

Preface

A compelling urgency

Prof. Jean-Paul Moatti, Chairman of the Board and Chief Executive Officer of the French Research Institute for Development (IRD)



Aerial view of the barrier-reef at Poé, west coast of Grande Terre. © P.-A. Pantz

An exceptional reserve for marine biodiversity, a barrier protecting the coastline against the fury of the ocean, a key economic resource and a precious cultural heritage for many island and coastal populations, coral reefs are today one of the most threatened ecosystems of our planet. Under the combined weight of global warming and the accelerated urbanization of coastal areas, 20% of the world's coral reefs have already been destroyed without hope of recovery, and an additional 70% could disappear in the short to medium term. Protecting these ecosystems and implementing sustainable management methods for these vulnerable environments is an urgent priority at the core of the 2030 agenda for Sustainable

Development Goals (SDGs) adopted by the United Nations and all its member states.

Home to the second largest coral reef barrier in the world after Australia, New Caledonia is at the forefront of this international challenge. Research on the reefs and lagoons of the New Caledonian archipelago has a long historical tradition, that began with Captain Cook's expeditions in the 18th century. Research in these areas has accelerated over the last half century as the scientific community have started to mobilize for the preservation of coral reefs, alongside many other stakeholders, NGOs and management agencies responsible for

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Bay of Upi, Isle of Pines. © P.-A. Pantz

Coral biodiversity of Larégnère reef. © IRD/S. Andréfouët

Cover page 4 (from left to right):

Loading of a mikwaa net on a decked pirogue at Pwadèwia, St. Joseph Bay, Isle of Pines, 2017. © M. Juncker

Clown fish eggs. © G. Boussarie

Incubation of coral colonies in benthic chambers. © CNRS/E. Amice

Flying Red-footed booby (*Sula sula*). © M. Juncker

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