

Safeguarding the future of nature and people in the Coral Triangle through marine protection

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The Coral Triangle, Raja Ampat, Indonesia. Credit: CI/STERLING ZUMBRUNN

Coral Triangle countries are helping to avoid a natural and humanitarian toll in the Indo Pacific by conserving ocean habitats that are critical for the food security and livelihoods of more than a hundred million people, delegates at the World Parks Congress will hear today.

The Coral Triangle is a 6 million-km² marine area that directly sustains and protects more than 120 million people in coastal communities across Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Papua New Guinea, the Solomon Islands, and Timor Leste.

"As a source of food, income, and protection from severe weather events, the ongoing health of the Coral Triangle's marine ecosystems is critical," said Ms Naoko Ishii, CEO and Chairperson of the Global Environment Facility.

"We applaud the leadership of Coral Triangle countries in taking on the responsibility of conserving and managing the region's marine resources for the benefit of the people that depend on them," added Ms Ishii.

Ms Ishii will be addressing a Coral Triangle side event at the World Parks Congress today, together with the Australian Government Minister for the Environment, the Hon Greg Hunt MP, who will be speaking on behalf of the development partners to the Coral Triangle Initiative on Coral Reefs, Fisheries and Food Security (CTI-CFF), an initiative that includes all six Coral Triangle nations.

Development partners to the CTI-CFF include the US and Australian governments, the Asian Development Bank, the Global Environment Facility, Conservation International, The Nature Conservancy, WWF, and the Coral Triangle Center.

"Since it came together in 2009 to form the CTI-CFF, the six Coral Triangle countries and partners have collectively demonstrated notable

achievements in the sustainable management of critical coastal and marine ecosystems essential to support [food security](#) and livelihoods in the Coral Triangle," said Prof. Ir. R. Sjarief Widjaja, Chairman of CTI-CFF Interim Regional Secretariat, hosted by the Government of Indonesia.

"We are delighted that the partners remain committed in their support and cooperation to secure the large-scale changes required to halt and reverse the threats facing this precious region.

"The CTI-CFF is vigorously pursuing institutional strengthening measures by establishing a permanent secretariat and encouraging neighboring countries and partners to join this multi-stakeholder partnership to help move positive outcomes forward in an unprecedented scale," added Prof. Widjaja.

The Coral Triangle is part of an area that has emerged as one of the planet's economic hubs. Fast population and economic growth have fuelled unsustainable coastal development and boosted demand for expensive marine resources such as tuna, shark fin, turtle products, and live reef fish.

In addition, climate change could see [coral reefs](#) disappear from the Coral Triangle by the end of the century and the ability of the region's coastal environments to feed people could decline by up to 80 per cent.

The CTI-CFF this year launched a plan to establish a system of marine protected areas in the Coral Triangle that will safeguard both people and nature as the threats of climate change, overfishing, destructive fishing, and pollution increase.

"Establishing a system of marine reserves in the Coral Triangle that are connected, resilient, and sustainably financed is one of the main goals of

our work," said Mundita Lim, who leads the CTI-CFF's technical working group on marine protected areas.

Ms Lim is also the Head of Secretariat of the Philippines' National CTI Coordinating Committee, and is Director of the Biodiversity Management Bureau in the Department of Environment and Natural Resources, Philippines.

"These marine protected areas are designed in such a way that they will generate significant income, livelihoods, and food security benefits for our coastal communities, as well as conserve the region's rich biological diversity," she said.

The Initiative reaches out to varied constituencies in the region such as fishers, businesses, local governments, women leaders, and scientists who are pivotal in planning and managing marine and coastal resources effectively.

The Malaysian government has made a commitment to gazette close to a million hectares of ocean in the state of Sabah by 2015 and will showcase the progress of its efforts at the World Parks Congress.

Tun Mustapha Park is an important marine area in the Coral Triangle threatened by overfishing, destructive fishing, and pollution. This site's rich marine biodiversity creates productive fishing grounds that support more than 80,000 people in coastal and island communities in the area. Fishing is the economic driver of the area with approximately 100 tonnes of fish - valued at USD200,000 - caught each day.

"With the impending gazettement of Tun Mustapha Park, the Coral Triangle stands to gain yet another [marine protected area](#), along with other flagship sites including the Wakatobi National Park in Indonesia, the Turtle Islands Park in Malaysia, and the Turtle Islands Wildlife

Sanctuary and Tubbataha Reefs National Park in the Philippines," Ms Lim said.

Provided by Conservation International

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