



THE CORAL TRIANGLE INITIATIVE ON CORAL REEFS, FISHERIES AND FOOD SECURITY (CTI – CFF)

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Strengthening our role as caretakers of the sea, reflections on World Oceans Day

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On June 8, 2011, the Coral Triangle countries join the rest of the world in celebrating World Oceans Day, an annual event to commemorate the vast resources of our oceans and what we can do to sustain them.

This year's World Oceans Day comes at the heels of the United Nations' launch of the UN Decade on Biodiversity, a rallying call to save and curtail the destruction of the world's biodiversity within the next ten years. This World Oceans Day, the Coral Triangle Initiative on Coral Reefs, Fisheries and Food Security (CTI-CFF) heeds the call of the UN by strengthening its role as steward of the world's global epicenter of marine biodiversity – the Coral Triangle.

The UN Decade on Biodiversity supports the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020 and the Aichi Biodiversity Targets which were adopted at the Convention on Biological Diversity 10th Conference of Parties in October 2010. The Strategic Plan and its corresponding targets envision that by 2050, biodiversity is valued, conserved, restored and wisely used, maintaining ecosystem services, sustaining a healthy planet and delivering benefits essential for all people.

This call comes at a crucial juncture as new studies show that the loss of biodiversity is continuing at an unprecedented pace in the world's oceans and coral reefs. Coral reefs provide essential habitat for fish and act as a cradle of marine biodiversity. The *Reefs at Risk Revisited Report* released by the World Resources Institute in February this year raised the red flag that more than 60% of the world's reefs are under immediate threat from overfishing, destructive fishing, coastal development and pollution while thermal stress and acidification from increasing temperatures could push the proportion of reefs at risk to more than 90% by 2030 and almost 100% by 2050.

The immediacy and magnitude of this problem cannot be ignored as biodiversity loss in marine ecosystems affects the lives and livelihoods of the millions of people who depend on these resources for their survival.

The role of the CTI-CFF as steward of the world's global epicenter of marine biodiversity – the Coral Triangle – has never been more crucial. The Coral Triangle comprises six million square kilometers of ocean and coastal waters surrounding Indonesia, Malaysia, Papua New Guinea, the Philippines, Solomon Islands and Timor-Leste and is home to over 500 species of reef-building corals, 3,000 species of fish as well as over 120 million people who are directly dependent on this resource. However, up to 80% of the reefs and fisheries in the Coral Triangle are at risk and need management interventions. In response, the

six Coral Triangle countries formed the CTI-CFF as a ground-breaking multilateral initiative to protect and sustain this resource.

Since its launch in May 2009, the CTI-CFF has made progress working with national and local governments, non-government organizations and development partners across the six Coral Triangle countries to address biodiversity threats in the region. This is being done through the implementation of activities under the five goals of the CTI Regional Plan of Action which are to strengthen management of seascapes, apply an ecosystem approach to fisheries management, develop and strengthen the management of marine protected areas, implement climate change adaptation measures and protect threatened marine species.

In 2011, the CTI-CFF has been at the forefront of marine conservation and sustainability activities. In April, CTI representatives from all Coral Triangle countries gathered in Honiara, Solomon Islands to identify tools and methods available for implementing early actions, vulnerability assessments, and climate change adaptation strategies needed for the development of a Climate Change Regional Early Action Plan that can be implemented in the Coral Triangle.

In the first week of May, conservation managers from the six CTI-CFF countries met in Batangas, Philippines to learn from each other's experiences and plan how to strengthen the management effectiveness of marine protected areas and ensure that these conserve biological diversity, protect fish spawning and nursery habitats and serve as platforms for increased food security, scientific research, eco-tourism and to enhance the quality of life of surrounding communities.

Last week, in Wakatobi, Indonesia, mayors and governors from coastal municipalities across the Coral Triangle took steps to establish the CTI Local Governance Network, an expanding group of local government leaders who are committed to their role as caretakers of the marine environment and to provide integrated coastal management as a service to their constituents.

The scenarios for the world's reefs are dire but the steps and actions planned for stemming the decline are underway. Large-scale initiatives like the CTI-CFF, though complex and requiring long-term commitment, show that with concerted efforts, clear goals, the best use of science and innovation, and shared responsibility, the world's coral reefs and the biodiversity that it cradles and nurtures can be sustained for those of us who depend on it and as a legacy for future generations to come.

With this collective mission and responsibility in mind, we hope you will join us this World Oceans Day as we heed the call to preserve and sustain the rich biodiversity of our earth, our oceans and our Coral Triangle, through which our own lives and livelihoods are sustained. #

References:

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