Shark Conservation for Coral Reef Resiliency and updated ToR for the Committee on Economic Valuation of Coral Reef Ecosystems

The third and final meeting of the Mexico-U.S. ICRI Secretariat, held in Phuket, Thailand in April 2009 was strongly attended and very successful with key outcomes including: revision of the organization and management procedures; amendments to the ToR for the Enforcement and Investigation Committee; adoption of two recommendations on Continuing Coral Reef Awareness and Invasive Alien Species and a resolution on Coral Disease; and launch of the new and improved ICRI Forum.

Action Plan Elements

The Mexico-United States Secretariat focused its work for the two-year term around elements of the Action Plan adopted by ICRI Members during the January 2008 General Meeting. Highlighted below is a snapshot of key actions under these elements:

Revitalize ICRI's Regional Focus

- Presentations during General Meetings on key regional initiatives, i.e., Coral Triangle Initiative, Micronesia Challenge, Caribbean Challenge and GLISPA.
- Presentations during General Meetings from key regional organizations, i.e., SPREP, CRISP, and UNEP Regional Seas Programmes.
- Focused discussion during General Meetings on regional issues of importance: e.g., sustainable tourism in the Caribbean, coral reef fisheries issues.
- Sponsorship of ICRI Regional Meetings: East Asia Regional Workshop in Tokyo Japan, and Live Reef Food Fish Trade Workshop in Hong Kong, SAR

Encourage better governance

- Adoption of recommendations on shark conservation, invasive alien species, and a resolution on coral disease.
- Robust discussion during January 2008 GM by a panel on economic valuation of coral reef ecosystems, followed by creation of Ad Hoc Committee. The adopted ToR was designed to target efforts to influence reef management decisions, taking value of reefs into account.

Enhance Marine Protected Areas

- Support for the ICRI regional meetings in the East Asia Region focused on MPA Networks
- Highlighting Member actions on MPA issues through focused presentations of Member Reports

Promote the International Year of the Reef 2008

- The International Year of the Reef was a highly successful international campaign launched by the International Coral Reef Initiative designed to effectively communicate the value and importance of the world's coral reefs, the threats to the reefs' sustainability, and to motivate target audiences to take action to protect and conserve coral reefs.
- The Mexico-U.S. Secretariat sponsored several side events at international venues (see additional details below), as well as attained endorsement by the G8 Environment Ministers of the IYOR.
- Capitalizing on the success of the IYOR campaign and to further the momentum achieved, ICRI Members adopted a resolution on continuation of reef awareness, acknowledging the need to increase public awareness pertaining to the importance of coral reef conservation.

Promote a successful 11th International Coral Reef Symposium

- Advertised ICRS to ICRI Members, encouraging attendance and active participation.
- Provided supporting scholarships for select participants to attend ICRS.
- Sponsored an ICRI / IYOR booth during ICRS.
- Hosted a General Meeting directly following ICRS, during which Members discussed the outcomes of ICRS and incorporated these topics into the emerging issues discussion during the ICRI meeting.

Raise the profile of coral reef related fisheries

- ICRI Members adopted a resolution on shark conservation, in particular highlighting the increasingly dire global status of sharks and their importance as apex predators in coral reef ecosystems.
- Presentations on key coral reef fisheries issues during April 2009 General Meeting, including the live reef food fish trade and the ecosystem-based approach to fisheries management.
- Sponsored an ICRI Regional Meeting on the Live Reef Food Fish Trade in Hong Kong.

Support enforcement training and capacity building

- Support for the further expansion of efforts by the Enforcement and Investigations Committee and the Coral Reef Crime Scene Investigations program as an on-going ICRI activity.
- ICRI Members adopted an amendment to the ToR for the Enforcement and Investigations Committee to expand its work to the issue of illegal trade in wildlife products associated with coral reef ecosystems.

Engagement with significant regional and global initiative and organizations

- The ICRI Secretariat sponsored and participated in several side events on IYOR and other coral reef-related issues at key international venues, e.g., Education Center at the 11th ICRS (Ft. Lauderdale, USA, July 2008); the Ninth Conference of Parties of the Convention on Biological Diversity (Bonn, Germany, May 2008); IUCN's World

Conservation Congress (Barcelona, Spain, October 2008), Diving Equipment and Marketing Association (DEMA) show (Las Vegas, USA, October 2008); the 10th Conference of Parties of the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands of International Importance (Changwon, Republic of Korea, November 2008); the 15th Conference of Parties at the UN Framework Convention on Climate Changes (Copenhagen, Denmark, December 2009).

- The ICRI Secretariat hosted a booth during the 11th ICRS to provide an opportunity to showcase ICRI and IYOR efforts, and to serve as a platform for ICRI Members to raise awareness during ICRS of relevant initiatives and activities.
- Through intense efforts by the U.S. and with support from Japan, the 2008 G8 Environment Ministers statement (the Kobe Call for Action on Biodiversity) includes specific endorsement of the International Year of the Reef.

Promote Partnerships

- Through presentations and updates by key regional initiatives, programmes and organizations, Members were informed of partnerships relevant to the objectives of ICRI, including those within which ICRI Members could more fully engage.