



Agenda item 6.2  
For information

**Council**

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*Lessons from the International Year of the Reef  
(Emily Corcoran)*



*Lessons from the International Year of the Reef*

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**This document presents information relating to the organisation and implementation of the International Year of the Reef that was first held in 1997, with a third event in 2018. The document presents the objectives and aspiration of the initiative as well as some insight into the practicalities.**

Background

1. This document presents information drawn from France, as the current co-host government of the International Coral Reef Initiative (ICRI), the ICRI Coordinator and also from a personal perspective having been involved in the International Coral Reef Initiative (ICRI) as its Secretariat from 2002-2009. This time frame included delivery of the International Year of the Reef 2008. The following information is presented:
  - a. The purpose of the IYOR;
  - b. It's history;
  - c. Designation and Delivery mechanisms;
  - d. Outcomes / impacts.
2. The purpose of IYOR is a global effort to increase awareness and understanding of coral reefs and support conservation, research and management efforts.
3. IYOR has been designated and implemented through the International Coral Reef Initiative (ICRI). ICRI is a unique public-private partnership that brings together governments, international organizations, scientific entities, and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) committed to reversing the global degradation of coral reefs and related ecosystems, such as mangrove forests and seagrass meadows, by promoting the conservation and sustainable use of these resources for future generations. Since its establishment in 1995, ICRI has been a driving force behind scientific, governmental, and civil society efforts to protect coral reefs and related ecosystems. The ICRI approach is to provide a platform for information sharing as well as to mobilize governments and a wide range of other stakeholders in an effort to improve management practices, increase capacity and political support. The Initiative is hosted on a voluntary basis for a two-year period by member Governments. The hosts for the period 2016-2018 are France and Madagascar and Chaired by Xavier Sticker, French Ambassador for the Environment.
4. More information on the Initiative is available at [www.icriforum.org](http://www.icriforum.org).

History of IYOR (*source icriforum.org*)

5. 1997 was declared the first International Year of the Reef (IYOR), in response to the increasing threats on coral reefs and associated ecosystems, such as mangroves and sea grasses around the world. IYOR was a global effort to increase awareness and

understanding on the values and threats to coral reefs, and to support related conservation, research and management efforts.

6. Recognising that, ten years later, there continued to be an urgent need to increase awareness and understanding of coral reefs, and to further conserve and manage valuable coral reefs and associated ecosystems, the International Coral Reef Initiative designated 2008 as the second International Year of the Reef, IYOR 2008.
7. IYOR 2008 was a year-long campaign of events and initiatives hosted by governments and non-governmental organizations around the world, to promote conservation action and strengthen long-term collaborations for coral reef conservation.
8. IYOR 2008 Goals were the following:
  - Strengthen awareness about ecological, economic, social and cultural value of coral reefs and associated ecosystems;
  - Improve understanding of the critical threats to reefs and generate both practical and innovative solutions to reduce these threats;
  - Generate urgent action to develop and implement effective management strategies for conservation and sustainable use of these ecosystems.
9. Nations, organizations, and individuals around the world celebrated the International Year of the Reef 2008 (IYOR 2008): from international organizations to village children, to raise awareness about the value and importance of coral reefs and to motivate people to take action to protect them. A tremendous amount of material was produced in several languages during that year, including educational DVDs, posters, children's books, and much more. More than 630 events were organized in over 65 countries and territories around the world.
10. A report on the Outcomes of the IYOR 2008 can be downloaded here: <http://www.icriforum.org/news/2010/08/international-year-reef-iyor-year-review>
11. At the 31<sup>st</sup> General Meeting of ICRI in November 2016, members recognised that the threats to coral reefs are still urgent and yet the awareness still insufficient to bring about the required policy, regulatory and behavioural change needed. 2018 was designated as the third IYOR.
12. IYOR 2018 aims to:
  - strengthen awareness globally about the value of, and threats to, coral reefs and associated ecosystems;
  - promote partnerships between governments, the private sector, academia and civil society on management of coral reefs;
  - identify and implementing effective management strategies for conservation, increased resiliency and sustainable use of these ecosystems and promoting best practices; and
  - share information on best practices in relation to sustainable coral reef management.

13. This will be achieved by encouraging ICRI members to:
  - support and participate in planning for IYOR 2018;
  - facilitate the development of national level IYOR activities;
  - work with others to support UN-observance of the coral reef through the UN General Assembly in 2018.

#### Designation and Delivery

14. The International Years of the Reef have not been UN observances, but been designated through the adoption of an ICRI Recommendation. As ICRI is a voluntary body, these Recommendations do not have any binding force. They do however constitute an agreement between the members. The Recommendations for 1997, 2008 and 2018 are available on the ICRIForum. In addition, the Recommendation designating IYOR 2018 is attached as Annex 1 for reference of this meeting.
15. For IYOR 2008 the following elements were put in place:
  - the IYOR goals were agreed, set out in the Recommendation;
  - an action plan adopted to set out how the goals should be achieved;
  - an individual was identified and nominated by ICRI as coordinator for the duration of IYOR;
  - an *ad hoc* committee was established to support the coordinator and the ICRI Secretariat. The *ad hoc* committee worked virtually and with a Terms of Reference. The committee comprised national representation from: Australia, France, Mexico, Japan, Philippines, USA as well as from the Global Coral Reef Monitoring Network, International Coral Reef Action Network, Pacific regional Environment Programme (Regional Sea), Reef Check, The Nature Conservancy, Caribbean Environment Programme (Regional Sea).
16. Limited Information was available for the delivery mechanisms that will be used for 2018. The lead will be provided through ICRI, under the lead of the co-host governments France and Madagascar. Contributions to IYOR 2018 are expected through partnerships and voluntary action by governments, civil society and private sector.

#### Outcomes/ impact

17. IYOR 1997: Over 225 organizations in 50 countries and territories participated, and over 700 articles in papers and magazines were generated, and hundreds of scientific surveys were undertaken.
18. IYOR 2008:
  - Global launch and 21 national launches. Two thirds of the countries and territories that contain shallow water coral reefs were involved in IYOR 2008 – over 630 events were registered in 65 countries, territories and economies;

- Side events at COP 9 of the Convention for Biological Diversity, IUCNs World Conservation Congress and COP 10 for the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands;
  - Recognised in the text of the G8 Environment Ministers Kobe Call to Action (May 2008);
  - 11<sup>th</sup> International Coral Reef Symposium was held as a focus for IYOR 2008 – 3000 experts from 75 countries;
  - Provided the focus to initiate national and international scientific studies to increase knowledge and included the release of a number of key international reports, including on the Status of the Coral reefs of the world, socioeconomic implications;
  - DVDs, posters, children’s books, educational materials, songs were produced, five unique art pieces inspired by IYOR were donated to auction;
  - In the recognition of the importance of public awareness as one element of coral reef conservation, ICRI members adopted a recommendation on continuing coral reef awareness efforts in 2009.
19. In addition to actions for awareness and promoting scientific advancement, anticipated impacts for IYOR 3, 2018:
- Reporting requested as a contribution to implement the United Nations Environment Assembly (UNEA-2) Resolution on Coral Reefs (UNEP/EA/2/12) (including possible contribution to their Strategic plan for biodiversity 2020) (UNEP/DEPI/CR1.4):
  - Actions for IYOR 2018 committed at the UN 2017 Oceans Conference as contributions to achieving Sustainable Development Goal 14.



## **Recommendation designating 2018 as the third International Year of the Reef**

*Adopted on November 4<sup>th</sup>, 2016, at the 31st ICRI General Meeting (Paris, France)*

**Acknowledging** that coral reefs are now one of the most threatened ecosystems on the planet, as a result of both climate change, which triggered the 2014/2016 coral bleaching event (the most severe ever recorded), and local anthropogenic pressures, but that awareness of this among the general public, as well as decision-makers and civil society, is still insufficient to bring about the required policy, regulatory and public behavioural changes;

**Aware that** the International Society for Reef Studies, in its Consensus Statement on Climate Change and Coral Bleaching prepared for the UNFCCC COP21 in Paris, December 2015, called for all nations to commit to reducing CO<sub>2</sub> emissions to the point to prevent the global collapse of coral reef ecosystems

**Aware that** the Call for Action that came out of the Leaders' Summit held at the 13th International Coral Reef Symposium in Hawaii, 2016, put out a challenge to Pacific nations and the global community to, among other things, collaborate and support each other's coral reef stewardship efforts and to leverage new initiatives

**Recognizing** the success of the 1997 and 2008 International Years of the Reef in raising awareness of the importance of coral reef and associated ecosystems, and the continued need for such activities to create an understanding of the opportunities to further conserve and restore these valuable ecosystems;

**Noting** that, following IYOR 2008, ICRI adopted a recommendation at the ICRI GM in 2009 on "Continuing Coral Reef Awareness Efforts" which called for ICRI Members and other active participants in IYOR2008 to continue the efforts started in 2008 in terms of strengthening awareness about the value of, and threats to, coral reefs and associated ecosystems; encouraging public involvement in coral reef education and conservation activities; and implementing effective management strategies for conservation, increased resiliency and sustainable use of these ecosystems;

**Noting** Aichi target 1, "By 2020, at the latest, people are aware of the values of biodiversity and the steps they can take to conserve and use it sustainably" as well as "Priority Actions to Achieve Aichi Biodiversity Target 10 for Coral Reefs and Closely Associated Ecosystems" adopted in CBD Decision XII/23 which, inter alia, encourages parties to enhance public awareness of the socio-cultural and environmental values of coral reefs and develop and implement targeted education and awareness campaigns for diverse stakeholders on how communities and stakeholders can increase coral reef resilience;



**Noting** resolution EA/2/12 “Sustainable coral reefs management” adopted at UNEA-2 in May 2016 which, inter alia, calls for the establishment of public-private partnerships to raise awareness of the importance of coral reefs and related ecosystems, and that a consultation meeting on implementation of resolution EA/2/12 held in Manado, Indonesia, in June 2016 recommended that “declaration of an International Year of the Reef 2018” should be pursued, initiated through ICRI;

**Noting** Motion 50 on the “Cooperation for the conservation and protection of coral reefs worldwide” adopted at the IUCN World Conservation Congress in September 2016, which asks States and regional and international organisations to strengthen regional cooperation on the conservation of coral reefs and associated ecosystems, including the development of awareness-raising actions.

**Noting** Target 8 of Sustainable Development Goal 12: By 2030, ensure that people everywhere have the relevant information and awareness for sustainable development and lifestyles in harmony with nature; and Target 3 of Sustainable Development Goal 13: Improve education, awareness-raising and human and institutional capacity on climate change mitigation, adaptation, impact reduction and early warning.

The International Coral Reef Initiative declares 2018 as the third International Year of the Reef and encourages:

- ✓ strengthening awareness globally about the value of, and threats to, coral reefs and associated ecosystems;
- ✓ promoting partnerships between governments, the private sector, academia and civil society on management of coral reefs;
- ✓ identifying and implementing effective management strategies for conservation, increased resiliency and sustainable use of these ecosystems and promoting best practices; and
- ✓ sharing information on best practices in relation to sustainable coral reef management.

**Encourages** ICRI members to support and participate in planning for IYOR 2018; and to facilitate the development of national level IYOR activities;

**Encourages** ICRI members and others to support UN-observance of the coral reef through the UN General Assembly in 2018.