



CTA-218- Global Coral Reef Research and Development Accelerator Platform

An analogue for “The Collaborative Coral Reef Registry”

The World Federation for Coral Reef Conservation
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SAUDI ARABIA

ARAB NEWS

Saudi Arabia ‘working to safeguard the future of world’s coral reefs’



A fish swims above coral reefs at the Obhor coast, 30 km north of the Red Sea city of Jeddah. (File/AFP)

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The Kingdom possesses some of the healthiest coral reefs in the Red Sea

The platform will promote the next generation of science and technology needed to secure a future for reefs in combatting climate change and other pressures

RIYADH: Saudi Arabia possesses some of the healthiest coral reefs in the Red Sea, and is committed to preserving and restoring them, the Kingdom’s Deputy Minister of Environment, Water and Agriculture, Dr. Osama Faqeeha, said.

His remarks came during the inaugural meeting of the governance committee of the Global Coral Reef Research and Development Accelerator Platform, which has been announced following a meeting of the initiative’s founding committee, which comprised 16 member states of the G20 in addition to the EU countries.

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During the meeting, Faqeeha was elected inaugural chairman of the platform's governance committee, while Jennifer Koss, director of the Coral Reef Conservation Program of the US National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, was elected vice president.

Faqeeha said: "We welcome the Global Coral Reef Research and Development Accelerator Platform, which was announced by G20 leaders with the aim of improving coral conservation operations around the world and restoring them with a set of superior scientific and technical methodologies, and as a much-needed international collaborative effort to secure the future of coral life."

He said that "the emergence of vaccines to protect against COVID-19 in record time is a testament to the effectiveness of concerted international scientific efforts to confront global challenges. This is what we hope to achieve in this platform, to confront the deterioration of coral reefs and the possibility of their permanent extinction from the world's seas and oceans."

Koss, said: "The US was pleased when the Kingdom drew our attention, during its recent presidency of the G20, to the urgent need to allocate greater resources and employ more innovative technologies in order to conserve global coral."

She added: "This platform provides a unique opportunity to bring together the world's scientific and coral management experts to complement current coral research and continue efforts to protect them, at a time when we are defining the future of our coral reefs, which are the basis for countless services that we cannot afford to lose in our ecosystem."

The platform will accelerate research and development of coral reefs, and promote the next generation of science and technology needed to secure a future for reefs in combatting climate change and other pressures.

The research program will engage a global multidisciplinary community of scientists, coastal managers, technologists and innovators, guided by a strategic plan and objectives proposed by the platform's scientific and advisory committee.

The platform will also connect existing national, regional and international research and development programs, engage the private sector in supporting these efforts, provide advanced research training to scientists from all countries and will facilitate access to scientific information and research and testing facilities around the world.

It will then provide the resulting new technologies and sciences, and allow them to support efforts on the ground to conserve and restore coral reefs.

The platform has designated King Abdullah University of Science and Technology (KAUST) to serve as a central meeting point for the platform and program management, in recognition of its proven track record in coral reef research, its proven capacity for global research collaboration, its management of proposals from scientific institutions around the world, and its state-of-the-art laboratories for coral reef research and world-class facilities to host international conferences and meetings. The university will support the center's operations at no cost to the G20, as an extension of its strong commitment to saving the world's coral reef ecosystems.

KAUST President Tony Chan said: "Since its establishment, coral reef research in the Red Sea has been one of the university's focus and strengths, so this global effort motivates and inspires us, as we offered to be a

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central meeting point for the platform to direct the necessary resources, talents and efficient ideas to achieve the platform's goals and protect disturbed coral ecosystems around the world."

Carlos Duarte, professor of marine science at KAUST and acting executive director of the platform, called for the need "to act as custodians of our planet — for the health of our oceans, and for future generations."



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