

Over **one-half**  
of the world's population lives  
within **100 kilometres**  
of the sea.



## MEDIA RELEASE

November 1, 2007

### WORLD LEADERS IN CORAL REEF SCIENCE REVIEW PROGRESS

Eminent marine scientists from seven countries are today drawing together the latest international research on the management of coral reefs during a high-level meeting at Manila, in the Philippines.

The scientists, leading members of the international program on Coral Reef Targeted Research and Capacity Building for Management (CRTR), are meeting at a time when the threat to coral reefs worldwide is mounting.

"Today, coral reefs are showing signs of stress throughout most of their distribution—the results of direct and indirect human impacts, including climate change. Even in the most remote areas where reefs are found, evidence of human disturbance emerges," says CRTR Team Leader Dr Marea Hatziolos, the Senior Coastal and Marine Specialist with the World Bank in Washington. Human impacts on reefs include changes in the amount of coral cover relative to seaweed or algae that can eventually take over a reef, due to over-fishing, sewage and other forms of pollution; loss of reef habitat due to dredging and conversion for tourism and coastal development, and local species extinctions in response to periodic disturbances, including major hurricanes, coral bleaching and disease.

"Although reefs are currently under siege, we have identified a range of well-proven policy and management tools that are readily available, and no time should be lost in applying them more widely and effectively."

"These tools include coastal zoning to ensure use of coastal habitat and resources is compatible with ecological function and with competing uses,, co-management between government and local communities, catchment approaches to water quality, compliance with fishing regulations, reef and coastal vegetation restoration, and sustainable tourism."

The CRTR scientists – members of the program's Synthesis Panel - point out that most coral reefs occur within developing countries where poverty and a reliance on ecosystem goods and



services place great pressure on them. “Effective management seeks to find the balance between protecting reefs and their ability to deliver services well into the future, and meeting the immediate needs of human communities, many of whose livelihoods depend on reefs.” Achieving this balance depends on understanding how coral reef ecosystems work and enhancing those factors associated with system productivity and resilience to outside pressures.

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Climate change is a perfect example of such external pressure on coral reefs. During the meeting, held at the Marine Science Institute at the University of Philippines, the scientists argued that increasing emissions of carbon dioxide in the earth’s atmosphere - which contribute to warmer sea temperatures during summer and higher levels of ocean acidification - represent an ‘irreducible risk’ to coral reefs that is beyond the control of local reef managers and policy-makers.

But they insist that this simply raises the urgency for reef managers and policy-makers to take responsibility for the ‘reducible risk’ – such as over-fishing, pollution, and unsustainable coastal development.

The CRTR ([www.gefcoral.org](http://www.gefcoral.org)) is a leading international coral reef research initiative that provides a coordinated approach to credible, factual and scientifically proven knowledge for improved coral reef management.

The CRTR Program is a partnership between the Global Environment Facility, the World Bank, The University of Queensland (Australia), the United States National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) and approximately 40 research institutes & other third parties around the world.

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**Further information:**



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