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## CORAL & CLIMATE CHANGE

IMPORTANCE OF CORAL

CORAL BLEACHING

- Coral reefs harbour the highest biodiversity of any ecosystem globally and directly support over 500 million people worldwide, mostly in poor countries.
- They are among the most threatened ecosystems on Earth, largely due to unprecedented global warming and climate changes, combined with growing local pressures.

WAY FORWARD

- A spike of 1-2°C in ocean temperatures sustained over several weeks can lead to bleaching, turning corals white.
- Over the last three years, reefs around the world have suffered from mass coral bleaching events as a result of the increase in global surface temperature caused by anthropogenic greenhouse gas emissions.
- Iconic reefs such as the Great Barrier Reef in Australia and the Northwestern Hawaiian Islands in the United States have all experienced their worst Reaching on record with devastating effects.
- The bleaching of the Great Barrier Reef in 2016 and 2017, killed around 50% of its corals.
- According to UNESCO, the coral reefs in all 29 reef-containing World Heritage sites would cease to exist by the end of this century if we continue to emit greenhouse gases under a business-as-usual scenario.
- If temperatures continue to rise, bleaching events will increase in intensity and frequency.

- Limiting global average temperature to well below 2°C above pre-industrial levels in line with the Paris Agreement provides the only chance for the survival of coral reefs globally.
- Reinforcing commitments to the Paris Agreement must be mirrored in all other global agreements such as the Sustainable Development Goals.
- There also needs to be a transformation of mainstream economic systems and a move towards circular economic practices.
- Economic systems need to rapidly move to the low greenhouse gas emission scenario to enable global temperature decrease.
- A move away from current economic thinking should include the benefits provided by coral reefs which are currently not taken into account in mainstream business and finance
- Therefore, sustaining and restoring coral reefs should be treated as an asset, and long-term investments should be made for their preservation.
- Investments should also include support for research at the frontiers of biology, such as genetic selection of heat-resistant corals that can withstand rising global temperatures.