



15 July 2021

Dear ICRI Secretariat Chair,

The Commonwealth Secretariat, as the intergovernmental organisation mandated by Commonwealth Heads of Government to support member countries achieve the Commonwealth's aims of development, democracy and peace, hereby expresses its interest in applying for membership to the International Coral Reef Initiative (ICRI).

The Commonwealth is a network of 54 countries, 47 of which are coastal states, including two-thirds of the world's small island developing states. The Commonwealth has a huge stake in the future of our global ocean, together covering more than one-third (36%) of national marine waters globally and, of particular relevance to ICRI, home to approximately 45% of tropical coral reefs.

The Commonwealth Blue Charter was unanimously adopted at the 2018 Commonwealth Heads of Governments Meeting (CHOGM) in London. It provides Commonwealth countries a voice and the platform to work together on the formation of a fair, inclusive, and sustainable approach to ocean protection and sustainable economic development. Ten thematic Action Groups have been created since its adoption, championed by sixteen Commonwealth Countries:

- Commonwealth Clean Ocean Alliance on marine plastic pollution - UK and Vanuatu
- Coral Reef Protection and Restoration - Australia, Belize and Mauritius
- Mangrove Ecosystems and Livelihoods - Sri Lanka
- Marine Protected Areas - Seychelles and Barbados
- Ocean Acidification - New Zealand
- Ocean and Climate Change - Fiji
- Ocean Observation - Canada
- Sustainable Aquaculture - Cyprus
- Sustainable Blue Economy - Kenya and Antigua and Barbuda
- Sustainable Coastal Fisheries - Kiribati and Maldives

While all 10 of the Blue Charter Action Groups are relevant to the objectives of ICRI, as outlined in the ICRI foundational documents '*A continuing call for action 2013*' and '*A framework for action 2013*', there is particularly close alignment with the Coral Reef Protection and Restoration Action Group.

The Chair, ICRI Secretariat

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The Commonwealth Secretariat commits to support the goals and objectives of ICRI, in as much as they align with those of the principles of the Commonwealth as expressed in its Charter and through the Commonwealth Blue Charter, by:

- supporting collective and coordinated action addressing challenges related to corals, noting that 19 ICRI members are also Champions or members of a Commonwealth Blue Charter Action Group;
- working with ICRI and its ad hoc committees to develop research, policy, knowledge sharing and educational opportunities;
- communicating about threats to coral reefs from inter alia climate change, land use practices, plastics and extreme weather events, and actions being taken to tackle these threats;
- providing expertise to assist in developing and reviewing policies;
- supporting the work being undertaken by the Global Coral Reef Monitoring Network by providing a platform for more Commonwealth countries to contribute to the mapping and monitoring of environmental and socio-economic trends across coral reef countries.

I am persuaded that membership of ICRI by the Commonwealth Secretariat would strengthen momentum towards our common objectives and I look forward to working with the ICRI Secretariat and members of ICRI, to highlight, promote and cooperate on innovative and practical solutions for the restoration and protection of coral reefs across the Commonwealth and globally. As such, I am pleased to nominate the Commonwealth Secretariat's Head of Oceans and Natural Resources, Dr Nicholas Hardman-Mountford (n.hardman-mountford@commonwealth.int), as contact point hereafter.

The ethos of the Commonwealth Blue Charter is of a shared ocean with shared values and over the past three years, the Blue Charter has developed as a network for cooperation on shared actions. I know that I speak for the Blue Charter team when I say that we keenly anticipate working more closely with ICRI to develop these shared actions in the coming years.

With all good wishes,



The Rt Hon Patricia Scotland QC
Secretary-General of The Commonwealth

The Chair
International Coral Reef Initiative (ICRI) Secretariat