

CORAL TRIANGLE INITIATIVE

ON CORAL REEFS, FISHERIES AND FOOD SECURITY

A proposal for a new multilateral partnership to help safeguard the marine and coastal biological resources of the Coral Triangle Region for future generations

Background

Scientists have identified a *Coral Triangle* area within the Indo-Pacific – its boundaries have been defined by marine areas containing 500 or more species of coral. This triangular-shaped region covers all or parts of the exclusive economic zones of six countries: the Philippines, Indonesia (Central and Eastern), East Timor, Malaysia (Sabah), Papua New Guinea (PNG) and the Solomon Islands. The Coral Triangle (CT), sometimes referred to as the “Amazon of the Seas”, is the epicenter of marine life abundance and diversity on the planet. It has more than 600 total coral species (>75% of all known coral species), 53% of the world’s coral reefs, 3,000 fish species, and the greatest extent of mangrove forests of any region in the world. In addition, the CT serves as the spawning and juvenile growth areas for what is the largest tuna fishery in the world.

Human benefits of marine and coastal biological resources of the Coral Triangle

The biological resources of the CT directly sustain the lives of over 120 million people living within this area, and benefit millions more worldwide. Primary human benefits include:

- Supports livelihoods, income, and food security – particularly for populations living along coastlines of the six CT countries.
- Total annual value of coral reefs, mangroves and associated natural habitats within the CT are estimated at US \$2.3 billion.
- Tuna spawning and nursery grounds support a multi-billion tuna industry,



CTI can help ensure sustainable fish supplies, healthy coral reefs and other marine resources for future generations.

and provide for millions of consumers worldwide.

- Healthy marine resources contribute to a growing nature-based tourism industry in the region.
- Healthy reefs systems and mangroves protect coastal communities from storms and tsunamis, reducing future reconstruction costs and the need for international aid.

Proposal for a new Coral Triangle Initiative (CTI)

These extraordinary marine biological resources are at risk, threatened by a range of factors, such as over-fishing, destructive fishing, pollution and climate change. Indeed, as part of a comprehensive approach to climate change threats, one issue requiring greater attention is the future impacts on our marine and coastal natural resources, and adaptation measures that can be employed. To help safeguard these marine and coastal resources for future generations, President Yudhoyono of Indonesia has recently written to other leaders, pro-

posing a new *Coral Triangle Initiative (CTI) on Coral Reefs, Fisheries, and Food Security*. Such an Initiative could potentially be centered around (i) high-level, joint political commitments by the six governments of the region (“CT6”), supported by (ii) significant international and domestic funding commitments, and (iii) multilateral and private sector action.

The Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) Summit in Sydney (September 2007) provides an opportunity to begin discussing this idea. Following the Summit, extensive consultations among the “CT6” and other relevant governments, as well as other stakeholder groups, will be needed to develop this Initiative, including defining specific joint commitments and key next steps. Such steps might include, for example, a *ministerial-level planning meeting* in the near future and a future *summit meeting*, at which leaders could adopt and announce concrete commitments under a *Coral Triangle Initiative*.