



HRH The Prince of Wales Announces a Global Call to Action for International Year of the Reef 2018

Announcement Highlights a New Level of Optimism that Coral Reefs Can Still be Saved



LONDON, United Kingdom (14 February 2018) – HRH The Prince of Wales today announced a global call to action to save coral reefs from complete global collapse. His call marks the start of a global campaign designed by The Ocean Agency, for the [International Year of the Reef](#) - a multi government and NGO initiative led by the International Coral Reef Initiative in collaboration with UN Environment Programme.

Speaking at a gathering of some of the world's leading coral reef experts and advocates in London, organised by The Prince's International Sustainability Unit, His Royal Highness said:

“There can be no doubt that we are at a critical tipping point, where we will either ensure or fatally compromise our ability to safeguard the world's coral reefs and the species that will support future generations of humans and countless other species.”

The Prince's announcement comes at a pivotal time for coral reefs. The last three years have seen the longest and most extensive coral die-off ever recorded and this impact from global climate change is predicted to worsen for at least the next two to three decades, threatening further destruction to reefs that are already suffering damage from overfishing and pollution.

The aim of the International Year of the Reef campaign is to draw attention to the crisis facing coral reefs and to secure the support necessary from governments, NGOs, businesses and the public. It aims to build on a new level of support for coral reef conservation and science, prompted by the recent global die-off, and help ensure 2018 becomes a turning point for coral reef conservation. It is intended to be a catalyst for action at a scale that has never been achieved before bringing together all sectors to work as a global community to find solutions to a global problem.

Speaking at the campaign launch Erik Solheim, Head of UN Environment said:

“We are at a critical juncture for the future of the world's coral reefs. For too long we have been taking much more from them than we have given back. Now climate change and ocean acidification also threaten their very existence. These underwater ecosystems sustain a quarter of all marine life and gift more than half a billion people essential food and livelihoods, yet we have already allowed up to 50 percent of the world's coral reefs to die. The International Year of the Reef is the springboard for galvanizing urgent global action to turn this coral reef crisis around.”

To support the campaign, the International Year of the Reef launched a [unique library of imagery and resources](#) which are freely available to download and use. It includes imagery collected for [Google Street View](#) and during filming for the [Netflix Original Documentary Chasing Coral](#). The image library is funded by The Tiffany & Co. Foundation, which supports organizations that work to improve the health of oceans through research, preservation and management of coral reefs.

“We must act now to protect coral reefs – the cornerstone of healthy marine ecosystems – from the myriad of threats they face,” said Anisa Kamadoli Costa, Chairman and President of The Tiffany & Co. Foundation. “International Year of the Reef provides an extraordinary opportunity to educate the broader public on what they can do to preserve this treasured species for the livelihood and enjoyment of future generations.”



Speaking about the global campaign Xavier Sticker, French Ambassador for the Environment said in London:

“2018 has been designated by ICRI as the International Year of the Reef. This is a great opportunity to draw attention to the condition of coral reefs and to step up efforts to save them. Action is our watchword for this year and beyond. We are committed to work as a team to make a difference to coral reef conservation.”

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VISUALS:

Photos of coral reefs can all be downloaded from www.coralreefimagebank.org

The majority of the images were taken during the XL Catlin Seaview Survey and during filming for the award-winning Netflix film *Chasing Coral*. They can be freely downloaded in high resolution for non-commercial and media uses.

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Speakers for International Year of the Reef:

Richard Vevers, The Ocean Agency, richard@theocean.agency

Francis Staub, International Coral Reef Initiative, fstaub@biodiv-conseil.fr

Attending the London Event:

Ambassador Xavier Sticker, French Ambassador for the Environment

Peter Thomson, UN Secretary - General's Special Envoy for the Ocean

Why coral reefs are important:

- **Coral reefs worldwide have been estimated to have a conservative value of \$1 trillion**, which generates at least \$300-400 billion each year in terms of food and livelihoods from tourism, fisheries and medicines according to recent reports (WWF 2015, Smithsonian Institute).
- **The extinction of coral reefs poses a critical threat for the hundreds of millions of people** in some of the world's developing countries who depend on reefs for their livelihoods, culture, food security, and nutrition.
- **One in every four fish in the ocean lives part of its life on a coral reef.** In the coming decades this could mean that half a billion people will lose access to a major source of protein, with developing countries being disproportionately more vulnerable.

“This is an all hands on deck moment,” said Professor Ove Hoegh-Guldberg, Director of the Global Change Institute at The University of Queensland.

About the International Coral Reef Initiative:

The International Coral Reef Initiative (ICRI) is an informal partnership between nations and organizations. It strives to preserve coral reefs and related ecosystems around the world. Although the Initiative is an informal group whose decisions are not binding on its members, its actions have been pivotal in continuing to highlight globally the importance of coral reefs and related ecosystems to environmental sustainability, food security and social and cultural wellbeing. The work of ICRI is regularly acknowledged in United Nations documents, highlighting the Initiative's important cooperation, collaboration and advocacy role within the international arena. The Initiative was founded in 1994 by eight governments: Australia, France, Japan, Jamaica, the Philippines, Sweden, the United Kingdom, and USA. ICRI now counts more than 60 members.

About The Ocean Agency:

The Ocean Agency is a Not-For-Profit organization founded in 2010. It is dedicated to achieving ocean conservation through technology innovation, creative communication and global partnerships. Its first major project was the XL Catlin Seaview Survey (also a partnership with the Global Change Institute), which has become the most comprehensive global survey of coral reefs ever conducted. It has revolutionized the speed, efficiency and cost of coral reef monitoring at scale. This is the project behind all the underwater imagery in Google Street View. The Ocean Agency is the only team to have ever travelled around the world to record and reveal a global bleaching event (the imagery taken with their specially developed cameras has appeared in virtually every major news publication.) This work is the subject of the acclaimed Netflix Original Documentary called "*Chasing Coral*."

About the event:

The Prince's International Sustainability Unit has been at the forefront of efforts to encourage collaboration between sectors to improve coral reef health and resilience in light of the threats these valuable ecosystems face from climate change, overfishing, land based pollution and direct physical damage.

This meeting explored how existing efforts can be scaled up and how different sectors can collaborate to provide financial incentives to improve coral reef health and resilience.