

CORAL REEF LIFE

Declaration

By adopting the *Sustainable Development Goal # 14* on the conservation and sustainable use of the ocean, seas and marine resources, we committed to protecting *Life below Water*.¹

At the UN Ocean Conference in June 2017 we undertook to:

“develop and implement effective adaptation and mitigation measures that contribute to increasing and supporting resilience to ocean and coastal acidification, sea level rise and increase in ocean temperatures, and to addressing the other harmful impacts of climate change on the ocean as well as coastal blue carbon ecosystems, such as mangroves, tidal marches, seagrass and coral reefs, and wider interconnected ecosystems impacting on our ocean, and ensure the implementation of relevant obligations and commitments.”²

BECAUSE *LIFE above Water* depends upon the health of *Life below Water*, including the health of coral reefs which maintain some of the richest biodiversity on our planet, and thus sustain the irreplaceable culture and livelihoods of coral reefs peoples.³

BECAUSE CORAL REEFS ARE HOTSPOTS OF BIODIVERSITY hosting in less than 0.2% of the total surface of the ocean no less than 30% of the species of marine life known to date⁴.

BECAUSE HEALTHY CORAL REEFS CAN GENERATE 5 TO 15 TONS OF FISH per square kilometre each year.⁵

BECAUSE CORAL REEFS REPRESENT A TRILLION DOLLAR ASSET at the very least, with benefits for hundreds of millions of vulnerable coastal people all over the world⁶.

BECAUSE HEALTHY CORAL REEFS ECOSYSTEMS REDUCE 97% of WAVE ENERGY and act as barriers to storms and are the first line defence for millions of people globally, preventing catastrophic erosion, flooding and destruction.⁷

BECAUSE CORAL REEF-RELATED TOURISM generates annual revenues of \$36 billion globally.⁸

BECAUSE THE SEVERE IMPACTS OF CLIMATE CHANGE AND OCEAN ACIDIFICATION on marine, coastal and island life are expected to continue to grow, and include unprecedented temperature-related coral bleaching and mortality events, rising sea level, flooding of coastal and island communities, and storms of unparalleled destructive strength and frequency, as well as increasing reef erosion catalysed by changing seawater chemistry.

BECAUSE OVERFISHING, EUTROPHICATION, SEDIMENTATION AND POLLUTION, which result from bad management practices, weaken the resistance and resilience of coral reefs and increase their vulnerability.

BECAUSE THE OPPORTUNITIES OF THE BLUE ECONOMY WILL BE LOST if we destroy the assets upon which it depends, especially coral reefs in coral-dependent Small Island Developing States, jeopardising economic opportunity for millions of livelihoods.

BECAUSE THE VERY EXISTENCE AND FUTURE OF SMALL ISLAND DEVELOPING STATES and other island and coastal coral-dependent communities are being compromised.

WE SHALL:

1. **WIDEN AWARENESS OF CORAL REEF ECOSYSTEMS AS KEY INDICATORS OF OCEAN AND PLANETARY HEALTH**, as well as their environmental, economic, social and cultural values during the Third International Year of the Reef (IYOR 2018) declared by the International Coral Reef Initiative (ICRI), while contributing to the priorities set in ICRI's 2016-2018 action plan, and as called for by Resolution 2/12 of the UNEA.
2. **SUBMIT, AS PART OF OUR PARIS AGREEMENT COMMITMENTS, NATIONALLY DETERMINED CONTRIBUTIONS** that promote the ambitious action on climate change required to avoid damaging coral reefs any further and to help, through protection and conservation, reef-dependent people to adapt and increase ecological resilience to climate change.
3. **ENCOURAGE THE INTERGOVERNMENTAL PANEL ON CLIMATE CHANGE (IPCC)** to highlight the role and fate of coral reef ecosystems, and to explore and promote solutions, in their preparation for the launch in September 2019 of its Special Report on Climate Change, Oceans and the Cryosphere.
4. **PROMOTE HIGH-LEVEL MULTIDISCIPLINARY RESEARCH** on the recent coral reef bleaching events, with a view to understanding resilience and adaptation needs, be better prepared to predict future events and thus orient public policies.
5. **SUPPORT LOCAL ADAPTATION AND MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES** aimed at increasing the resilience of coral reefs regionally.
6. **AIM TO DEVELOP ENVIRONMENTALLY SUSTAINABLE BUSINESS MODELS** that actively promote the health of coral reefs by engaging the private sector.
7. **WORK WITH THE BUSINESS COMMUNITY** to reduce coral-related investment risks.
8. **IDENTIFY AND PROMOTE THE FINANCIAL BENEFITS OF INVESTING IN CORAL REEFS** as assets of a sustainable blue economy.
9. **ASK THE HOSTS OF THE 5th OUR OCEAN CONFERENCE** to schedule a high level plenary session on action for the enhancement of the resilience of coral reef environments, specifically on finance and capacity building at the scale needed to ensure that we do not lose these world's most diverse ecosystem.
10. **INVITE OTHER COUNTRIES** to join this declaration.

¹ <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/sdg14>

² Paragraph 13k of *Our Ocean, Our Future: Call for Action*, June 2017

³ http://www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/RES/71/312&Lang=E

⁴ Biodiversity II: Understanding and Protecting Our Natural Resources, pp. 88-108. Joseph Henry/Nat. Acad. Press, Washington, D.C.

⁵ The global biodiversity of coral reefs: a comparison with rain forests, Reaka-Kudla MJ (1997), in Biodiversity, Reaka-Kudla et al. eds

⁶ Reefs at Risk Revisited, Burke et al. 2011.

⁷ Hoegh-Guldberg, O. et al. 2015. Reviving the Ocean Economy: the case for action - 2015. WWF International, Gland, Switzerland.

⁸ Ferrario et al. 2014. [The effectiveness of coral reefs for coastal hazard risk reduction and adaptation](https://doi.org/10.1038/ncomms53794). Nature Comm 5:3794

⁹ Mapping the Global Value and Distribution of Coral Reef Tourism, Spalding et al. in Marine Policy, August 2017

¹⁰ <http://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0308597X17300635>