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Summary of the ICRI Recommendation for inclusion of coral reef ecosystems within the CBD Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework

Coral reef ecosystems are both critical and vulnerable, as highlighted through numerous recent landmark assessments such as the IPBES Global Biodiversity Assessment and the Special Reports of the International Panel on Climate Change (IPCC). For their small global coverage these ecosystems deliver disproportionate benefits to the global economy and food security. Coral reefs are an important part of the solution to achieve the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Now is the time to deliver focused, strategic action to safeguard coral reef ecosystems from further decline and drive progress towards a future of living in harmony with nature.

The International Coral Reef Initiative (ICRI), a global partnership organisation with almost 90 members, including over 40 countries, has adopted a Recommendation that strongly encourages Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) to prioritize coral reefs in the Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework.

In its Recommendation, ICRI:

1. Calls for prominent recognition of coral reef ecosystems within the text of the CBD Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF). ICRI agrees that the Global Biodiversity Framework should have goals and targets that focus on biodiversity at the ecosystem level. It is also important that the framework triggers actions that will enhance the integrity and resilience of these ecosystems, so they can continue to support human society into the future;
2. Emphasises appropriate timescales for the goals and targets. For example, 2050 would be an ambitious, yet potentially achievable timeline for the stabilisation and recovery of coral reef ecosystems, if immediate prioritization is achieved;
3. Encourages explicit inclusion of coral reef indicators within any monitoring framework. Even meaningful targets can fail to deliver if they are not accompanied by appropriate indicators. The Recommendation identifies a set of six coral related indicators for adoption and highlights a further five indicators for priority development, particularly helpful to provide improved information on ecosystem integrity, function, intactness, resilience. These are listed below.

Access to the ICRI Recommendation and supporting materials can be found here:

www.icriforum.org/post2020.

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Photo: The Ocean Agency

Recommended indicators

(Note: reference to goals and targets relates to the structure of the Zero Draft of the GBF)

1	Live coral cover	<i>Relevant to Goal A and Target 1 - the most basic indicator of coral dominance and the most widely used indicator used in national to global policy</i>
2	Coral reef extent	<i>Relevant to Goal A - a key metric for changes in coral reef area</i>
3	Fleshy algae cover and cover of key benthic groups	<i>Relevant to Goal A and Target 1 and 6 - increases in fleshy algae indicate decline in coral reef health</i>
4	Fish abundance and biomass	<i>Relevant to Goal A and Target 1 - necessary to understand functioning and productivity of the reef</i>
5	[Percentage/ area] of coral reefs included in [effectively managed] Marine Protected Areas and Other Effective Conservation Measures	<i>Relevant Target 2 - gives information on the representativity of coral reefs included within area-based management</i>
6	Index of coastal eutrophication	<i>Relevant to Target 4 - nutrient pollution from land-based sources is of high concern for many inshore reefs</i>

Indicators for priority development

7	Red list of ecosystems (coral reef ecosystems)	<i>Relevant to Goal A and Target 1 - how close an ecosystem is to collapse</i>
8	Hard coral genera richness	<i>Relevant to Goal A and Target 1 - helps understand coral community change and structure - relevant to integrity</i>
9	Structural complexity of coral reefs	<i>Relevant to Goal A and Target 1 and 6 - provides information on expected function of the system</i>
10	CATAMI Classification Scheme	<i>Relevant to Goal A and Target 1 - a standardised, progressive approach to understanding the benthic habitats</i>
11	Carbonate budgets	<i>Relevant to Goal A and Target 1 and 6 - a proxy for understanding function and impacts of climate change</i>



Photo: The Ocean Agency