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Environment of the Wider Caribbean Region

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**International Coral Reef Action Network
(ICRAN):
A Global Partnership for Coral Reefs
A Summary**

International Coral Reef Action Network (ICRAN): A Global Partnership for Coral Reefs

1. INTRODUCTION

1. The *International Coral Reef Action Network (ICRAN): A Global Partnership for Coral Reefs*, established in the year 2000, is a collaborative effort, aiming to halt the trend of degradation of coral reefs worldwide and to maintain the biodiversity, health and productivity of coral reefs and related ecosystems. It is a contribution by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), World Fish Center (formerly ICLARM), World Resources Institute (WRI), UNEP-World Conservation Monitoring Center (WCMC), Global Coral Reef Monitoring Network (GCRMN), International Coral Reef Initiative (ICRI) Secretariat, Coral Reef Alliance (CORAL), the founding partners, towards the implementation of the Framework for Action of the International Coral Reef Initiative (ICRI), the internationally agreed blueprint for conservation of coral reefs. Within ICRI a Strategic Plan was developed. This project will implement selected components of that Strategic Plan and attract other donors to implement complementary elements of the Plan.

2. ICRI was launched in 1994 to address the rapid global decline of coral reefs after they were recognized and accorded a high priority for protection in Agenda 21, at the 1992 United Nations Conference on Environment and Development. It is a partnership among governments, NGOs and organizations such as UNEP - which emphasised the importance of the Regional Seas Programme to ICRI, The World Fish Center (WFC formerly ICLARM) and the World Bank. ICRI was further endorsed by the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands of International Importance, the Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD), UNEP and the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (IOC-UNESCO).

3. In 1995 the Wider Caribbean developed its regional Agenda for Action under ICRI and identified UNEP's Caribbean Environment Programme (UNEP-CEP) as regional contact point and facilitator for implementation of the ICRI process. Since then numerous activities have been implemented at the national, subregional and regional level by different organizations and programmes, including UNEP-CEP, which have resulted in greater attention being placed on coral reef issues although not yet at the required levels.

4. Through ICRAN a set of interlinked and complementary activities will be implemented to enable the proliferation of good practices for coral reef management and conservation, which will also constitute the implementation of the International Coral Reef Initiative's Framework for Action as well. The activities of ICRAN fall into three components, namely, management action, coral reef assessment and communication. In addition, the UNEP-Regional Seas Programmes will play a leading role in practical conservation action to protect and manage targeted coral reef ecosystems. This will be combined with assessment and information components to enhance effective management of people's actions and their impacts upon coral reefs.

5. The action phase of ICRAN is to have a duration of four years, from June 2001 to May 2005 with a total cost for the project, worldwide, of US\$ 14.1 million, primarily funded by the United Nations Foundation. The project is to be implemented by UNEP in partnership with:

- Global Coral Reef Monitoring Network (GCRMN)
- Coral Reef Alliance (CORAL)/International Coral Reef Information Network (ICRIN)
- The World Fish Center (ICLARM)
- International Coral Reef Initiative (ICRI) Secretariat
- World Resources Institute (WRI)
- UNEP-World Conservation Monitoring Center (WCMC)

- South Pacific Regional Environment Programme (SPREP)
- Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO/IOC)
- Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO) among others

✓ ***Reversing the decline of coral reefs through the proliferation of good practices worldwide***

2. GOALS/OBJECTIVES

6. Through the UNEP Regional Seas Programme, ICRAN will 1) establish a global network of actively functioning demonstration sites for Integrated Coastal Management and Marine Protected Areas to promote good management practices with full involvement of local communities. ICRAN aims to use the experience of the demonstration sites to adopt successful approaches to additional target areas and communities. The demonstration sites will be instrumental in sustainable capacity building activities in each region. 2) effectively communicate the value and importance of coral reefs, the threats to their sustainability and the actions needed to protect them. 3) create an integrated series of selected global assessment activities to enable efficient management of coral reef areas by providing essential information. These goals are divided into the following three categories:

- ***Management Action - Global Network of Demonstration Sites:*** to include actively functioning demonstration sites to promote good management practices with full involvement of local communities.
- ***Communication & Awareness Activities:*** to include a global awareness campaign tailored to meet the needs of each region. This communication component will ensure that the information obtained from the other ICRAN activities will be widely available and put to the best possible use in support of ICRAN's implementation, as well as coral reef management and conservation in general.
- ***Assessment Activities & Information Dissemination:*** to include Regional Reefs at Risk studies by WRI, support of the GCRMN for monitoring and assessment of coral reefs, and coral reef mapping and marine protected area assessment through UNEP-WCMC. Assessment activities through ICLARM include enhancement of ReefBase, coral reef fisheries and mariculture analysis, economic valuation of coral reef areas and policy analysis and an analysis of biological linkages among reefs.

7. The expected result from the concluded implementation of the ICRAN projects is the launch of ICRAN as a long-term and sustainable framework for strategic implementation of the ICRI Framework for Action, leading to the following results:

- An increasing number of local communities in the major reef regions of the world applying successful management and conservation practices.
- Local stakeholders participating actively in decision-making.
- Several sites demonstrating good management and conservation practices, and promoting their replication.
- Professionals in the field supporting improved coastal management.
- Support for reef protection enhanced among the general public i.e. increased public awareness.
- The information basis for coral reef action consolidated and extended.
- Systematic and up-to-date identification and evaluation of reef action priorities.
- The basis for financing coral reef conservation firmly established through support from the private sector.
- Legislative changes.
- Improved health of coral reefs.
- Reduced die-off of coral reefs.
- Establishment of new MPAs with coral reefs

✓ *Concerted and integrated actions among partners within an interlinked and complementary framework*

3. REGIONAL ACTIVITIES

8. The Wider Caribbean and Eastern Africa have been selected as targets for immediate priority in years 1 and 2 of ICRAN. The Wider Caribbean has, through its active involvement in the ICRI process, a series of priority opportunities for demonstration sites, a group of trained trainers on Marine Protected Areas management, and the means to identify candidate sites and target communities. In the start-up phase, the Wider Caribbean Region carefully selected demonstration sites for one or more good practices, and potential target sites needing better management. The requisite for a demonstration site is that it provides a good working example of effective management addressing one or more issues. Target sites shall in turn have a clear management identified and a potential to have applied the lessons of experience from successfully managed demonstration sites with similar issues. Annex 1 includes the set of criteria considered for the selection of demonstration sites.

9. Even though there are over 300 coastal and marine protected areas declared or established in the Wider Caribbean, about 70% are only partially managed or not being managed at all and thus are not achieving the conservation objectives for which they were established. Common issues that are impacting in the currently weak or non-existent management practices are:

- a lack of sustainable financing,
- unsustainable fishing and tourism practices,
- a lack of strategic and targeted training and weak community participation at the planning and implementation stages of management interventions.
- a lack of commitment by decision-makers both in governmental and private sectors,
- a lack of continued monitoring on reef status,
- a lack of targeted awareness and lack of alternative and diversified livelihoods as underlying causes.

10. In this context, it is expected that the set activities developed for the Wider Caribbean under ICRAN will correspond well with the need of the partially or non-managed coastal and marine protected areas. The ICRAN-activities will be implemented in coordination with the existing network of MPAs (CaMPAM), regional initiatives and networks such as the Caribbean Action for Sustainable Tourism (CAST), the Caribbean Fisheries Resources Management Programme (CFRAMP) and the Gulf and Caribbean Fisheries Institute (GCFI). Relevant initiatives such as the CPACC climate change adaptation project and the Caribbean Region Environmental Programme (CREP) are expected to participate as well as governments and regional partners such as The World Conservation Union (IUCN) and The Nature Conservancy (TNC) and local Nongovernmental Organizations (NGOs).

11. A key component to reach the specific and realistic targets set for the project is to mobilize further resources, especially from the non-governmental sector. ICRAN is intended to become self-sustaining after the end of the project in 2005, and this will generate substantial but unquantified benefits to local communities and coral reef ecosystems. In order to maximize resources and increase positive impact of the activities resources will be channelled through ongoing national, sub-regional or regional activities with similar objectives, such as the Small Grants Fund of UNEP for MPAs in the region, UNEP/UNDP Proposal to GEF on marine biodiversity conservation (in preparation) and the Mesoamerican Barrier Reef Initiative (a World Bank/WWF GEF project) and initiatives from the organizations mentioned above.

✓ *Working on the ground with local communities and partners providing alternative approaches and strengthening capacity*

The following are the major interlinked and complimentary components of the project in the Wider Caribbean:

3.1 Demonstration and Target Sites

12. Assistance will be provided to the demonstration sites with strategic activities to strengthen their capacity as appropriate, as well as with the development of the activities for the potential target sites and communities that require the assistance and experiences on their best practices. For the target communities the specific activities and support will be need and demand driven based on knowledge of UNEP-CEP and consultations with relevant partners and NGOs.

13. It is expected that additional demonstration sites will be developed after the second year of implementation, and that there will be by the end of the project a functioning network of demonstration sites.

3.1.1 In the Wider Caribbean the following demonstration sites have been selected:

- **Soufriere Marine Management Area (SMMA) in St. Lucia:** to demonstrate successful conflict resolution, community participation in planning and management and effectiveness of zoning practices.
- **Hol Chan Marine Reserve in Belize:** to demonstrate successful alternative livelihoods for fishers and their involvement in monitoring and enforcement of regulations.
- **Bonaire National Marine Park in Bonaire:** to demonstrate sustainable financing and successful private sector participation by hoteliers and dive operators.
- **Sian Ka'an Biosphere Reserve in Mexico:** to demonstrate successful practices in a multipurpose protected area with both active fisheries and tourism.

3.1.2 Target sites with communities may include

- Portland Bight Protected Area and Negril Marine Park, Jamaica
- Parque Nacional del Este, Dominican Republic
- Los Roques Archipelago National Park, Venezuela
- Providencia, Colombia
- Buccoo Marine Park and/or Speyside, Tobago

14. Assistance to Demonstration and Target sites may include support for programmes to reduce pressures and develop alternative income strategy: the development of alternative livelihoods could include for example ecotourism activities and sea moss cultivation in target communities.

3.2 Information and communication programmes

15. The International Coral Reef Information Network (ICRIN) of ICRI will target the communication and information component. ICRIN's primary objectives are to effectively communicate to the public the value and importance of the world's coral reefs and the threats to the reefs' sustainability, and to motivate target audiences to take action to protect coral reefs. As it is closely linked to all ICRAN components, the public awareness raised will benefit ICRAN goals and objectives. ICRIN will be working closely with the UNEP Regional Seas Units to deliver activities specifically tailored to meet the needs in each region, to raise the public awareness from grass-root to decision-making level on coral reef issues. Other important objectives are to raise awareness on the ICRAN project itself, and raising awareness for fundraising purposes, including the public in developed countries.

Activities in the Wider Caribbean will include:

- Preparation of the Reefs at Risk for the Caribbean with WRI: Reefs at Risk is a map based indicator of threats to the coral reefs of the world, and was developed by WRI in collaboration with ICLARM, UNEP-WCMC and UNEP. Reefs at Risk uses Geographical Information Systems (GIS) to model risk factors and generate a threat-based indicator of coral reefs. Its main objective in the region will be to develop an integrated base of information as the first step towards better identification of the causes of

reef degradation. The Reefs at Risk report will provide useful information for management interventions at national and international levels.

- Coral reef valuation and policy analysis with ICLARM: ICRAN will compare sources of information and identify the best variables to be used to estimate the economic value of coral reefs, due to the disparity on availability and reliability on coral reef valuation data. The use of these measures will be standardized to produce uniform and reliable information on the contributions of coral reefs to economies and societies. An analytical review will be organized, of national policies for sustainable management, and policies that affect reefs adversely. This activity is expected to result in recommendations for policy change and improvement. These studies will provide fundamentally important information on the economic and social importance and potential and the management options relating to coral reefs.
- Develop focused and effective public awareness activities (e.g. campaigns, materials) in collaboration with CORAL/ICRIN to raise awareness and influence change, especially around the target communities, using information from the Reefs at Risk, GCRMN, coral valuation and policy analysis studies.
- Support to the existing UNEP/CEP Training of Trainers programme on all aspects of MPA management (both regional courses for trainers and local activities by the trainees).

3.3 Assessment and Information Dissemination

16. The ICRAN assessment and information dissemination activities are designed to produce and make available the knowledge needed to empower decision-makers to develop and implement policies for the sustainable management of coral reefs. An important feature of ICRAN at the global level is strengthening the ability to collect data and prepare consistent and comparable reports on ecological, socioeconomic and management factors on local to global levels. ICRAN assessment activities will provide benefits to the demonstration/target sites and strengthen their linkages to global and regional initiatives.

Activities in the Wider Caribbean will include:

- Low cost, standardized coral reef monitoring among all participating sites and MPAs including participation in GCRMN, Caribbean Coastal Marine Productivity Programme (CARICOMP), ReefBase, ReefCheck, Atlantic and Gulf Rapid Reef Assessment (AGRRA). ICRAN will provide on-the-job training to enhance government and community capacity in basic coral reef monitoring and assessment techniques, as this will support management.
- ICLARM will develop the capacity of ReefBase, a global coral reef database to operate as a management information support system. ReefBase will work with GCRMN and other monitoring and field data programmes, and will also establish a comprehensive database index (meta-database). Information on coral reef valuation, coral reef policy and coral reef fisheries and mariculture analysis will be compiled by ICLARM.
- WRI in collaboration with UNEP, ICLARM, UNEP-WCMC, GCRMN and others will update Reefs at Risk, an assessment of coral reefs to determine areas at risk from overfishing, coastal development and other human activities.
- ICRAN in collaboration with CORAL/ICRIN will develop focused and effective public awareness activities (e.g. campaigns, materials etc.) to raise awareness and influence change, especially around the target communities, using among others, information from the Reefs at Risk, GCRMN, coral mapping, coral valuation and policy analysis studies.
- UNEP-WCMC maintains the global database of MPAs. This database will be combined and analysed in conjunction with the UNEP-WCMC coral reef maps to produce the first assessment of the role of MPAs in the protecting of coral reefs. The reef mapping work will be fully collaborative. WCMC will manage these

activities, but will seek to work closely with regional and national organizations to develop the best possible data sets. Similarly, every effort will be made to encourage the free flow of information from WCMC to all interested parties. This will form the required base for ICRAN's assessment activities.

4. OVERALL OUTPUTS of ICRAN

17. The outputs expected from the three activity categories described above are:

4.1 Management Action - Global Network of Demonstration Sites:

- Demonstration sites or examples of good management practices for coral reefs and related ecosystems functioning as training centres in each participating region.
- Target sites established in each participating region, in which the local communities have learned from the demonstration sites and improved the management of coral reefs
- A global network of actively functioning demonstration sites with rapid proliferation of experience and knowledge of best management practices between and within regions.
- Regionally adapted guidelines, recommendations and case studies for best practices in management of local coral reef areas used in field-level training

4.2 Communication & Awareness Activities:

- Local publications and media material to enhance awareness of the value of reefs and the need for widespread action among all stakeholders and general public.
- A wide range of information materials from a network of databases available to NGOs and projects for use.
- ICRAN data and reports published and widely available on Internet and CD-ROM linked to ReefBase.
- Databases on coral reef projects, best practices, sources of funding posted on or linked to the ICRI Partnership Forum website.
- Training Materials relevant to Integrated Coastal Management meeting the needs of coral reef managers and coastal communities.

4.3 Assessment Activities & Information Dissemination:

- Established local programmes among coastal managers and local communities to monitor and assess coral reefs and to evaluate management effectiveness.
- A network of readily accessible databases to support better informed reporting on baselines and trends in the status of coral reefs and associated ecosystems.
- Reports with specific and achievable recommendations for protection of the key coral reef areas with genetic diversity of international importance.
- High quality illustrated reports and geographic presentations providing coral reef assessment results.
- Reefs at Risk assessments of threats to coral reefs, in each major region, including reports and posters for each. A revised global Reefs at Risk assessment of threats in Year 4 made widely available.
- Maps of demonstration and target sites and larger areas identified under the Management Action component of ICRAN.
- Maps of the world's coral reefs, widely available in GIS format.
- Coral Reef Theme Report for the Integrated Global Observing Strategy (IGOS) Partnership.
- Report with an analysis of the World Heritage Convention's potential role in protection of coral reefs, and recommendations for reef sites suitable for protection under the convention.
- Reports on specific current value of and sustainable future opportunities for fisheries and mariculture based on coral reefs in different regions.
- Reports on the use and non-use values of coral reefs providing reliable information on the contribution of coral reefs to economies and societies.

5. MAIN OUTPUTS for the WIDER CARIBBEAN

18. In combination with the information support from ICRAN partners in the Assessment and Communication Component (see above), the specific outputs anticipated from the Caribbean's priorities are as follows:

- An active and functioning network of MPA and coastal sites serving as demonstration sites, sharing experiences and information and assisting with problem solving.
- Improved and strengthened management capacity within at least fifteen MPAs in the region.
- A cadre of at least 25 - 30 trained MPA managers in all aspects of MPA management and with training and communication skills to transmit knowledge to others and their MPA staff.
- Documented case studies on the positive and negative impacts of coastal and marine management practices on coral reef ecosystems and recommended actions for improved practices widely disseminated within local communities as appropriate (in coordination with CORAL/ICRIN).
- Improved coastal management practices in several sites of the region, resulting in improved conditions of the associated coral reefs
- Sub-regional and national coordinated networks of individuals, organizations and institutions (i.e. nodes) conducting low-cost monitoring of coral reefs for management interventions and contributing to the GCRMN and ReefBase.
- Regional and sub-regional yearly assessments on the health and status of coral reef ecosystems,(through GCRMN/ReefBase). The assessments shall also be used to raise public awareness and guide management interventions, and will be widely disseminated.
- Analysed information on status, condition and protection of coral reefs and their threats in the region through the Reefs at Risk report and materials (through WRI), widely disseminated in cooperation with CORAL/ICRIN.
- The GIS-based modelling will result in a systematic and consistent database of threats to coral reefs and an estimation of what is at stake if these threats are not reduced.
- Documented information on the socio-economic value of coral reefs (through ICLARM) targeted for public and private decision-makers to influence change.
- Documented information on existing policy instruments in the region and their effectiveness (by ICLARM) resulting in improved policies and greater political intervention in a number of sites.
- A number of coastal communities with improved and alternative sustainable livelihoods fully engaged in implementation of best practices.
- Data and maps on the regional distribution of MPAs and their reefs, together with more detailed information about the demonstration sites, lessons learned and training materials available through the RCU-website, UNEP-WCMC and ICRIN.

6. BUDGET for the WIDER CARIBBEAN

TOTAL Cost of Activities to UN Foundation	US	\$ 1,530,000
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TOTAL Cost to UN Foundation	US	\$ 1,606,500
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Additional funds to be raised	US	\$ 800,000
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Annex 1: Criteria for selection of demonstration sites

The selection of ICRAN demonstration sites will be through a participatory and transparent process, based on certain selection criteria. These criteria for the selection will be further refined with the input of the Technical Advisory Committee and from the regions, but will include the following considerations:

- Representation of ecological units (i.e. coral communities with associated ecosystems)
- Presence of local coastal communities which utilize the coral reefs and associated resources for their subsistence (directly or indirectly).
- Presence of current or resolved issues and stakeholder conflict situations
- Examples of participatory approaches to management (including participatory planning such as management planning and zoning planning)
- Sites that have well-designed zoning plans and/or management plans that are being adhered to and implemented
- Presence of investments (hotels, shopping centers, petty trade, scuba diving, etc.) and possibilities for partnerships with the private sector
- Regional significance of the selected sites in terms of providing habitat for a wide diversity of species, or habitat to migratory species, endemic or threatened species
- Accessibility to visitors (geographic location, communications infrastructure, internet facilities and visitor's facilities) and to arrange for demonstrations and training occasions
- Areas where the successful features in management have a high potential for replicability in other areas
- Areas that have potential to contribute – or are already contributing - to the economy by virtue of their conservation and sustainable management (i.e. refuge or nursery area, recreation or appreciation by tourists, subsistence by local inhabitants)
- Sites reflecting different environmental and management challenges
- Areas where social, political and communal support is high
- Areas where social, political and communal support is *presumably* high, but sacrificed to other politically or financially more appealing interests.
- Sites for which a strong institutional and management framework already exists
- Sites for which a strong wealth of information is already available particularly on those that may have lessons learnt in management practices (sites that have been evaluated or assessed in some way)
- Sites that may have conducted monitoring programmes that have demonstrated success in terms of biodiversity protection, increased fisheries production, and/or specific economic benefits (e.g. through tourism) to communities involved
- Areas that are culturally or traditionally important for local and indigenous communities in the region.