



## The International Year of the Reef 2008



### **International Year of the Reef 2008 and the role of the UNEP Regional Seas Programme**

*This is a working document only for the participants of the event on the International Year of the Reef 2008 (IYOR 2008) that will be held during the 9th Global Meeting of the Regional Seas Conventions and Action Plans in Jeddah, October 2007.*

The ICRI International Year of the Reef 2008 is a worldwide campaign to raise awareness about the value and importance of coral reefs and threats to their sustainability, and to motivate people to take action to protect them. All individuals, corporations, schools, governments, and organizations are welcome and actively encouraged to participate in IYOR 2008.

Ten years ago, 1997 was declared the first International Year of the Reef (IYOR). This previous IYOR campaign was initiated in response to the increasing threats and loss of coral reefs and associated ecosystems, like mangroves and sea grasses. IYOR 97 was a global effort to increase awareness and understanding of coral reefs, and support conservation, research and management efforts. IYOR 97 proved to be very successful, with over 225 organizations in 50 countries and territories participating, over 700 articles in papers and magazines generated, hundreds of scientific surveys undertaken, and catalyzed conservation and policy initiatives, as well as numerous local and global organizations dedicated to coral reef conservation.

Recognizing that ten years after IYOR 97 there continues to be an urgent need to increase awareness and understanding of coral reefs, and to further conserve and manage valuable coral reef and associated ecosystems, the International Coral Reef Initiative designated 2008 as the International Year of the Reef (IYOR 2008).

IYOR 2008 will:

- Strengthen awareness about the ecological, economic, social and cultural value of coral reefs and associated ecosystems.
- Improve understanding of the critical threats to coral reefs and generate both practical and innovative solutions to reduce these threats.
- Generate urgent action at all levels to develop and implement effective management strategies for conservation and sustainable use of these ecosystems.

The UNEP Regional Seas Programme could play a critical role in the success of this campaign in helping to promote IYOR 2008 at the regional, national and local levels. The IYOR mission is fully consistent with the one of the UNEP Regional Seas Programme to

address the accelerating degradation of the world's oceans and coastal areas through the sustainable management and use of the marine and coastal environment.

Moreover, IYOR could be a way to engage neighboring countries in comprehensive and specific actions to protect their shared marine environment. Finally, it is important to underline that 11 out of the 18 Regional Seas are located in tropical coral reef areas (see annex 1), and all have cold water coral communities which are also under the remit of ICRI.

Lastly, two of the RS (SPREP and CEP) are members of the IYOR Ad Hoc Committee, created by ICRI, to advise, support and provide guidance to the IYOR 2008 Coordinator in carrying out the ICRI IYOR 2008 Action Plan and accompanying activities.

### **How can the RSP be involved in the International Year of Reef?**

One of the first actions will be to nominate an IYOR point of contact (focal point) for each regional seas to provide follow-up and coordination. The RS IYOR focal point will serve as the main contact for the ICRI IYOR coordinator. Other tasks of the focal point could be:

- to facilitate and promote government's engagement in the coral reef plight, in particular through the intergovernmental processes within the RS
- To act as an information relay to promote awareness of, and interest in, IYOR 2008 within their region (a good example is the circular sent by SPREP to all members announcing the IYOR and seeking nominations for national contacts);
- To provide the name of regional organizations that should be contacted by the ICRI IYOR coordinator (a good example, is the role of UNEP CEP that has facilitated the contacts between the IYOR coordinator and several regional organizations – Caribbean Tourism Organization, and Caribbean Alliance for Sustainable Tourism);
- To share regional activities with the ICRI IYOR coordinator and ensure they are available on the ICRI IYOR web site;

The regional seas programme could also:

- Promote the IYOR by having a link on their web site and having article on their newsletter;
- facilitate the planning and implementation of contributions to IYOR 2008, including, where appropriate, the endorsement of ICRI IYOR recommendations/resolutions;

- if possible, encourage and facilitate the provision of necessary funds, logistical support, and other support for the implementation of local, national and regional activities contributing to the IYOR 2008 objectives;

It is important to note that each focal point organization will be given a dedicated space within the IYOR 2008 web site where relevant and useful information can be posted to showcase the organization's efforts. The space will include contact information, list of planned IYOR activities, and products and materials produced...

The RSP could also work with Division of Communications and Public Information to develop several activities such as:

#### “Our Planet” Magazine on Coral Reef.

The UNEP’s quarterly magazine “Our Planet” features authoritative articles on the theme of environment and development by world scientific and political leaders. The last issue is: “*The art of diplomacy – Celebrating 20 years of the Montreal protocol*”. Previous Issues were: “*Melting Ice- A Hot Topic - Climate Change and the Cryosphere*”, and “*Connected Dreams: Globalizations and the Environment*”

#### TUNZA magazine

Same as above: have the TUNZA on Coral Reefs.

#### World Environment Day (WED)

The World Environment Day, commemorated each year on 5 June, is one of the principal vehicles through which the United Nations stimulates worldwide awareness of the environment and enhances political attention and action. For the year 2008, the theme could be “coral reefs”.

The previous themes were:

- 2007- Melting Ice – a Hot Topic?
- 2006 – Deserts and Desertification – Don’t Desert Drylands!
- 2005 – Green Cities – Plan for the Planet!
- 2004 – Wanted! Seas and Oceans – Dead or Alive?
- 2003 – Water – Two Billion People are Dying for It!
- 2002 - Give Earth a Chance
- 2001 - Connect with the World Wide Web of Life
- 2000 - The Environment Millennium - Time to Act
- 1999 - Our Earth - Our Future - Just Save It!

#### **Highlights of current RSP involvement in IYOR 2008**

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Several of the RSP are already very involved in the Year of the Reef 2008. Below a brief summary of their activities.

*PERSGA - The Regional Organization for the Conservation of the Environment of the Red Sea and Gulf of Aden*

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Or

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PERSGA General Secretary

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PERSGA will integrate IYOR 2008 activities in most of its ongoing relevant projects and activities during the course of the Year 2008.

For instance, the PERSGA "Regional Marine Litter Programme" participated in a clean-up campaign organized by a local diving centre in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia (Desert-Sea-Divers) in collaboration with PADI (Project AWARE), and used this event to spread the word about the International Year of the Reef 2008.

The participation of the "Regional Marine Litter Programme" to this event added a monitoring dimension since the collected debris were sorted and quantified. 50 dedicated volunteered divers, who made three dives each to clean-up three dive sites participated to this event. During the opening ceremony, PERSGA staff distributed an IYOR 2008 Brochure to all the participants.

PERSGA Marine Litter Programme is implemented in collaboration with UNEP. Cleanups and public awareness campaigns will continue in the different member states during 2008.

PERSGA also translated the IYOR logo and leaflet in Arabic.

*UNEP Caribbean Environment Programme (CEP)*

IYOR Contact: Alessandra Vanzella-Khouri, SPAW Programme Officer

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The UNEP Caribbean Environment Programme has been very active and very useful resource for the IYOR coordinator in providing name of organizations that should be involved in the Year.

UNEP CEP is currently planning an informal brainstorming meeting in Punta Cana , 10-11 November with key stakeholders from the region to discuss the IYOR campaign for the Caribbean. This meeting will be organized in conjunction with the 60th annual Gulf and Caribbean Fisheries Institute Conference.

UNEP-CEP promoted the International Year of the Reef a several regional meetings and at Intergovernmental and Contracting Parties Meeting of Caribbean Regional Seas Programme, 2 decisions welcoming IYOR and requesting organizations and countries to participate were adopted.

*The Secretariat of the Pacific Environmental Programme (SPREP)*

Contact: Caroline Vieux, carolinev@sprep.org

The 1997 Pacific Year of the Coral Reef was a wide conservation awareness campaign aimed at communicating the urgent need to conserve Pacific's coral reef and related ecosystem. In 2008, the campaign will not focus on raising awareness on reefs as endangered ecosystems because it is well known now. The campaign will focus on generating action to effectively protect them. Awareness will still be raised on new areas such as the economic value of coral reefs. The campaign objectives are:

- Promote action to conserve coral reefs at the regional, national and community levels
- Entail a change of behavior
- Raising awareness on coral reef value to economy and adaptation to climate change.

The campaign slogan: “*Strong reefs, strong islands*” depicts the close relation between the health of the reef and the integrity of the island and its people that it is surrounding.

At he end of the campaign, following outcomes are expected or at least significantly advanced:

- Communities and governments supported to better protect their reefs through information sharing and marine protected area establishment
- Communities and government aware that the best adaptation to climate change is to build resilience of coral reefs and mangroves.
- Framework developed for governments and NGOs to conserve their reefs
- Governments aware of the economic value of conserving their reefs.

The role of the SPREP in this regional campaign is to:

- Actively seek new and additional funding, technical assistance and in-kind support for PYOR.
- Disseminate information about the level and availability of funding (including a format/guidelines for application)

- Provide expert and timely advice for nation/NGO campaign plans
- Support local and national workshops that are part of national/NGO campaign plans.
- Act as a clearing house for information and contacts. Collate information and/or provide contact information on resource persons that can respond to specific issues e.g. bleaching, marina development, starfish outbreaks, climate change, marine protected areas, monitoring, best management practices.
- Encourage Heads of Government/Ministers to launch national campaign
- Encourage national/NGO campaign to have a patron.

### *The UNEP Coral Reef Unit*

Contact: Stefan Hain, [Stefan.Hain@unep-wcmc.org](mailto:Stefan.Hain@unep-wcmc.org)

The UNEP Coral Reef Unit received from DEPI some small funds in support of IYOR activities. The UNEP RCU is planning to support (fund or preferably co-fund) as many IYOR 2008 activities of UNEP partners as possible. As an example, \$2,500 were recently committed in support of an educational / awareness raising television media campaign on coral reefs and IYOR 2008 in the Gulf of Mannar, Southeastern India. This campaign is lead by J.K. Patterson Edward of the Suganthi Devadason Marine Research Institute ([www.sdmri.org](http://www.sdmri.org)).

The UNEP RCU is encouraging UNEP RS to submit such small projects in support of IYOR 2008.

### **For more information**

For more information, please contact the IYOR coordinator at [info@iyor.org](mailto:info@iyor.org) or visit the IYOR web site: [www.iyor.org](http://www.iyor.org) where you will be able to:

- Learn about coral reefs and ask questions to coral reef experts.
- Search for the IYOR activities and events occurring across the world. You can also add your own campaign activities and events to the calendar.
- Subscribe to the IYOR E-news to receive email updates.
- Browse the Focal Point pages to learn more about what others are doing.
- Find out how you can get involved.
- Download informational materials.

### **List of Annexes**

- Annex 1: Regional Seas Programmes (RSP) located in tropical coral reef areas
- Annex 2: ICRI Resolution designating 2008 as the International Year of the Reef
- Annex 3: SPREP Press release (October 11, 2007)
- Annex 4: IYOR Poster

## **Annex 1: Regional Seas Programmes (RSP) located in tropical coral reef areas**

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11 out of the 18 (60%) Regional Seas Programmes are located in tropical coral reef areas.

<b>Region</b>	<b>Coral reef area</b>
Antarctic	No
Arctic	No
Baltic	No
Black Sea	No
Caspian	No
Eastern Africa	Yes
East Asian Seas	Yes
Mediterranean	No
North-East Atlantic	No
North-East Pacific	Yes
North-West Pacific	Yes
Pacific	Yes
Red Sea and the Gulf of Aden	Yes
ROPME Sea Area	Yes
South Asian Seas	Yes
South-East Pacific	Yes
Western Africa	Yes
Wider Caribbean	Yes

## **Annex 2: Resolution to Designate 2008 as the International Year of the Reef**

*This resolution was approved by the ICRI members at the ICRI General Meeting held in Cozumel, Mexico (22-23 October 2006)*

**Recognizing** the success of the 1997 International Year of the Reef in raising awareness of the importance of coral reef and associated ecosystems; and

**Recognizing** the continued need to increase awareness and understanding of the opportunities to further conserve and restore valuable coral reef and associated ecosystems;

The International Coral Reef Initiative decides to;

**Designate** 2008 as the International Year of the Reef with the goals of:

- Strengthening awareness about the ecological, economic, social and cultural value of, and critical threats to, coral reefs and associated ecosystems; and
- Generating urgent action at all levels to develop and implement effective management strategies for conservation and sustainable use of these ecosystems.

**Encourage** ICRI members to support and participate in planning efforts and events leading up to and during the 2008 IYOR; and

**Encourage** ICRI members, especially national delegates, to facilitate the development of national level activities on IYOR.

SPREP Press Release: News  
2008 Pacific Year of the Reef  
11-Oct-07

‘Strong reefs, strong islands’, is the slogan for the 2008 Pacific year of the Reef. It was endorsed at the eighteenth Secretariat of the Pacific Environmental Programme (SPREP) Meeting of officials in Apia this year. The Pacific has embraced the 2008 International Year of the Reef, an International Coral Reef Initiative (ICRI).

The Pacific Ocean is home to over 75 percent of the World’s reefs that are now under threat. From 1968 to 2004, approximately 600 square miles of coral reef has disappeared each year. Since 1995, the rate of this disappearance has doubled.

From the 22nd to the 26th of October, Alotau in Milne Bay, Papua New Guinea will host the 8th Pacific Islands Conference on Nature Conservation and Protected Areas. The Pacific Year of the Reef campaign will be explained with an information session at the conference in order to get feedback and ideas from Pacific participants. The official launch of the Pacific Year of the Reef by SPREP will be in February next year.

“The last Pacific Year of the Reef was in 1997, our main purpose then was to raise awareness of the coral reef,” explained SPREP’s Coral Reef Management Officer, Caroline Vieux.

“For 2008 we cant do the same thing, raise awareness. We are at a point where there is a major need for action. Research shows that in the next thirty to fifty years, we’re not going to have a reef at all. We need to focus on taking action to save our reef.”

The disappearance of the reef will impact significantly upon Pacific communities, the coral reef provides between \$10,000 and \$100,000 per year in economic benefits to nearby communities. Cyclones, nutrient pollutions and warmer temperatures that lead to coral bleaching, are several causes of dead coral.

“We really want to integrate this Pacific Year of the Reef in the context of climate change. We really want people to know that adaptation to climate change is not only about building infrastructure, one of the best ways to adapt is to maintain a healthy coral reef”

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**INTERNATIONAL  
YEAR OF THE REEF  
2008**

IYOR 2008 IS A WORLDWIDE CAMPAIGN TO RAISE AWARENESS ABOUT THE VALUE AND IMPORTANCE OF CORAL REEFS AND THREATS TO THEIR SUSTAINABILITY, AND TO MOTIVATE PEOPLE TO TAKE ACTION TO PROTECT THEM. ALL INDIVIDUALS, CORPORATIONS, GOVERNMENTS, SCHOOLS AND ORGANIZATIONS ARE WELCOME AND ACTIVELY ENCOURAGED TO PARTICIPATE IN IYOR 2008.

**WHAT CAN YOU DO TO PROTECT CORAL REEFS?**

- Join IYOR 2008; organize and host events to raise awareness and funds for coral reef conservation or participate in an existing event
- Register your event; you are invited to register your own event at our web site ([www.iyor.org](http://www.iyor.org))
- Learn about the threats to and the value of coral reefs, mangroves and sea grasses
- Encourage conservation and sustainable use of coral reef resources (for ideas, see [www.iyor.org](http://www.iyor.org)).

**... AND WHY?**

Healthy coral reef habitats provide:

- Habitat: home to over 1 million diverse aquatic species, including thousands of fish species
- Income: billions of dollars and millions of jobs in over 90 countries around the world
- Food: for people living near coral reefs, especially on small islands
- Protection: a natural barrier protecting coast of cities, communities and beaches
- Medicine: the potential for treatments for many of the world's most prevalent and dangerous illnesses and diseases.

**IYOR**  
INTERNATIONAL YEAR OF THE REEF  
2008  
FOR INFORMATION, VISIT [WWW.IYOR.ORG](http://WWW.IYOR.ORG)

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[WWW.ICRIFORUM.ORG](http://WWW.ICRIFORUM.ORG)