

## **STATEMENT BY THE INTERNATIONAL CORAL REEF INITIATIVE AT THE UN OPEN ENDED INFORMAL CONSULTATIVE PROCESS ON OCEANS AND THE LAW OF THE SEA, JUNE 2005**

Distinguished co-chairs, distinguished delegates,

I have the honour to make a statement on behalf of ICRI, the International Coral Reef Initiative. I am doing so since the UK Government, along with the Government of Seychelles, is currently co-hosting the ICRI Secretariat. We look forward to the Governments of Palau and Japan assuming that responsibility shortly for a further two years.

ICRI is a partnership of governments and a range of other bodies, including multilateral agencies, conventions and NGOs formed in 1995 to help implement Chapter 17 of Agenda 21, and international agreements concerned with conservation of coral reefs and related ecosystems. ICRI's approach has concentrated on mobilising governments and a wide range of other stakeholders around a political call for action and an associated framework for action. Working with and through ICRAN and GCRMN, its operational networks, ICRI fosters improved management practices and capacity building, monitoring, the sharing of information, and fund raising.

We are particularly pleased to participate in this year's Informal Consultative Process meeting, since this year sees ICRI's 10 anniversary and the issues for this year's discussion is of particular importance to us.

### **Fisheries and their contribution to sustainable development**

ICRI welcomes the Secretary-General's report in focusing on the contribution of fisheries to sustainable development. This year sees the review of the Millennium Development Goals and we would underline the contribution of sustainable fisheries to poverty alleviation and indeed other MDGs, including environmental sustainability. We attach importance to achieving the WSSD 2010 target on biodiversity in this context.

To be successful we need to understand and develop the links between sustainable fisheries and effective biodiversity conservation: that sustainable fisheries livelihoods are also dependent on effective, sustainable marine and coastal ecosystem management. In this context, we particularly welcome the focus on the importance of small-scale fisheries

ICRI is well placed to make these connections: coral reefs are the richest ecosystem in the marine environment. Many communities and millions of people around the world depend on coral reefs – 10% of the world's fishing harvest is contained in coral reefs. And they protect against erosion and sea level rise, recycle nutrients,

and offer an increasing source for medical research. *Coral reefs need sustainable development and sustainable development needs coral reefs.*

ICRI shares the Secretary-General's analysis of what is hindering the contribution of fisheries to sustainable development, including over-fishing; unsustainable fisheries practices; the problem of IUU; and problems of oceans governance. In this context, we also draw attention to land-based impacts, including habitat destruction and spawning areas.

To guide our work in addressing these problems, we suggest focusing on three, mutually supportive goals:

- *implementing international fisheries and marine agreements*
- *building the environmental management capacity of developing countries*
- *developing consumer awareness notably in developed countries of the impacts of consumer decisions*

***and that we seek to identify policies and approaches by countries and organisations which to take forward these goals. To this end, we recommend an emphasis on:***

- all countries ratifying relevant international treaties and agreements, so signalling a common interest in improved governance and co-operation
- we need to focus on issues that offer multiple benefits. Of particular importance is action on IUU fishing, which offers capacity building, and governance benefits, as well as bringing needed revenue to developing countries
- we need to address the vulnerability of small scale and artisanal fisheries: addressing IUU fishing will assist greatly, including from the impacts of industrial fleets
- but it also requires an understanding that the sustainability of marine ecosystems is dependent on the extent to which livelihoods can be made less dependent on unsustainable uses of those ecosystems: countries' marine and coastal management strategies need to address this vulnerability of coastal communities
- this vulnerability was demonstrated by the effects of the tsunami and the value of natural assets such as coral reefs and mangroves needs to be effectively factored into post tsunami reconstruction work as well as broader disaster mitigation efforts
- additionally, countries and relevant bodies need to adopt management approaches which support environmental management capacity building
- in this we would emphasise the fundamental importance of adopting ecosystem, precautionary and stakeholder approaches, including the development of networks of marine protected areas. ICRI would draw particular attention to its

partnership work on MPAs in the Small Island Developing States, which should provide effective conservation benefits for coral reefs, including their fisheries

- there is a continuing need for engagement of fisheries managers and fishers in the development of networks of marine protected areas and, in particular, promoting a realisation that marine protected areas (which may or may not include “no-take” components) can benefit both fisheries and biodiversity protection outcomes.
- underpinning these various steps is the need for the costs and benefits of inaction and action to be identified in order to provide real incentives to countries and others to focus on implementation of agreements and capacity building. Estimates, for example, of the loss of revenue to developing countries from IUU are in the order of \$2-\$15bn annually. MPAs likewise can offer real economic and social benefits which if articulated effectively can enable coral reef issues to be mainstreamed into investment strategies
- linked to this is improved information systems, including the need for fisheries and tourism entities, including from the private sector to embrace consumer information and sustainability labelling tools.
- Finally, we would draw attention to the particular problem of destructive fishing practices, which applies to both warm and cold-water corals. The measures outlined will assist substantially, but in the case of cold water corals we recommend giving urgent effect to last year’s UNGA resolutions on oceans and fisheries, and that the UN General Assembly looks carefully at the scope for additional shorter term measures.

## **Marine debris**

Distinguished co-chairs, delegates

Marine debris provides a number of significant problems for the conservation of coral reefs and related ecosystems - direct physical damage, interference with fish breeding, and loss of revenue from tourism

- as with fisheries, we think that a focus on implementation of existing agreements, capacity building and consumer awareness can guide the outcomes of our discussion and that we should focus on areas which facilitate these linked themes
- awareness raising can play an important role in this context: not just in terms of educational activities among consumers but also in terms of bringing out the real costs of marine debris and therefore the benefits of action within broader national strategies dealing with waste management at source.

- along with its regional seas programmes and the contribution of other regional seas conventions, we would see value in the development of straightforward awareness raising guidelines – these can assist managers in various institutions and locations as both check list and as an instrument to influence others
- in this respect, we support the suggestion of some form of co-ordination of information on marine debris through a clearing house. Given that the Washington GPA has marine litter as one of its focal areas, we would see a role for the GPA Office
- we would also underline the need for improved assessments of marine debris, notably at the regional level. The regional seas conventions can play an important role here in conjunction with the regional fisheries organisations and arrangements, given the particular problem of discarded fishing gear
- what these various actions can do is help clarify the real costs, for example in lost tourism revenue, including to sectors who are partly responsible, where responsibility lies within various sectors and thus where resources can best be targeted
- in this way the problem of marine debris can also be inserted into broader national strategies dealing with waste management at source
- on building capacity, we note and welcome the work of the IMO on port waste reception facilities and the development of supporting guidelines. We would recommend co-operation in this area between FAO and IMO in order to tackle the problem of garbage and waste on and from vessels, and the involvement of the private sector regarding cruise liners
- finally, we draw attention to the decision by ICRI at its recent meeting in the Seychelles to use its partnership network to assist the co-chairs and delegates in taking forward the conclusions of this discussion