



International Medical Crisis Response Alliance

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Proposed Theme H:

Increasing scientific knowledge and strengthening the science – policy interface for ocean health

In line with the mandates of SDG 14 addressing an ocean based economy, conservation, and sustainable use of marine resources, IMCRA notes the following:

- 1) Scientifically-informed conservation of fragile oceanic ecosystems in waters surrounding coastal communities and small island nations is essential to maintaining healthy and sustainable ocean-based livelihoods. While oceanic ecosystems may in many cases be robust and capable of self-repair and renewal, the devastating impact of human activities can push these recovery mechanisms below a critical operational level. Of equal importance, full recovery of these systems may be on the order of decades or centuries, during which time interrelated damage to dependent human communities or other oceanic ecosystems may become irreversible.
- 2) Economies dependent on oceanic bounties have frequently looked to short-term utilization of available resources for immediate economic gain without extended planning for maintaining renewable ecosystem health. This has included fish bombs and other technologies, which seriously impact local fishery health as well as irreversibly damaging the coral reefs many ecosystems are dependent on. Frequently, use of these technologies is undertaken in the absence of local knowledge of their long-term impact, or as a consequence of the offering of cash bounties by unscrupulous corporate entities seeking to exploit the ignorance of local communities.
- 3) All such destructive practices will ultimately rebound negatively to the overall health and nutrition of the human communities involved, particularly those, which are local, without recourse to other options and hence most vulnerable to the downstream consequences of ecosystem disruption. We draw attention to this reality and urge all stakeholders to take vigorous steps to identify and provide reputable marine ecologists and conservationists as advisors to local oceanfront and small island communities when they are formulating or reconsidering plans for oceanic resource utilization.
- 4) Many oceanic ecosystems are unique in biodiversity and include breeding grounds and locations integral to the health of individual species as well as larger global ecosystems. Accordingly, national partnerships with scientific and conservation organizations can not only provide guidance for planners and vulnerable communities but may also be useful in identifying pre-existing and potential funding sources for marine and littoral conservation.