



Workshop - Western Indian Ocean Coral Reef Task Force

Enhanced capacities of national coral reef task force (CRTF) members on integrated management of coral reefs and associated ecosystems, monitoring and reporting on ecosystem health

Organized by

Nairobi Convention and CORDIO East Africa, in partnership with AIDE Comores, Ministry of Environment Union of Comoros, Global Coral Reef Monitoring Network, Nairobi Convention Coral Reef Task Force

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The Corals of the Western Indian Ocean

Coral reefs occur in more than 100 countries and territories and whilst they cover only 0.2% of the seafloor, they support at least 25% of marine species and underpin the safety, coastal protection, well-being, food, and economic security of hundreds of millions of people.

The Western Indian Ocean (WIO) region comprises almost 6% (about 15,180 km²) of the total global area of coral reefs, and the region is a globally important hotspot for coral reef biodiversity. The WIO includes sovereign states along the eastern and southern African mainland (Somalia, Kenya, Tanzania, Mozambique, South Africa), island states (Mauritius, Madagascar, Comoros, Seychelles), as well as overseas territories (Reunion, France). The human population has grown considerably during the last century, with the states named now supporting approximately 220 million people, of which some 69 million live within 100 km of the coastline.

Coral reef ecosystems underpin the economies of the countries in the region, particularly through the fisheries and tourism sectors, and provide livelihood opportunities and income for local communities estimated at US\$ 8.4 billion annually. WIO coral reefs are estimated to have an asset value of US\$ 18.1 billion.

Threats to coral reef ecosystem

Coral reefs are among the most vulnerable ecosystems on the planet to anthropogenic pressures, including global threats from climate change and ocean acidification, and local impacts from land-based pollution such as input of nutrients and sediments from agriculture, marine pollution, and overfishing and destructive fishing practices. After an [18-month analysis](#), the corals of the Western Indian Ocean have been found to be vulnerable to collapse

within decades. Rising sea temperatures due to climate change, and overfishing, are the dominant threats to all coral reefs of the Western Indian Ocean.

The Western Indian Ocean region suffered the most from the global coral reef bleaching event in 1997- 1998, in which 30-50% of corals were estimated to have died. It was also affected by the third global coral bleaching event in 2016.

Retaining the integrity and resilience of coral reef ecosystems is a critical part of the solution for achieving Sustainable Development Goal 14 under the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and applicable targets of the [Global Biodiversity Framework](#). Actions to protect coral reefs in the region will include alleviating fishing pressure through the co-management of small-scale fisheries, and the establishment of no-take areas for fishery replenishment. Embedding climate mitigation and adaptation as national priorities within development and planning frameworks will be a priority, including specific actions such as reducing stressors to coastal and marine systems and people linked to coral reefs.

Another priority will be to increase support (funding and capacity building) for reef monitoring, towards restoration, conservation, and effective management of at least 30% of coastal and marine ecosystems. Such efforts will enhance biodiversity and ecosystem functions and services, ecological integrity, and connectivity.

The CRTF has over the years supported regional engagement in the [International Coral Reef Initiative](#) for the preservation of coral reefs and associated ecosystems. Strengthening regional networks is a priority for improving assessment, data management, and reporting processes, and for developing options for open access to reef monitoring data in accordance with [international guidelines](#).

Nairobi Convention Coral Reef Task Force

The regional coral reef networks in the Western Indian Ocean have been active since 1999, coordinating and reporting on coral reef monitoring activities through the Nairobi Convention Coral Reef Task Force ([CRTF](#)), and the Global Coral Reef Monitoring Network ([GCRMN](#)), with support from multiple sources.

The Nairobi Convention CRTF was established by the third meeting of Conference of Parties of the Nairobi Convention for the Protection, Management, and Development of the Marine and Coastal Environment of the Western Indian Ocean ([COP3](#)) in 2001. The decision led to the establishment of a Coral Reef Task Force in 2002 to co-ordinate work on coral reefs throughout the region, and in 2004 national bodies were constituted to coordinate coral reef activities, action plans and strategies within each country. At the fourth meeting of the

Contracting Parties to the Nairobi Convention ([COP4](#)) in 2004, contracting Parties resolved to further strengthen the coordination structure of the Coral Reef Task Force, as well as the national coral reef task forces and enhance their linkages with national focal points.

The Coastal Oceans Research and Development in the Indian Ocean ([CORDIO](#)) first published the coral reef degradation status report in the Indian Ocean in [1999](#). The 2005 status report further updated on the status of [coral reef degradation in the Indian Ocean](#).

The partnership of the [GCRMN](#), the Indian Ocean Commission ([IOC-COI](#)), CORDIO, and the International Union for the Conservation of Nature ([IUCN](#)) Species Survival Commission's [Coral Specialist Group](#), CRTF and the national CRTF members produced a detailed coral reef status report for the Western Indian Ocean in [2017](#) in accordance with the 2018 [COP8](#) decision. The report was an update to the publication by the GCRMN in [1998](#), [2000](#), [2002](#), [2004](#) and [2008](#). The 2015 [Regional State of the Coast Report](#) for the WIO highlighted insights into the enormous economic potential around the WIO, the consequential demand for marine ecosystem goods and services to match the increasing human population, the pace and scale of environmental changes taking place in the region and the opportunities to avoid serious degradation in one of the world's unique and highly biodiverse oceans.

Nairobi Convention [COP9](#) in 2018 continued to urge Contracting Parties to promote and support monitoring of coral reefs for signs of stress or recovery and make appropriate management responses. A [Marine Protected Areas Outlook](#) for the Western Indian Ocean was published in 2021 showing the extent of coral reefs and related ecosystems in the region and existing management plans. CORDIO and partners actively contributed to the GCRMN Status of Coral Reefs of the World [2020](#) report.

Objectives of the Workshop

With renewed focus on scientific support to policy through the [Science-Policy Platform of the Nairobi Convention](#), and the adoption of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework in December 2022, a new phase of activities is being initiated with support from the Nairobi Convention. The hosting aim of this workshop is to revitalize and enhance capacities of national coral reef task force (NCRTF) members for the integrated management of coral reefs and associated ecosystems, monitoring and reporting on ecosystem health.

The specific objectives of the workshop will be to:

- establish a new workplan (2023-??), including priorities for monitoring and use of data, and continued engagement in the Global Coral Reef Monitoring Network.

- reconfirm coral reef monitoring tasks within the CRTF by confirming technical membership by country and roles, and coordination mechanisms.
- strengthen data sharing and repository mechanisms for the regional Coral Reef Monitoring Network.
- recognize the headline indicators and monitoring framework adopted for the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework, to identify mechanisms for supporting national coral reef management and reporting under the framework of the Nairobi Convention, Global Coral Reef Monitoring Network, Convention on Biological Diversity, and Sustainable Development Goals.

Workshop Participants

CORDIO East Africa is organising the workshop in partnership with AIDE NGO, the Ministry of Environment Comoros, and the Nairobi Convention. The workshop will comprise about 20-25 participants, to be nominated and drawn from existing members of the CRTF and active national contributors to the Western Indian Ocean regional coral reef monitoring, including related coral reef networks and reporting processes.

Programme of the Workshop

A 3-day workshop is planned with the following agenda:

Days 1 and 2, coordination of the regional coral reef monitoring network.

- confirm technical membership and strategic monitoring partners, by country.
- identify coordinating mechanisms and funding needs.
- identify key variables and national needs for reporting for the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework.
- propose a new workplan for coral reef monitoring and reporting at the regional level (2023-??);

Day 3, technical and data

- propose options for use of data and skills needed data sharing and repository mechanisms supporting national and regional needs;
- identify key gaps and new technologies for coral reef monitoring, and options for addressing these (e.g., fish, coral ID).

The workshop agenda and schedule are detailed on the next page.

AGENDA

Day 1 Wednesday, 1st March 2023	
09:00-10:30	<p>Opening and Welcome (<i>Swaleh Aboud</i>)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Host partner, AIDE: <i>Said Ahamada</i> - CORDIO East Africa: <i>David Obura</i> - Nairobi Convention Secretariat, <i>Dixon Waruinge, Theuri Mwangi</i> - Official opening: Ministry of Environment, <i>representative</i> - Introduction of Participants - Objectives of the meeting: <i>David Obura</i>
10:30 – 11:00	Coffee Break
11:00 – 12:30	<p>Technical Session – WIO GCRMN to 2022 and next steps (<i>Swaleh Aboud</i>)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Country updates (8 minutes/5 slides each) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Comoros: <i>Said Ahamada, Nadjim Ahmed</i> o Kenya: <i>Juliet Karisa</i> o Tanzania: <i>Pagu Julius</i> o Mozambique: <i>Francisco Zivane (virtual), Maida Lobo</i> o South Africa: <i>Sean Porter</i> o Madagascar: <i>Gildas Todinanahary</i> o Mauritius: <i>Ravi Mohit (to be confirmed)</i> o Seychelles: <i>Gilberte Gendron</i> o Reunion: <i>Pascale Chabanet (virtual), Lionel Bigot (virtual)</i> - Summary of recent regional network activities (since WIO regional report, 2017): <i>Swaleh Aboud and Said Ahamada</i>
12:30-14:00	Lunch
14:00-16:30	<p>Technical session - WIO GCRMN 2023-24 (<i>Said Ahamada</i>)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Updates from ICRI: <i>Thomas Dallison (ICRI)</i> - Updates from GCRMN global: <i>Britta Schaffelke (AIMS, GCRMN Global Coordinator)</i> - Update on WIO GCRMN plans and processes: <i>David Obura</i> - Brainstorm on key activities for 2023-2024. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Data and regional repository o Monitoring - methods, gaps o Reporting for the COP and other national priorities (CBD-GBF) o Introduction of workplan template – Nairobi Convention MSP Working Group ToR. - May break into working groups.

Day 2 Thursday, 2nd March 2023	
09:00-10:00	<p>Working sessions (<i>Said Ahamada</i>)</p> <p><u>Presentations</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Key variables and national needs for reporting for the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework: <i>David Obura</i> - Coral reef fish monitoring - technical and capacity needs: <i>Melita Samoily</i> - gcrmdb_benthos - A centralized and collaborative integration platform for benthic coral reef monitoring data: <i>Jeremy Wicquart</i>
10:00-10:30	Coffee break
10:30-12:30	<p>Working sessions continued</p> <p>Working groups (to be decided)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 2023-2024 workplan/ToR development (including multiple elements) - Coral reef fish monitoring
12:30-14:00	Lunch
14:00-15:00	Working sessions continued
15:00-16:30	<p>Plenary (<i>Joshua Rambahinjarison</i>)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Presentations from working groups, for feedback - Other items (as raised by participants, e.g. WIO participation at Asia-Pacific Coral Reef Symposium)
Day 3 Friday, 3rd March 2023	
9:00-10:00	<p>Plenary Outputs (<i>Swaleh Aboud/David Obura</i>)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Report back from all working sessions - Presentation of Draft workplan and ToR, 2023-24
10:00-10:30	Coffee break
10:30-11:30	<p>Closing (<i>Said Ahamada</i>)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Nairobi Convention Secretariat, representative - Official closing – Comoros National Focal Point, Nairobi Convention