

Decision on International Trade

*Adopted during the ICRI General Meeting (GM)
3-4 July 2004, Okinawa (Japan)*

Reaffirming ICRI's *Renewed Call to Action*, which urges all parties to eliminate unsustainable fishing practices and to encourage the private sector to use and protect coral reefs and related ecosystems in ecologically sustainable ways;

Recalling the "Resolution on Trade in Coral and Coral Reef Species" (October, 1999), "Resolution on Sustainable Fisheries" (October, 2000), and the "Decision in Support of the APEC Strategy on Destructive Fishing" (April, 2001) adopted at previous meetings;

Recognizing that international trade in corals and coral reef species continues to increase and is contributing to destructive fishing practices, overexploitation and stresses on these systems, including the increased extraction of live corals, ornamental fish and invertebrates, food fish, and coral products - such as live rock, coral substrate, coral rock, and coral sand;

Noting that international trade in corals and coral reef species adds to other stresses on coral reef ecosystems from climate change, increasing incidents of bleaching and decreasing calcification rates and reef formation;

Further recognizing the emphasis given to the impacts of trade and resource extraction on coral reef ecosystems during sessions at the 10th International Coral Reef Symposium, in Okinawa, Japan, where more than 1300 scientists and managers convened;

Noting the concerns voiced by ICRI partners regarding the need to improve and better coordinate trade data collection and enforcement through existing international mechanisms, such as the Convention on International Trade of Endangered Species of Fauna and Flora (CITES), and to reinforce CITES role in coral reef conservation;

Noting that coral sand, coral gravel, and small coral rubble were recently exempted from the provisions of CITES;

Noting the potential role of CITES listings in promoting management and sustainable use of coral reef species and products; and

Further noting that several proposals related to coral and coral reef species will be discussed at the 13th meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES COP13) in October, 2004, including a proposal to define certain coral rock and coral substrate as "fossil corals" and thus exempt these specimens from Appendix II trade controls, and measures related to seahorses, humphead wrasse and sea cucumbers.

The International Coral Reef Initiative:

Encourages CITES Parties at COP 13 to adopt measures that increase protection for coral reef species and the role of species in coral reef ecosystems;

Urges CITES parties to utilize sound science and the precautionary approach, as called for under the Convention, in making recommendations and decisions;

Calls upon ICRI members to encourage national CITES authorities to carefully review the proposal (to define coral rock and coral substrate as “fossil coral” based on product description and packaging methods) to ensure that the proposal will be enforceable in their country and will not lead to an unsustainable increase in trade in coral products, noting that the recommended change in CITES listing should be consistent with the intent and purpose of the CITES Convention;

Further calls upon ICRI members to encourage national CITES authorities to carefully review, in light of the scientific evidence including that presented at the 10th ICRS, the proposals to list the humphead wrasse under Appendix II, use an universal minimum size (10 cm) for exports of seahorses to assist Parties in permitting trade under Appendix II, and extend the deadline for analyzing the international trade in sea cucumbers (as per CITES Decision 12.60);

Recommends that ICRI members call for international discussions to consider proposing other coral reef species threatened by international trade for listing or strengthened protection under CITES, especially those species that function as essential fish and reef habitat, based upon the precautionary approach and scientific information.

Recommends that governments strive to improve and harmonize the collection and analysis of data on reef species collection, exports and imports, with particular respect to species, volumes, and destination countries;

Further recommends that importing countries encourage importers to certify that coral reef species were taken without destructive practices and from areas under sustainable management to provide positive economic incentives for sustainable collection and management.