



UNITED NATIONS OCEAN CONFERENCE NICE, FRANCE 2025

UNOC3 Conference Side Event

ID 86

THE STATUS AND TRENDS OF CORAL REEFS OF THE PACIFIC: 2024 - A CALL TO ACTION FOR PACIFIC ISLANDS AND PEOPLE

Thursday 12th June, 08:45 – 10:00, Room 1, Blue Zone

Organized by:

International Coral Reef Initiative (ICRI)

In partnership with: Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme (SPREP); The Pacific Community (SPC), The National Centre for Scientific Research (CNRS); Government of French Polynesia; Principality of Monaco Bloomberg Philanthropies Ocean Initiative; Global Coral Reef Monitoring Network (GCRMN); The General Organisation for the Conservation of Coral Reefs and Sea Turtles in the Red Sea (SHAMS); Initiative Française pour les Recifs Coralliens (IFRECOR); Global Fund for Coral Reefs (GFCR).

Two page maximum

Background on the event (one paragraph)

On Thursday 12 June 2025, during the Third United Nations Ocean Conference in Nice, the Global Coral Reef Monitoring Network (GCRMN), an operational network of the International Coral Reef Initiative (ICRI), officially launched the *Status and Trends of Coral Reefs of the Pacific: 1980–2023*. The high-level event brought together ministers, ambassadors, scientists, Indigenous leaders, regional organisations and development partners to present and reflect on the report's findings — the most comprehensive GCRMN assessment of Pacific coral reefs to date. The event featured opening remarks from Ambassador Peter Thomson, United Nations Secretary-General's Special Envoy for the Ocean, and ministerial statements from French Polynesia, Niue, Samoa, and Kiribati. Speakers underscored the cultural, ecological, and economic significance of coral reefs to Pacific nations, and highlighted the urgent need for action based on the scientific and policy recommendations within the report. The event also provided a platform to reaffirm the importance of integrating traditional knowledge with long-term monitoring and using science to guide national and regional decision-making. The event was exceptionally well attended, demonstrating strong support for coral reef conservation and a shared call to accelerate progress under SDG14 and the Global Biodiversity Framework.

Key Issues discussed (5-8 bullet points)

1. **Declining Reef Health and Ecological Shifts:** Although average coral cover in the Pacific has remained relatively stable, the report reveals growing ecological stress, including increased macroalgae and reduced structural complexity of reef-building coral species.
2. **Climate Change as a Primary Driver of Coral Reef Decline:** Speakers underscored that warming seas, intensified marine heatwaves, and more frequent cyclones are accelerating coral bleaching and ecosystem degradation across the Pacific.
3. **Importance of Long-term, Standardised Monitoring:** The event highlighted the critical need for consistent, science-based monitoring to track changes, inform national planning, and evaluate progress toward global targets.
4. **Urgency for Bold, Inclusive, and Regionally Led Action:** Ministers and speakers called for immediate implementation of policy and conservation measures grounded in the report's recommendations, aligned with SDG14 and the Global Biodiversity Framework.
5. **Integration of Indigenous and Local Knowledge:** There was strong consensus on the need to bridge traditional knowledge with scientific data to inform holistic, community-relevant reef governance.
6. **Capacity Gaps and Uneven Monitoring Coverage:** Several countries, including Papua New Guinea, were noted as having limited monitoring data — underscoring the need for targeted support and investment.
7. **Scaling Regional and Global Partnerships:** Participants stressed that achieving resilient coral reef futures requires deeper regional collaboration, data sharing, and international support for Pacific-led initiatives.
8. **Financing the Transition from Knowledge to Action:** The need for increased and sustained financing — from philanthropy, trust funds, and development partners — was emphasised to ensure that the science in the report drives tangible, long-term impact.

Key recommendations for action / voluntary commitments (5-6 bullet points)

1. **Expand spatial coverage of monitoring:** Address geographic bias by increasing monitoring in underrepresented regions such as Papua New Guinea through targeted funding, capacity building, citizen science, and scientific expeditions.
2. **Establish and maintain long-term monitoring programmes:** Increase the proportion of reef sites monitored over 15+ years to better detect long-term ecological trends and climate impacts, supported by sustained financing and innovative technologies like artificial intelligence.
3. **Broaden monitoring indicators beyond coral cover:** Include fish biomass, nutrient levels, Crown-of-Thorns starfish outbreaks, and other stressors using new tools such as environmental DNA (eDNA) and photogrammetry.
4. **Improve data access, quality, and sharing:** Promote the use of FAIR (Findable, Accessible, Interoperable, Reproducible) data principles, encourage open repositories, and adopt global standards to support collaborative analysis and faster policy uptake.
5. **Support early detection of ecosystem change:** Strengthen real-time monitoring to identify emerging threats, such as macroalgae overgrowth or shifts in coral assemblage structure, which may signal reduced reef resilience.
6. **Use scientific insights to guide regional and national action:** Ensure monitoring data informs policy decisions and adaptive management, aligned with global goals such as SDG14 and the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework.