

AGENDA ITEM 11: Items Proposed by Members:**11.1: 2028-2029 as the Pacific Year of the Reef**

(Paper presented by the Government of Australia)

**Background Paper**

Purpose:

1. The purpose of this paper is to seek the Executive Board's endorsement to declare 2028 and 2029 as the Pacific Year of the Reef (PYOR).
2. The PYOR is proposed in cooperation with SPREP. If endorsed, SPREP will develop a program of initiatives and activities in cooperation with SPREP Members and partners, as described below.
3. The proposal aligns with the Fourth International Year of the Reef, which was declared at the 39th session of the International Coral Reef Initiative (ICRI) held in April 2026.

Background:

4. Declaring 2028 and 2029 as the PYOR provides an opportunity to implement activities that are aligned to the eight Action Areas of the Pacific Coral Reef Action Plan 2021–2030 by bringing together governments, regional organizations, NGOs, communities, and the private sector to deliver joint programs, coordinate awareness campaigns, enhance monitoring, provide training, undertake restoration and mobilise additional investments.
5. The declaration will also serve as a catalyst for SPREP Members to sign onto the Global Commitment to Protect Climate Resilient Coral Reefs that was launched at the UN Ocean Conference in Nice, France (2025).
 - a. The commitment identifies and prioritises climate-resilient coral reefs in national policies and 30x30 planning, integrating reef protection into national biodiversity and climate frameworks, reducing local pressures like pollution and destructive fishing, implementing national reef monitoring and action plans and ensuring community leadership and local knowledge underpin their action for corals.
 - b. Seven SPREP Members have signed this commitment, including Australia, Fiji, France, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands and Vanuatu.
 - c. SPREP has been invited to be a partner organisation of this global commitment, which aligns with upcoming activities related to heat-adapted corals under the AFD-funded Pacific Ocean Initiative.
6. If endorsed, SPREP's Marine and Coastal team will work with partners to secure funding and develop a program of initiatives that celebrates and elevates national activities. SPREP will seek to coordinate across its work programs to deliver activities and promote the PYOR.
7. SPREP will promote the PYOR through its networks and partners, such as the Pacific Islands Roundtable for Nature Conservation (PIRT), WWF-Pacific, Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS), Great Barrier Reef Foundation (GBRF), and the Australian Institute of Marine Science (AIMS), so that they may also celebrate and implement activities through their respective projects and programs at the national level to contribute to the PYOR.

8. The 39th ICRI General Meeting, hosted by Saudi Arabia and the General Organization for Conservation of Coral Reefs and Turtles in the Red Sea (SHAMS), convened virtually from 20 to 22 April 2026. SPREP participated as a member of ICRI.
9. Five motions were presented to the Members which were adopted and included the following:
 - a. Resolution to support a UN Ocean Decade Contribution
 - b. Recommendation on the Global Coral Reef Summit 2026
 - c. Resolution and Terms of Reference for an Ad Hoc Committee on Strengthening ICRI Impact and Continuity
 - d. Recommendation to support implementation of UNEP/EA.7/Res.1 on Accelerating global actions to promote the climate resilience of coral reefs at the seventh session of the UNEA in December 2025.
 - e. Resolution to support 2028 as the Fourth International Year of the Reef (IYOR).
10. A series of IYOR have been declared with the first IYOR in 1997, 2008 and in 2018. These IYOR were a year-long campaign of events and initiatives hosted by governments and non-governmental organizations around the world to promote conservation action and strengthen long-term collaboration for coral reef conservation.
11. SPREP has designated and coordinated the Pacific Year of the Coral Reef (PYOR) campaign aligned with the IYOR – 1997, 2008 and 2018 where regional campaigns were mobilised with our Members and included initiatives and activities such as:
 - d. support to national awareness campaigns;
 - e. communication and educational initiatives;
 - f. policy initiatives;
 - g. resource production;
 - h. reporting, monitoring and evaluation;
 - i. technical workshops and meetings.
12. The three past PYOR increased awareness on the importance of, and threats to, coral reef ecosystems, elevated recognition of community and traditional conservation approaches, and strengthened regional partnerships.

Recommendation:

13. The Executive Board Meeting is invited to:
 - 1) **Note** this proposal was prepared in cooperation with SPREP.
 - 2) **Endorse** the proposal to declare 2028 and 2029 as the Pacific Year of the Reef.
 - 3) **Endorse** SPREP to develop and coordinate activities associated with the Pacific Year of the Reef as outlined in this paper.