

## 35<sup>th</sup> ICRI General Meeting Secretariat Report

A short questionnaire was sent to all ICRI members ahead of the 35<sup>th</sup> ICRI General Meeting to see how they contributed to the implementation of the 2018-2021 Plan of Action. A total of nineteen replies were received. A full detailed report of activities of the Secretariat will be produced by July 2021.

### Theme 1 – Promote effective and adaptable solutions to improve the protection of coral reefs

#### 1.A – Strengthening policies - Supporting protection of coral reefs and associated ecosystems through effective policy and legislative frameworks

- Summary of legislative and regulatory mechanisms for the protection of coral reefs and associated ecosystems

Two studies have been conducted in the context of the implementation of the ICRI Plan of Action 2018-2020, and more specifically to “promote effective and adaptable solutions to improve the protection of coral reefs”. The aim is to highlight good practices that directly and indirectly protect of coral reefs within pilot countries and identify potential gaps. Those good practices are found, first, in the legislation of the country, but also in how several international and regional instruments important in the protection of coral reefs are implemented within each country.

Thus far, the legislative frameworks of [France](#) and [Seychelles](#) have been summarised. Australia and Costa Rica are currently preparing their summaries.

- Ad hoc committee on Coral reef ecosystems and the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF)

At the 33<sup>rd</sup> ICRI General Meeting an ad hoc committee was formed to follow the post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework development process and to contribute on matters relating to the critical status of coral reefs and how these can be sufficiently addressed within the post-2020 framework, including the recommendation of a coral reef related target. During the 34<sup>th</sup> ICRI General Meeting ICRI members agreed to extend the mandate of the ICRI ad hoc committee on the inclusion of a coral reef-related target in the Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework until the fifteenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity. The Committee is co-chaired by ICRI Secretariat, the Government of Monaco, and Vulcan Inc, and the membership is made up of Australia, France, Indonesia, Jamaica, Japan, Maldives, New Caledonia, Seychelles, UK, USA, CORDIO, ICRS, Reef World

Foundation, SPREP, UN Environment, UNEP-WCMC, Vulcan Inc., Wildlife Conservation Society, World Resources Institute, WWF International.

As part of continuing this work, in May 2020 a Recommendation for the inclusion of coral reefs and related ecosystems within the CBD Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework was put to the members and adopted virtually for the first time in ICRI history. The Recommendation includes a set of clear indicators that measure the health, integrity and function of coral reefs including live coral cover, coral reef extent, fish abundance, and coral reefs that are under some form of area-based management. Through the Recommendation, CBD Parties are strongly encouraged to prioritise coral reefs by including clear, specific and actionable indicators in the Global Biodiversity Framework, which will inform interventions aimed at improving reef integrity, quality and function. As it stands, five of the six indicators have been adopted into the draft framework.

Communication and advocacy relating to the Recommendation falls under [Terms of Reference 3 of the Post-2020 Ad Hoc Committee](#), as such a communications group was established that sits within the ICRI Ad Hoc Committee and is open to ICRI members. Members of the group include United Nations Environment Programme, Vulcan Inc., Reef-World Foundation, WWF, Wildlife Conservation Society and most recently IUCN. To continue the work in promoting the Recommendation, a number of resources have been produced:

- A promotional video
- Two infographics, one that illustrates the value of coral reefs globally and one that describes the recommended indicators (which have been translated into Spanish, Portuguese, Persian, French and Indonesian)
- Translation of the Recommendation and Recommendation Summary into French, Spanish, Arabic and Bahasa
- Twenty individuals have also lent their voices of support, which have been converted into quote cards.

All of these materials have been widely shared across social media. A number of articles have been written in support of the Recommendation. To ensure access to all of this information a section on the ICRI website has been dedicated to the work being done by both the Ad hoc Committee and the communications team ([www.coralpost2020.org](http://www.coralpost2020.org)).

For more information, consult the Ad Hoc Committee report (reporting against the terms of reference established at the inception of the ad hoc committee).

## 1.C – Support reef resilience at the local, regional and global scale

- Ad hoc committee on Resilience Based Management

At the 34<sup>th</sup> ICRI General Meeting a side event on resilience-based management, entitled [Managing for Resilience](#), was held by the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority, together with The Nature Conservancy and the Great Barrier Reef Foundation. Following the event, an Ad hoc committee on Resilience Based Management (RBM) was formed, chaired by Australia. The membership is made up of representatives from USA, Australia, UN Environment, ICRS, The Nature Conservancy, Wildlife Conservation Society, Reef World Foundation, Great Barrier Reef Foundation, CTI-CFF, Coral Cay Conservation and Coral Reef Alliance.

On the 21<sup>st</sup> January 2021 a questionnaire was sent to all ICRI members (with a reply deadline of 19<sup>th</sup> February) with the aim of identifying members' needs and priorities.

Considering the positive feedback received in relation to the hub on Reef Restoration, there are now plans for the integration of a RBM hub on the ICRI website. In the ICRI member questionnaire sent to members in place of the member report, 42% of responses stated a hub on RBM would be a beneficial addition to the website.

#### 1.D - Promote leading practice reef restoration mechanisms by facilitating partnerships, investment and capacity building among ICRI members

##### - *Ad Hoc Committee on Reef Restoration*

During the 33<sup>rd</sup> ICRI General Meeting an Ad Hoc Committee on Reef Restoration was created in response to disturbances affecting coral reefs, in particular thermal stress-induced global mass coral bleaching events and the current climate forecasts predicting that sea temperatures will exceed the thermal tolerances of corals. The committee is chaired by Ian Mcleod, James Cook University and David Souter, Australian Institute of Marine Science. Following the approval of resolution to extend the work at the 34<sup>th</sup> ICRI General Meeting, the Ad hoc Committee has continued to work on ensuring best practices are promoted.

##### - *Mapping the funding landscape for coral reef restoration efforts*

A new study on 'Mapping the funding landscape for coral reef restoration efforts', targeted at governments, international development agencies and funding bodies is currently being prepared by the ICRI Secretariat. The study aims to:

- Understand the type of investments made for coral reef restoration between 2015 to 2020, and how funding varied across regions, sectors, and/or type of restoration projects,
- If possible, identify links (or lack of) between funding and success indicators
- Identify specific funding gaps and needs and draw accurate recommendations for future commitments and investments.

- *Restoration Hub*

In November 2020, in view of the growing interest in restoration and the development of many new initiatives and projects, a Restoration Hub was created on the ICRI website. This space has been designed in a way to share:

- Restoration guidelines
- Activities related to restoration
- Restoration in related ecosystems
- The latest related news
- UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration

- *Coral Restoration Database*

In January of 2021, the Coral Restoration Database was moved to the ICRI website. The database was developed by the team at James Cook University after synthesising the available knowledge of coral restoration methods in a review paper (published January 2020), incorporating data from the peer-reviewed scientific literature and relevant grey literature, and finalising a survey of coral restoration practitioners.

- *Publications*

[A technical guide to mangrove restoration](#)

The French Tropical Wetlands Network produced a technical guide on mangrove restoration, which provides a summary of key elements that should be considered in any mangrove restoration project, based on a review of available literature and practices around the world. The translation of this report from French to English was funded by ICRI.

[Coral reef restoration as a strategy to improve ecosystem services](#)

This document produced jointly by ICRI and UNEP with assistance from the Ad hoc Committee on Reef Restoration. The guide presents an overview of the best- available knowledge in the field and provides realistic recommendations for the use of restoration as a management strategy for coral reefs to assist managers, practitioners, policy makers, and funding agencies to make informed decisions. Whilst not designed to reduce climate impacts, coral reef restoration can be a useful tool to support resilience, especially at local scales where coral recruitment is limited, and disturbances can be mitigated. Ongoing investment in coral reef restoration research and development globally will improve the scale and cost-efficiency of the methods currently applied.

To promote the guide a [webinar](#) was held on January 19<sup>th</sup> in conjunction with the Reef Resilience Network.

## Theme 2 – Understand the trends of coral reefs

### Update on the Global Coral Reef Monitoring Network: Status of Coral Reefs of the World

- Data collation and analysis

The data collation and homogenisation process was completed in March 2020. The process yielded 195 coral reef monitoring datasets from 75 of the 88 coral reef bearing nations of the world. The resulting global data set had almost 2 million individual observations of the condition of corals reefs worldwide. This is an impressive achievement and is testament to the broader GCRMN community who have willingly contributed to generating an extraordinary global dataset.

Primary analysis of this global data set is also complete. Analyses focussed on modelling status of and trends in the cover of hard coral and algae at sub-regional, regional and global scales. Outputs of these analyses have been incorporated into a draft results chapter for the Status Report and used to develop a common template for each of the 10 GCRMN regional chapters of the report.

- Draft report

The structure of the report has been discussed and agreed by the GCRMN Steering Committee and consists of two halves. The first half presents the results of analyses of the global dataset and is focused on the status and trends of coral reefs at a global scale, while the second half describes the condition of coral reefs within each of the 10 GCRMN regions at the scale of the entire region and at smaller sub-regional scales. In addition to the primary chapters, more than a dozen issues/topics (e.g., mass coral bleaching and marine heatwaves, ocean acidification, policy and management solutions) will be highlighted in specific boxes throughout the report.

Each of the global chapters are currently in draft form and are being reviewed prior to finalisation and peer review. All draft regional chapters have been circulated to GCRMN Regional Coordinators to seek local expert input into the drafts. Local expert knowledge is essential to validate the results of statistical analyses and assist with the identification of primary drivers responsible for the status of and trends in coral reef condition within each region. Several regional chapters have been or are very close to complete, but others require additional work. Most of the highlights boxes have been drafted and are currently being reviewed. The Executive Summary of the report will be translated into several UN languages courtesy of UNEP. The core writing team is working toward finalising the report at the end of March.

- Launch of the report

The GCRMN Steering Committee had initially identified several high-level international events at which the GCRMN Status Report could be launched to ensure significant impact among the target audience. Owing to the global COVID-19 pandemic, all of these events have been either cancelled or postponed. The GCRMN Steering Committee has re-evaluated launch opportunities and, considering the changing nature of the international meeting landscape, it is most likely that an independent launch/webinar event will be the preferred approach. The GCRMN has been in discussion with the ICRI Secretariat, UNEP and Vulcan Inc to develop a broader communications strategy that will use different media to ensure that the report reaches a broader audience and has a longer ‘shelf-life’. A suitable date will be determined in discussion with primary stakeholders and significant contributors to the report. In addition, a number of countries/organisations have expressed keen interest in being involved in the launch of the report or organising events associated with the report. These include Australia, Coral Cay Conservation, France, ICRS, Maldives, Myanmar, Reef-World Foundation, Thailand, UNEP, Vulcan and Wildlife Conservation Society.

- Capacity building

Unfortunately, opportunities to conduct on-ground capacity development activities during 2020 have been curtailed by the COVID-19 pandemic. However, once the GCRMN Status Report has been produced, and the world begins to emerge from the COVID-19 pandemic, the focus of the GCRMN will shift to capacity development across the network. To assist in targeting efforts, ICRI members were asked what the highest capacity building priorities were. Training in coral monitoring, data collection, analysis, management and sharing emerged as a priority among a number of ICRI members. This is consistent with experiences gained in developing the global data set for the GCRMN Status of Coral Reefs of the World report, which also identified a need to build greater capability and capacity for socio-economic monitoring of coral reefs. The GCRMN intends to establish task forces of experts to develop guidelines and protocols that can be implemented across the network to build capability and capacity in these areas.

### Theme 3 –Live Reef Food Fish Trade (LRFFT)

In accordance with theme 3 of the ICRI Plan of Action 2018-2021, an ICRI report on the Live Reef Food Fish Trade (LRFFT), focusing on groupers and the wild capture fisheries, which account for almost all the species in trade and a significant proportion of the volume entitled “Live Reef Food Fish Trade” Undervalued, Overfished and opportunities for change’ was published and shared in 2019.

The report acknowledges that it has been twenty years since ICRI Partners set a goal to reduce adverse ecological and socio-economic impacts of trade in coral and coral reef species, eliminate unsustainable fishing practices and protect coral reefs and related ecosystems. The

report recognises the ongoing need to focus on sustainability in coral reef systems in general, and the LRFFT in particular, and arose as an initiative of the former Fishery Minister of Indonesia, Susi Pudjastuti, with ICRI.

## Theme 4 - Help to reduce anthropogenic threats to coral reefs

### - Noise Pollution

An ICRI report on the impact of anthropogenic noise pollution in coral reefs entitled “Legal and policy approaches at the national, regional and international level” details existing legislation for controlling/limiting anthropogenic noise in coral reef ecosystems, the many sources of noise pollution in the marine environment, and the legal responses needed to mitigate underwater noise pollution at national, regional and international levels. Alongside this publication an ‘Information Paper’ related to the impact of anthropogenic noise pollution in coral reefs was also produced. This report details existing policies and recommendations on legal frameworks and tools that must be enhanced or developed and the sources of both naturally occurring and anthropogenic noise sources respectively.

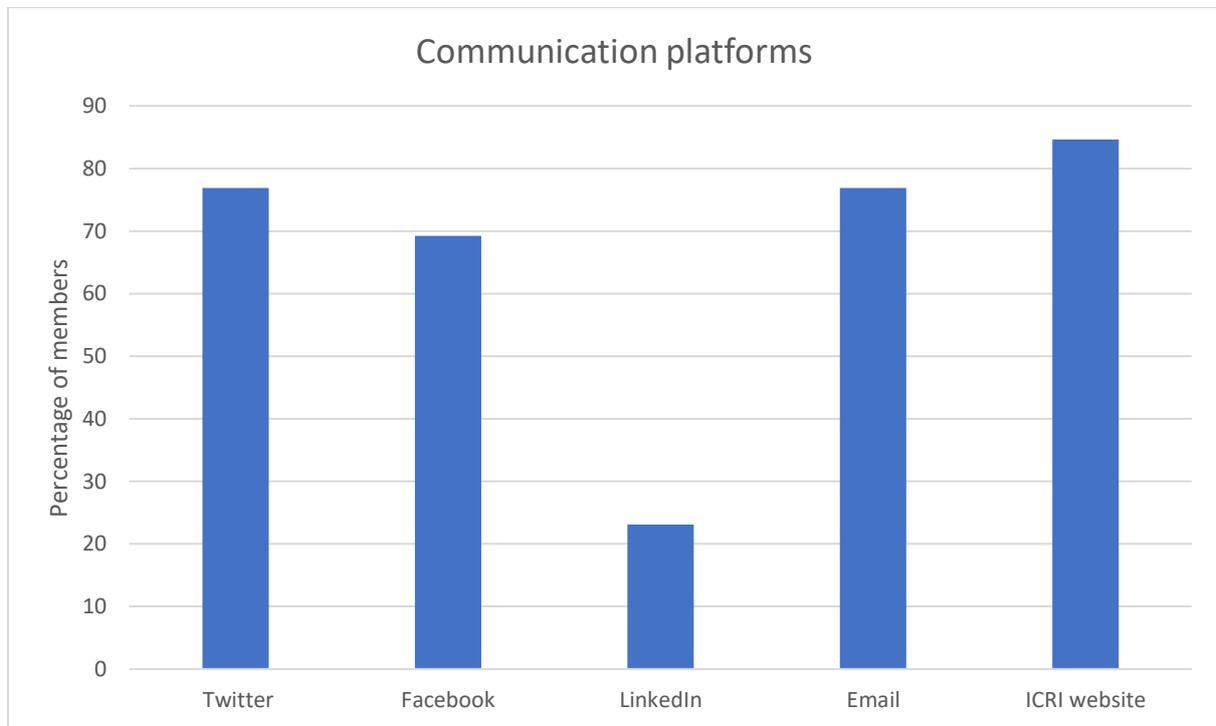
### - Human health and the Ocean

On the occasion of the 1<sup>st</sup> International Symposium on Human Health and the Ocean, in a changing world, the Scientific Centre of Monaco and the International Coral Reef Society produced a brochure on ‘[Coral reefs and human health](#)’. The brochure describes how coral reef ecosystems can contribute to human health, and the importance of a healthy coral ecosystem.

## Communication

Within the responses from the questionnaire, members were asked what communication methods were most effective and if there were additional platforms should be explored. Their responses (table 1) showed that we are already utilising the most popular platforms and tools.

Table 1 - Communication platforms



- ICRI Website

The new and updated ICRI website was launched on the 22<sup>nd</sup> of May 2020. It has received rave reviews and continues to grow as an ever-evolving host for resources dedicated to coral reefs and related ecosystems.

- Newsletters

The ICRI newsletter continues to grow and be an invaluable communications tool, and counts close to 2500 subscribers, between January 2020 and December 2020 there were over 600 new subscribers. Since the last GM, nine newsletters have been sent out, not including numerous targeted campaigns to increase awareness about the Post-2020 work and the creation of the Restoration Hub.

20/01/2021 - [ICRI News - January 2021](#)

30/11/2020 - [ICRI News - Reef Restoration Special Issue](#)

23/10/2020 - [ICRI News - October 2020](#)

17/08/2020 - [ICRI News - August 2020](#)

15/06/2020 - [ICRI News - June 2020](#)

21/05/2020 - [Coral reef ecosystems and the CBD Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework](#)

22/04/2020 - [ICRI News - Earth Day issue](#)

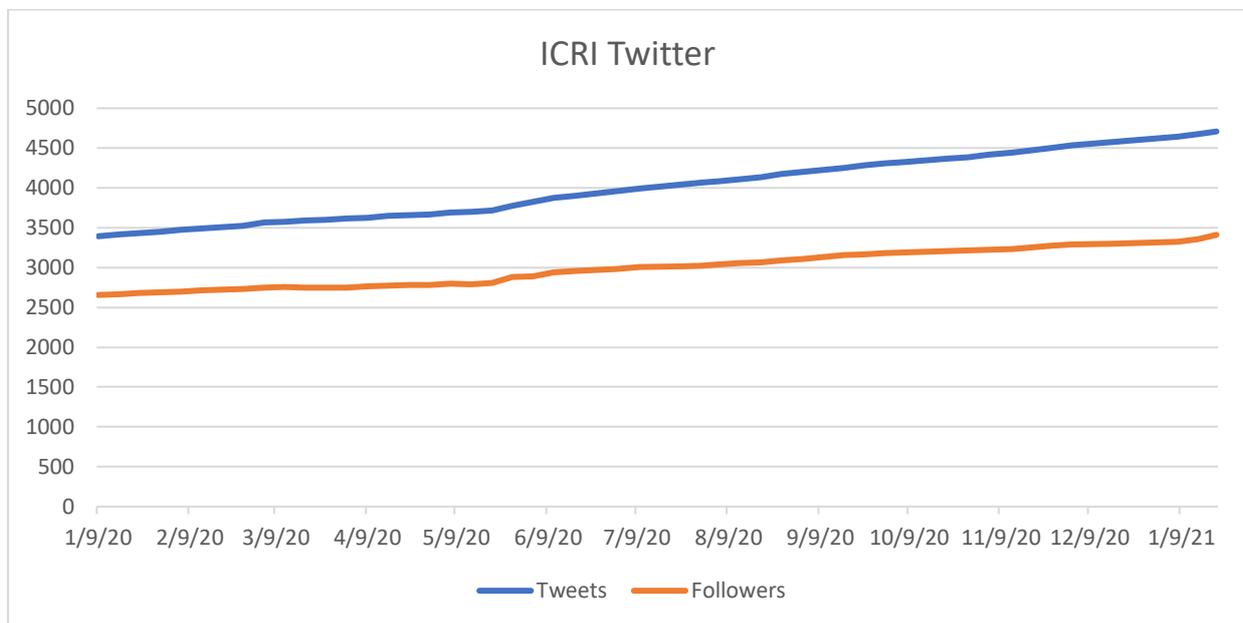
08/04/2020 - [ICRI News - April 2020](#)

03/02/2020 - [ICRI News - February 2020](#)

- Twitter

The ICRI twitter account has continued to grow over this past year, gaining over 750 new followers in 2020. This brings the total to 3411 followers keen to learn more about coral reefs and engage with ICRI.

Table 2 – ICRI Twitter account stats



- Coral Heroes

ICRI was recognised as a ‘Coral Hero’ by NOAA’s Coral Reef Conservation Program for their 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary. ICRI proudly stands among the likes of Dr Ruth Gates, the Reef Resilience Network and the Gulf and Caribbean Fisheries Institute to name a few.

### Fostering partnerships / collaboration, including with private sector

- UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration

ICRI has been nominated as a Supporting Partner of the UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration. In this capacity, ICRI will promote and amplify the UN Decade and its activities, help strengthen restoration capacity and monitoring efforts, and support the coordination of UN Decade initiatives.

Germany, Thailand, ICRS, Japan (via the Ad hoc Committee on Restoration), UNEP, COBSEA and Mars have all committed to taking part in the Decade on Restoration. Myanmar and Maldives have stated that although a decision has not yet been made, they are both likely too.

- UN Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development

Canada, Australia, South Africa, France, Myanmar, ICRS, Thailand, SPC, Japan, UNEP and COBSEA are all taking part in the Decade of Ocean Science in some capacity. The Maldives has yet to make a decision on whether they will take part.

- Uplink

ICRI partnered with the World Economic Forum and UpLink – a digital platform to crowd-source innovations to accelerate the SDGs – to launch the second Ocean Solutions Sprint calling for solutions to restore, protect and invest in the ocean.

The coral winners are:

- [CHARM](#), the innovative coral farming robot, combines scientific research with computer automation to reduce costs, save time, and grow resilient coral colonies at economies of scale.
- [Plant a Million Corals](#) and their adaptable, low-cost coral restoration units, can be deployed to not only increase coral growth but also to empower communities to take an active role in conservation.
- The “Global Coral Reef R&D Accelerator Platform”, an initiative launched by G20

The G20 is a major custodian of warm-water and cold-water coral reefs, with about half of the world’s tropical reefs located in the Economic Exclusive Zones of G20 members. The G20 considers coral reefs to be amongst the most valuable ecosystems on earth, harbouring incredible biodiversity, supporting livelihoods, and providing economic opportunities for at least 500 million people across the world. However, they are also amongst the ecosystems most vulnerable to unsustainable human activity, which causes coral reef decline through pollution, direct destruction, and ocean warming and acidification. Thanks to their significant economic and scientific capabilities, G20 members can play a vital role in preventing the grim predictions of a catastrophic loss of coral reefs from being realized if the current rate of coral reef loss continues. The G20 has proposed to establish a voluntary Global Coral Reef R&D Accelerator Platform to accelerate scientific knowledge and technology development in support of coral reef survival, conservation, resilience, adaptation and restoration. The initiative is targeted at addressing the most important knowledge gaps and will be placed in an overarching program design framework.

This initiative encompasses both warm-water, tropical coral reefs, as well as those growing in deep, cold waters, which have also experienced losses and are also threatened by multiple human pressures.

The objective of this G20 initiative is to increase support for and complement existing national, regional, and international initiatives that are currently working on coral reef conservation, resilience, adaptation, and restoration. To achieve this objective, the G20 proposes the establishment of a **Platform focused on accelerating international research and development** to improve the survival, conservation, resilience, adaptation and restoration of both warm-water and deep, cold-water coral reefs.

The ICRI Secretariat was part of the discussions and attended several meetings. The ICRI Secretariat has been invited to join the “the Founding Committee Members”. Noting that several G20 countries (see Annex 1) are also ICRI members, it would be important to have a consistent approach during the future developments of this initiative.

- Global Fund for Coral Reefs

In September of 2020, the Global Fund for Coral Reefs was launched. This first of its kind fund to protect coral reefs has been set up by a coalition of partners, including ICRI members Monaco, Vulcan Inc., UNDP and UNEP. The first Executive Board Meeting of the Global Fund for Coral Reefs (GFCR) was held the week of January 25<sup>th</sup>, and ICRI was invited and participated in it.

## 6th International Tropical Marine Ecosystems Management Symposium (ITMEMS)

The 6<sup>th</sup> ITMEMS was due to take place in April of 2020 in Indonesia, however due to the global spread of COVID-19, the symposium was postponed indefinitely. There has been work done to examine the possibility of hosting the event online, a decision has not yet been taken.

When ICRI members were asked whether they would be interested in taking part in a meeting in April 2021, the responses were overwhelmingly that it would be dependent on the global COVID-19 situation. If there is still a risk of COVID-19 there is support from members for a virtual event.

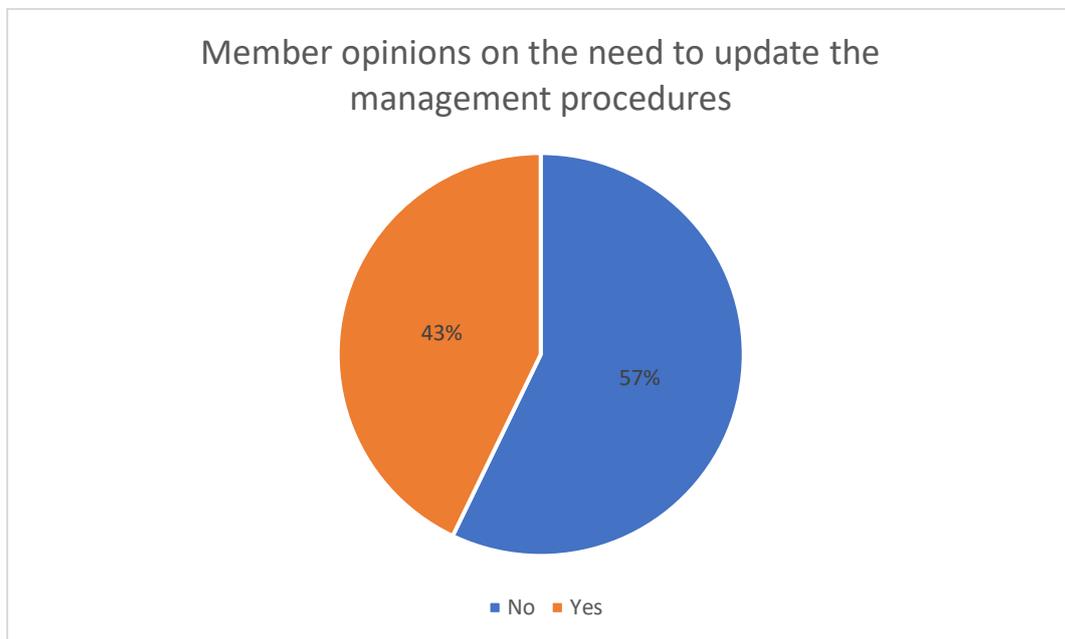
## Governance

Since the start of the Australia, Monaco, Indonesia co-chairmanship, ICRI is proud to have welcomed eleven new members (this does not include the applications received from the European Commission, Mote Marine Laboratory and Aquarium and Coral Restoration Consortium to be determined at the 35<sup>th</sup> GM): [Canada](#), [Coral Triangle Center](#), [Coral Triangle Initiative on Coral Reefs, Fisheries, and Food Security \(CTI-CFF\)](#), [Encounter Edu](#), [Germany](#),

[Jordan](#), Mars Inc., [Mirpuri Foundation](#), Sri Lanka, [Vulcan Inc.](#), and [World Underwater Federation \(CMAS\)](#).

ICRI members were asked if they thought given the increased interest in becoming a member whether it is time to update the [Organisation and management procedures](#) to include new categories. The majority response was that this was not yet needed, although could be considered in the future. A suggestion was made that instead of waiting until the General Meetings to approve new members, special virtual sessions could be held throughout the year.

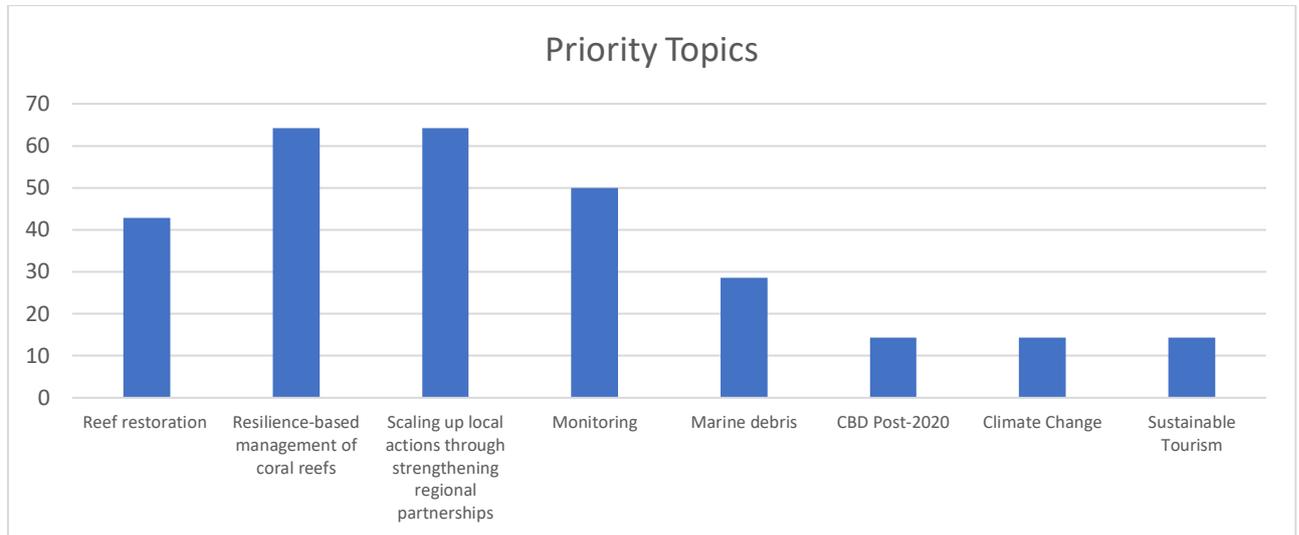
Table 3 - Member opinions on the need to update the management procedures



## The Future

Table 4 is summarising key topics identified by ICRI members that could be integrated into the future ICRI Plan of Action.

Table 4 - Priority topics for the next Plan of Action



- Additional comments from members

It was suggested that ICRI explore the creation of committees on coral reefs associated ecosystems, but which could also be part of the mandate – i.e., mangroves and seagrass. UNEP would be interested in coordinating a committee on seagrass under ICRI.

*The work completed this year was done thanks to the kind contribution from the Government of Sweden, the Principality of Monaco, the Government of Australia, UNEP and Vulcan Inc.*

## Annexes

### Annex 1 – ICRI members who are G20 countries

- Australia
- Brazil
- Canada
- France
- Germany
- India
- Indonesia
- Japan
- Korea
- Mexico
- South Africa
- United Kingdom
- United States of America

Annex 2 – Replies from members regard to Theme 4 of the 2018-2021 Plan of Action “Help to reduce anthropogenic threats to coral reefs”, and whether members have any activities under this theme.

#### Australia

- \$12.6 m for farmers and organisations across catchment areas from Cairns to Mackay (Queensland, Australia) to improve Reef water quality: <https://www.philthompson.com.au/media-release-12-6-m-for-farmers-to-protect-reef-water-quality/#:~:text=%2412.6%20M%20for%20Farmers%20to%20Protect%20Reef%20Water,and%20reduce%20sediment%20reaching%20the%20Great%20Barrier%20Reef>
- 24 tonnes of marine debris cleared from Great Barrier Reef in 2019. <https://minister.awe.gov.au/ley/media-releases/24-tonnes-marine-debris-cleared-great-barrier-reef>.
- ReefClean project launched online campaigns to reduce marine litter: <https://minister.awe.gov.au/ley/media-releases/reefclean-goes-digital-ditch-marine-litter>.
- \$1.8 million boost for community partnerships supporting healthy waterways for the Great Barrier Reef: <https://minister.awe.gov.au/ley/media-releases/supporting-healthy-waterways-great-barrier-reef>.
- Two-year-pilot sees reduction of hundreds of tonnes of nitrogen used on farms: <https://minister.awe.gov.au/ley/media-releases/two-year-pilot-sees-reduction-hundreds-tonnes-nitrogen-used-farms>.
- \$28.6 million to help control coral-eating Crown of Thorns Starfish: <https://minister.awe.gov.au/ley/media-releases/crown-thorns-starfish-control-secured>.
- \$10m to deliver on-ground activities to improve the quality of water entering the Reef. More information: <https://statements.qld.gov.au/statements/90203>.
- Reef Guardian Councils committed to another four years in the program: <https://www.gbrmpa.gov.au/our-partners/reef-guardian-councils>.
- Fisheries reforms ensure the sustainability of Queensland’s commercial fishing industry: <https://www.daf.qld.gov.au/business-priorities/fisheries/sustainable/fisheries-reforms>.
- Reef Knowledge System publicly released: <https://reefiq.gbrmpa.gov.au/ReefKnowledgeSystem>.
- Reef regulations for minimum practice standards in place for cattle grazing and banana production: <https://www.qld.gov.au/environment/agriculture/sustainable-farming/reef/reef-regulations>
- GBR Intervention Policy released: <https://elibrary.gbrmpa.gov.au/jspui/handle/11017/3674>

#### Canada

- Under the Presidency of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, the G20 recently launched *the Coral Reef R&D Accelerator Platform* aimed at international research and development to improve the survival, conservation, resilience, adaptation and restoration of both warm-water and deep, cold-water coral reefs.
- Canada is also a founding member of *The Ocean Risk and Resilience Action Alliance (ORRAA)*, a multi-sector collaboration committed to driving investment into coastal natural capital through

the development of innovative finance solutions that reduce vulnerability and build resilience in the most exposed and vulnerable regions and communities. ORRAA mobilises governments, financial institutions, the insurance industry, conservation organizations, communities and other stakeholders, to unlock the scale of finance required to help mitigate and adapt to the impacts of climate change and ocean risk. ORRAA's work, with grant funding from Canada for 2020/21 and endorsed by the G7's Environment Ministerial in 2019, contributes to disaster risk reduction and climate adaptation in countries that often lack the financial resources to build resilience and to fund relief, recovery and post-disaster reconstruction efforts, particularly in Small Island Developing States (SIDS) and Least Developed Countries (LDCs). Through the effective use of finance and insurance tools, ORRAA's mission is to drive \$500 million of investment into nature-based solutions by 2030.

## COBSEA

- A review of national and regional legal and policy frameworks relevant to marine and coastal spatial planning (MCSP) is being undertaken through desktop research and consultation with COBSEA countries. The review will identify recommendations on enabling conditions for wider use of MCSP in marine and coastal ecosystem-based management and as a contribution to development of a sustainable blue economy. Findings will be presented to the 25<sup>th</sup> Intergovernmental Meeting of COBSEA for consideration.
- A review on nutrient pollution as a transboundary challenge in the East Asian Seas region was initiated in December 2020. Work is carried out in collaboration with the Global Partnership on Nutrient Management (GPNM) and with initial funding from the Swedish Ministry of Environment. The study will map existing knowledge on the main sources and impacts of nutrient pollution in the coastal and marine environment; compile information on prevention and reduction commitments, targets and measures, and related monitoring and assessment; identifying gaps and potential priorities. The findings of the review will be presented to the 25<sup>th</sup> Intergovernmental Meeting (IGM) of COBSEA in 2021.
- The [Second Regional Ocean Policy Dialogue](#) was held virtually on 15-16 December, organized by the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) and the Indonesian Coordinating Ministry for Maritime Affairs in collaboration with COBSEA, ASEAN Secretariat and the ESCAP. Under the theme 'Financing Solutions to Address Marine Plastics Pollution in Southeast Asia', the Dialogue explored interlinked issues of policy coherence, ocean finance and marine plastics pollution. The dialogue forms part of OECD's *Sustainable Ocean for All* initiative and built on the [Regional Policy Dialogue](#) organized by OECD in collaboration with COBSEA in Indonesia in December 2019.
- Extensive work towards implementation of the [COBSEA Regional Action Plan on Marine Litter](#), including development of harmonized national marine litter monitoring programmes, hotspot and leakage assessment, identification and application of market-based solutions, development of national marine litter plans and/or reduction roadmaps, and outreach. e.g., SEA circular project <https://www.sea-circular.org/>
- A review of c. 400 scientific publications on marine plastic pollution in 13 countries in South-East and East Asia was conducted, in partnership with the National University of Singapore (NUS). The [review](#) includes a [comprehensive report](#) of published plastic pollution research, policies and initiatives in ASEAN+3 as well as a [searchable database of research](#) and a series of graphics.

- COBSEA and UNEP organized the second annual SEA of Solutions partnership event on preventing plastic pollution from 24-26 November. The event was co-hosted by the Government of Viet Nam and was held as hybrid virtual/in-person event. SOS 2020 encompassed 5 sessions conducted in plenary including a high-level session with messages by ministers from ten countries, a session focused on finance, and a technical session focusing on Viet Nam: 10 parallel sessions, 11 side events and 19 exhibition booths, all accessible through a virtual platform. A total of more than 800 participants took part through the online platform, and many more in person in Hanoi. All event content is available on-demand at <http://sos2020.sea-circular.org/>

#### France

- France is leading a study to identify and regulate the main chemical pollutants impacting coral reefs and their sources. If interesting for other ICRI members we could report and share the results of this study (2022 at the earliest).

#### Germany

- Start of the preparation phase of a new project “CoralCarib: Pioneering a new strategic approach for conserving and restoring Caribbean coral reef ecosystems that targets Climate Resilient Refuges” implemented by The Nature Conservancy, as part of the International Climate Initiative (IKI) of the Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation and Nuclear Safety (BMU).
- Publication of a booklet entitled “[Blue Nature-based Solutions in Nationally Determined Contributions: A booklet for Successful Implementation](#)” by the Blue Solutions Project, a global project implemented in partnership by [GIZ](#), [GRID-Arendal](#), [IUCN](#) and [UN Environment](#), financed by the BMU through IKI. It provides solutions and best practices on how essential ecosystems such as coral reefs can be rehabilitated, conserved and managed sustainably for future generations. It offers a deep dive into how existing examples on coastal and marine Nature-based Solution can inform and inspire the *design* and the *implementation of Nationally Determined Contributions (NDC)* – including for NDC transparency and review cycles – in the national, sub-national and even project-level context.
- Hosting including financial contribution of a policy event by BMU as part of the International Coral Reef Symposium (ICRS); event needed to be postponed because of COVID19, now expected in July 2021.
- Global Fund for Coral Reefs: the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development supports UNDP’s new Global Fund for Coral Reefs with a contribution of 3 Mio. Euro in order to protect priority coral reef sites and transform the livelihoods of coral reef-dependent communities and sectors in development countries.

#### ICRS

- ICRS’s Plan of Action, and particularly its “Pledge4CoralReefs”, provides encouragement to ICRS members to take appropriate action: <http://coralreefs.org/plan-of-action/>

## Maldives

- The Maldives Government initiated a nationwide coral reef restoration and rehabilitation program intended to directly address means of both restoring coral reefs sustainably over a long period of time and assess how coral reefs are being degraded.
- In an effort to alleviate fishing pressure on reef associated fauna and related impacts on coral reefs as well support national fisheries, the Government of Maldives has heavily invested in research and development of Mariculture within the country.

## Myanmar

- An awareness arising program to the local communities is implementing at the western Coast of the Ayeyarwady Region especially at the tourism development areas by Marine Science Department from Patheingyi University jointly working with Myanmar Dive Center, Myanmar Diver Association, Fishery Department and various stakeholders. The activities are targeted to reduce the negative effects on coral reefs by unregulated fishing, and anchoring, waste accumulation, unregulated sport diving, especially on the coral production for the local market.

## Reef- World Foundation

- The Green Fins Disinfecting Guidelines provide marine tourism operators with guidance on how to follow disinfecting regulations in line with COVID-19 with minimal environmental impact.

## SPC

- SPREP is the dedicated regional organisation looking after this type of issue. However, regional organisations working on pelagic fisheries have identified a potential issue with drifting fish aggregating devices (FADs) where lost or abandoned FADs may contribute to waste production which may impact coral reefs. The scale of this issue is not clearly known, so they are currently collecting data on this (e.g., <https://www.wcpfc.int/node/46723>) and working with RMI and FSM to get community based- information.
- While identifying whether this is a serious issue for the Pacific, to reduce the impact, SPC and WCPFC in partnership with industry and NGOs are developing biodegradable FAD designs (a summary of the latest global biodegradable FAD design work is: <https://www.wcpfc.int/node/46707>), which adapts work in other Ocean areas. SPC currently have a WCPFC project (EU/US/ISSF-funded) working with industry and ISSF to investigate effective bio-degradable FAD designs. It is just beginning

## UNEP

- The updated UNEP coral bleaching futures report using the latest IPCC climate model data
- Supporting the development of the Global Fund for Coral Reefs

#### Wildlife Conservation Society

- WCS has recently completed a global mapping of local threats, focusing on global reefs and the '50 Reef' potential climate refugia regions (Beyer et al, Cons Letters 2018). This study will be shared with ICRI following peer review and highlights the importance of small-scale fisheries management and water quality as urgently needed to address key local threats, globally, to coral reefs in addition to climate change. We will inform ICRI when this work is available for members, and all data layers will be freely available online.