

Annex III

DECISIONS ADOPTED BY THE CONFERENCE OF THE PARTIES TO THE
CONVENTION ON BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY AT ITS FIFTH MEETING
Nairobi, 15-26 May 2000

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V/3. Progress report on the implementation of the programme of work on marine and coastal biological diversity (implementation of decision IV/5)

The Conference of the Parties,

Recalling the need to implement the programme of work on marine and coastal biological diversity in a holistic manner, taking into account river basin issues, the effects of land-based activities (including pollution) and tourism plans,

Noting the relevance for the future implementation of the programme of work of the joint work plan 2000-2001 of the Convention on Biological Diversity and Ramsar Convention on Wetlands,

Stressing the importance of regional approaches to the implementation of the programme of work and therefore of cooperation with regional bodies,

1. Takes note of the tools that have been used for the implementation of the programme of work on the conservation and sustainable use of marine and coastal biological diversity, as set out in the note by the Executive Secretary on the subject prepared for the fifth meeting of the Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice (UNEP/CBD/SBSTTA/5/7, annex I), requests the Executive Secretary to report to future meetings of the Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice on the application of these tools, encourages the Secretariat and the Subsidiary Body to complete, as soon as possible, the implementation of decision IV/5 on the programme of work on marine and coastal biodiversity as adopted by the Conference of Parties at its fourth meeting, and notes that the work element on coral reefs was enabled at the fifth meeting of the Conference of the Parties, and will have a minimum three year time schedule;

I. CORAL REEFS

2. Endorses the results of the Expert Consultation on Coral Bleaching, held in Manila from 11 to 13 October 1999, as contained in the annex to the present decision;

3. Decides to integrate coral reefs into programme element 2 (Marine and coastal living resources) of the programme of work;

4. Requests the Executive Secretary to integrate fully the issue of coral bleaching in the programme of work on the conservation and sustainable use of marine and coastal biological diversity and to develop and implement a specific work plan on coral bleaching, taking into account the recommendations set out in the annex to the present decision, as appropriate, and in cooperation with the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, and invites Parties, other Governments and relevant bodies to contribute to its implementation. In conducting his work on coral bleaching, the Executive Secretary will also liaise with, inter alia, the Convention on Wetlands, the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (including the World Heritage Convention), the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, regional fisheries organizations, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change and the Global

International Waters Assessment and will formally liaise with the Global Coral Reef Monitoring Network and the International Coral Reef Initiative;

5. Notes that there is significant evidence that climate change is a primary cause of the recent and severe extensive coral bleaching, and that this evidence is sufficient to warrant remedial measures being taken in line with the precautionary approach, transmits that view to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and urges the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change to take all possible actions to reduce the effect of climate change on water temperatures and to address the socio-economic impacts on the countries and communities most affected by coral bleaching;

6. Urges Parties, other Governments and relevant bodies to implement response measures to the phenomenon of coral bleaching by:

(a) Identifying and instituting additional and alternative measures for securing the livelihoods of people who directly depend on coral-reef services;

(b) Encouraging and supporting multidisciplinary approaches to action relating to coral-reef management, research and monitoring, including the use of early-warning systems for coral bleaching, and collaborating with the International Coral Reef Initiative and the Global Coral Reef Monitoring Network;

(c) Building stakeholder partnerships, community participation programmes and public education campaigns and information products that address the causes and consequences of coral bleaching;

(d) Using appropriate policy frameworks to implement integrated marine and coastal area management plans and programmes that supplement marine and coastal protected areas and the multiple conservation measures outlined in the Renewed Call to Action of the International Coral Reef Initiative;

(e) Supporting capacity-building measures, including training of and career opportunities for marine taxonomists, ecologists and members of other relevant disciplines, particularly at the national level;

(f) Implementing and coordinating targeted research programmes, including predictive modelling, in the context, as appropriate, of the ongoing activities referred to in paragraph 4 of the present decision;

7. Invites Parties, other Governments and relevant bodies to submit case-studies on the coral-bleaching phenomenon to the Executive Secretary, for dissemination through the clearing-house mechanism;

8. Agrees that physical degradation and destruction of coral reefs also pose a significant threat to the biological diversity of coral-reef ecosystems, and therefore decides to expand its request to the Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice, as contained in section II, paragraph 1, of decision IV/5, so as to include the effects of such factors;

II. INTEGRATED MARINE AND COASTAL AREA MANAGEMENT

9. Endorses further work on developing guidelines for coastal areas, taking into account decision V/6, on the ecosystem approach;

10. Encourages the Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice, with the assistance of the Executive Secretary, to continue work on ecosystem evaluation and assessment, inter alia, through guidelines on evaluation and indicators;

III. MARINE AND COASTAL LIVING RESOURCES

11. Requests the Executive Secretary to gather information on approaches to management of marine and coastal living resources in relation to those used by local and indigenous communities and to make the information available through the clearing-house mechanism;

12. Takes note of the work of the Executive Secretary on marine and coastal genetic resources, including bioprospecting, and requests the Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice to analyse, and provide advice on scientific, technical and technological matters related to the issue of marine and coastal genetic resources;

13. Suggests that the Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice consider the following issues and prioritize them as appropriate: the use of unsustainable fishing practices, including the effects on marine and coastal biological diversity of the discard of by-catch; the lack of use of marine and coastal protected areas in the context of management of marine and coastal living resources; and the economic value of marine and coastal resources, including sea grasses, mangroves and other coastal ecosystems; as well as capacity-building for undertaking stock assessments and for economic evaluations;

IV. ALIEN SPECIES AND GENOTYPES

14. Requests the Executive Secretary to make use of existing information, expertise and best practices on alien species in the marine environment in the implementation of the work programme on alien species under decision IV/1 C;

V. GENERAL

15. Approves the terms of reference and the duration of work specified for the ad hoc technical expert groups on marine and coastal protected areas and mariculture, as contained in annex II to recommendation V/14 of the Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice, with the addition of "Identification of best practices" for mariculture;

16. Requests the Executive Secretary to make further use of the roster of experts for peer-review and preparation of background documents;

VI. COOPERATION

17. Invites the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization to continue its strong involvement in the implementation of the

programme of work, and requests the Executive Secretary to further strengthen cooperation with other global organizations;

18. Requests the Executive Secretary to coordinate with the secretariats of regional seas conventions and action plans with a view to exploring the possibility of further collaboration, including the development of joint work programmes, in the implementation of the Jakarta Mandate on Marine and Coastal Biological Diversity, paying particular attention to the identification of priorities for action at the regional level, the development of joint implementation strategies and identification of joint activities and the use of regional networks, and to report to the Conference of the Parties at its sixth meeting on collaboration with the regional seas conventions and action plans.

Annex

PRIORITY AREAS FOR ACTION ON CORAL BLEACHING

A. Information-gathering

Issue: Our ability to adequately project, and thus mitigate, the impacts of global warming on coral-reef ecosystems and the human communities which depend upon coral-reef services is limited by the paucity of information on:

(a) The taxonomic, genetic, physiological, spatial, and temporal factors governing the response of corals, zooxanthellae, the coral-zooxanthellae system, and other coral-reef-associated species to increases in sea-surface temperature;

(b) The role of coral reefs as critical habitat for marine species and natural resources for human communities;

(c) The current status of coral-reef health and threats to coral reefs; and

(d) The potential capacity of recovery ^{1/} of corals and resilience of the ecosystem after mass mortality.

Response:

(a) Implement and coordinate targeted research programmes, including predictive modelling, that investigate: (1) the tolerance limits and adaptation capacity of coral-reef species to acute and chronic increases in sea-surface temperature; (2) the relationship among large-scale coral-bleaching events, global warming, and the more localized threats that already

^{1/} Recovery is the return of a coral colony to a state of health, including a symbiotic relationship with zooxanthellae, after the health and/or symbiotic relationship has been disrupted by a stress or perturbation. Recovery may involve a change in the genetic composition of species of the zooxanthellae. Resilience is the return of a coral-reef ecosystem to a state in which living, reef-building corals play a prominent functional role, after this role has been disrupted by a stress or perturbation. A shift toward high dominance by frondose algae accompanied by a reduction in the functional role of coral would indicate a situation of low resilience.

place reefs at risk; and (3) the frequency and extent of coral-bleaching and mortality events, as well as their impacts on ecological, social and economic systems;

(b) Implement and coordinate baseline assessments, long-term monitoring, and rapid response teams to measure the biological and meteorological variables relevant to coral bleaching, mortality and recovery, as well as the socio-economic parameters associated with coral-reef services. To this end, support and expand the Global Coral Reef Monitoring Network and regional networks, and data-repository and dissemination systems including Reef Base - the Global Coral Reef Database. Also, the current combined Sida-SAREC and World Bank programme on coral-reef degradation in the Indian Ocean, as a response to the 1998 coral-bleaching event, could be used as an example;

(c) Develop a rapid response capability to document coral bleaching and mortality in developing countries and remote areas. This would involve the establishment of training programmes, survey protocols, availability of expert advice, and the establishment of a contingency fund or rapid release of special project funding;

(d) Encourage and support countries in the development and dissemination of status-of-the-reefs reports and case studies on the occurrence and impacts of coral bleaching.

Issue: The remoteness of many coral reefs and the paucity of funding and personnel to support on-site assessments of coral reefs require that remote-sensing technologies are developed and applied in the evaluation of coral-bleaching events.

Response: Extend the use of early-warning systems for coral bleaching by:

(a) Enhancing current NOAA AVHRR Hot Spot mapping by increasing resolution in targeted areas and carry out ground-truth validation exercises;

(b) Encouraging space agencies and private entities to maintain deployment of relevant sensors and to initiate design and deployment of specialized technology for shallow-oceans monitoring;

(c) Making the products of remote sensing readily accessible to coral reef scientists and managers worldwide with a view to those scientists and managers that are based in developing countries.

B. Capacity-building

Issue: There is a substantial lack of trained personnel to investigate the causes and consequences of coral bleaching events.

Response: Support the training of and career opportunities for marine taxonomists, ecologists, and members of other relevant disciplines, particularly at the national and regional level.

Issue: Coral bleaching is a complex phenomenon. Understanding the causes and consequences of coral bleaching events requires the knowledge, skills, and technologies of a wide variety of disciplines. Any action aimed at addressing the issue should bear in mind the ecosystem approach, incorporating both the ecological and societal aspects of the problem.

Response: Encourage and support multidisciplinary approaches to coral-reef research, monitoring, socio-economics and management.

Issue: Public awareness and education are required to build support for effective research, monitoring, and management programmes, as well as policy measures.

Response: Build stakeholder partnerships, community participation programmes, and public education campaigns and information products that address the causes and consequences of coral bleaching.

C. Policy development/implementation

Issue: Nearly 60 per cent of the world's coral reefs are threatened by localized, human activities that have the potential to exacerbate the impacts of coral-bleaching events. Evaluations of the 1998 coral-bleaching events suggest that marine protected areas alone may not provide adequate protection for at least some corals and other reef-associated species as sea-surface temperatures rise.

Response: Use existing policy frameworks to implement the multiple conservation measures outlined in the Renewed Call to Action of the International Coral Reef Initiative, and develop and implement comprehensive local-to-national-scale integrated marine and coastal area management plans that supplement marine protected areas.

Issue: Most coral reefs are located in developing countries, and the majority of the people living near coral reefs are often extremely poor. Thus, even minor declines in the productivity of coral-reef ecosystems as a result of coral bleaching events could have dramatic socio-economic consequences for local people who depend on coral-reef services.

Response: Identify and institute additional and alternative measures for securing the livelihoods of people who directly depend on coral-reef services.

Issue: Coral bleaching is relevant not only to the Convention on Biological Diversity but also the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and the Convention on Wetlands. The ultimate objective of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change is to reduce emissions in a manner that "allows ecosystems to adapt naturally to climate change". The United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change calls upon Parties to take action in relation to funding, insurance, and technology transfer to address the adverse effects of climate change. The Convention on Wetlands provides guidance on the conservation and wise use of wetlands, including coral reefs.

Response: Initiate efforts to develop joint actions among the Convention on Biological Diversity, the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, and the Convention on Wetlands to:

- (a) Develop approaches for assessing the vulnerability of coral-reef species to global warming;
- (b) Build capacity for predicting and monitoring the impacts of coral bleaching;

(c) Identify approaches for developing response measures to coral bleaching;

(d) Provide guidance to financial institutions, including the Global Environment Facility, to support such activities.

Issue: Coral bleaching has the potential to impact local fisheries, as well as certain high-value commercial pelagic fisheries and coastal ecosystems.

Response: Encourage the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations and regional fisheries organizations to develop and implement measures to assess and mitigate the impacts of sea-surface temperature rise on fisheries.

Issue: Coral-bleaching events are a warning of even more severe impacts to marine systems. If anomalous sea-water temperatures continue to rise, become more frequent, or are prolonged, the physiological thresholds of other organisms will be surpassed. Not only will local fisheries be impacted, but certain high-value commercial pelagic fisheries and coastal ecosystems will be affected as well.

Response: Emphasize that coral bleaching can be monitored as an early warning of the impacts of global warming on marine ecosystems and that the collapse of coral-reef ecosystems could impact ecological processes of the larger marine system of which coral reefs are a part.

Issue: The observations of the 1998 coral-bleaching events suggest that coral-reef conservation can no longer be achieved without consideration of the global climate system and that it requires efforts to mitigate accelerated global climate change.

Response: Emphasize the interdependencies and uncertainties in the relationships among marine, terrestrial, and climatic systems.

D. Financing

Issue: Because the issue of climate change is global and long-term in scale, Governments around the world need to work together to make funds available to implement initiatives to address the causes and consequences of coral bleaching.

Response: Mobilize international programmes and mechanisms for financial and technical development assistance, such as the World Bank, the United Nations Development Programme, regional development banks, as well as national and private sources to support implementation of these priority actions.