



Brussels, 4 December 2020
(OR. en)

13574/20

POLGEN 218
POLMAR 22
CLIMA 319
ENV 767
MARE 35
PECHE 409
RELEX 965
TRANS 568

'I/A' ITEM NOTE

From: General Secretariat of the Council
To: Permanent Representatives Committee/Council

No. prev. doc.: 13393/20, 13564/20

Subject: European Union's application letter to become a member of the
International Coral Reef Initiative (ICRI)
– Approval

1. On 12 October 2020, the Council approved¹ the request of the Commission to enter, on behalf of the European Union, into negotiations on the EU's application to become a member of the International Coral Reef Initiative (ICRI). The application for the ICRI membership is considered to be a non-binding instrument, in accordance with the 'Arrangement for Non-Binding Instruments'².

¹ ST 11112/20, ST 11566/20

² ST 15367/17

2. On 23 November 2020, the Commission submitted to the Friends of the Presidency Group on Integrated Maritime Policy (FoP IMP) a European Union's application letter to become a member of ICRI³.
3. The application letter and an explanatory note⁴ were examined by the members of the FoP IMP in an informal videoconference on 24 November 2020.
4. On 2 December 2020, the FoP IMP agreed by means of written consultation to submit the above-mentioned application letter to Coreper and to Council for approval. During the written consultation it was recalled that the application of the EU to become a member of the ICRI is without prejudice to the division of competence between the EU and the Member States.
5. It is understood that, following acceptance of the application by the ICRI, the Commission will send a copy of the final application letter to the Council.
6. In light of the above, the Permanent Representatives Committee is invited to confirm the agreement reached by the FoP IMP and to suggest that the Council approve the European Union's application letter to become a member of the ICRI, as set out in the Annex.

³ ST 13127/20

⁴ WK13488/20

**European Union's application letter to become a member of the
International Coral Reef Initiative**

Dear Sirs and Madams,

As the member of the European Commission in charge of Environment, Oceans and Fisheries, I have the honour to express on behalf of the European Union its interest in applying for membership in the International Coral Reef Initiative (ICRI).

The Union shares and supports the objectives of ICRI as outlined in its foundational documents *A continuing call for action 2013* and *A framework for action 2013*:

- The Union fully supports the importance of awareness raising bringing the spotlight on the value of coral reefs and their related ecosystems as well as on their increased vulnerability.
- The Union fully supports the need for a collective and coordinated action addressing all aspects and challenges related to corals.
- The Union also acknowledges the importance of furthering integrated management practices in a manner that recognises the connectivity of land and sea and the cumulative impacts of anthropogenic pressures, including threats from climate change. It also acknowledges that protecting coral reefs can significantly reduce some of these threats such as coastal flooding and storm surges.
- The Union stands ready to help build capacity with regards to all aspects of the conservation and sustainable use of marine resources for the benefit of all. The Union will continue to support and highlight globally the crucial role that reef-associated fisheries play for millions of small-scale fishers and coastal communities around the world, in respect for their income, food security and nutrition.
- The Union recognises the importance of research and monitoring to assess the status of coral reefs and inform management practices. For years, the Union has been supporting research projects, the results of which can contribute to the objectives of ICRI and its members.
- The Union values the importance of reviewing actions and adopting adaptive policies.

The Union appreciates the added value of ICRI as a forum for regular discussion on the management of coral reefs and related ecosystems.

In a spirit of partnership, the Union would welcome the opportunity to exchange information and best practices with organisations and countries sharing the same aims and goals. The Union trusts ICRI members can benefit from its experience in supporting many coral-related initiatives either in the field of research or by providing support to specific regions of the world, as already mentioned.

The Union also believes its long-standing and strong experience in the sustainable management of fisheries, including the protection of vulnerable marine ecosystems, as well as its robust internal environmental legislation resulting in the world's highest environment standards, would be an asset for ICRI.

ICRI membership would complement the efforts made by the Union on the international scene to promote a better ocean governance, call for stronger climate change policy and confirm its determination to protect and restore biodiversity and reverse the degradation of ecosystems.

The Union has also taken due note of the membership rules.

I thank the Secretariat for considering the Union application to join ICRI.
