

## **ICRI statement "Coral Reefs in the Caribbean"**

*This statement was approved by the ICRI members following the ICRI General Meeting held in Palau (October 31<sup>st</sup> - November 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2005)*

At this time, scientists and managers throughout the Caribbean have observed massive, regional-scale bleaching of coral reefs. This is related to extreme ocean temperatures around eastern Caribbean coral reefs, shown by satellite data to be at record levels of thermal stress (10-15 degree heating weeks over much of the region). As seen in previous massive bleaching events, such as the Indo-Pacific bleaching of 1997-98, such high temperature stress is known to promote the bleaching, and often death, of reef corals.

Members of the International Coral Reef Initiative meeting in Palau on 2 November 2005 express great concern over the magnitude of the bleaching event now taking place in the Caribbean. We encourage all countries in the region to take immediate action to document the extent of bleaching, mortality, recovery, and socioeconomic impacts; and to take steps to target coral reefs for protection, especially in resilient areas (those that demonstrate high survival and/or recovery), including through networks of marine protected areas. We further encourage countries with experience in coral bleaching and its monitoring to assist nations in the Caribbean with methods, training, and other support.

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