CLASSROOM WORKSHEET

IUCN Assessment Warns Nearly All Coral Reefs Face Ecosystem Failure

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NAME _____ CLASS _____ DATE _____ SCORE _____ / 10



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1 Read

The number beside each paragraph helps you talk about it.

1 Presented at the United Nations' COP17 biodiversity summit in Yerevan, Armenia, the IUCN's inaugural systematic evaluation of 127 tropical and subtropical reef systems worldwide concluded that nearly all shallow-water coral ecosystems carry an extremely high probability of ecosystem failure before 2075, with climate change identified as the single greatest driver. The assessment spans more than 80 countries and found that the proportion of critically endangered reef regions would surge from 24 percent, based on observed changes over the past half-century, to 96 percent once expected global heating effects are factored in. These projections rest on an IPCC climate pathway anticipating roughly 2.7 degrees Celsius of warming above pre-industrial levels by the century's end. Australia's situation is particularly stark: of 17 reef regions, four were already critically endangered, five endangered and five vulnerable, yet all 17 would shift to critically endangered once projected climate impacts were included. Beyond heat stress, overfishing of parrotfish and groupers, coastal development, pollution, tourism and intensifying storms are cited as additional pressures degrading reef ecosystems. Notably, the assessment did not fully incorporate the fourth global mass bleaching event spanning early 2023 to mid-2025, confirmed as the most widespread such event on record. IUCN Director General Grethel Aguilar urged decisive action to tackle climate change and halt ocean warming, listing emissions cuts, stronger

protection and restoration, and sustained investment in coastal ecosystems and communities as requirements.

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2 Key words

inaugural /ɪˈnɔːgjʊrəl/ *adjective*

Marking the very first occasion or event of its kind; being the first in a series.

The inaugural lecture of the new professor drew a packed audience from across the faculty.

projections /prəˈdʒɛkʃənz/ *noun*

Estimates or forecasts about future outcomes based on current data and assumed trends.

The government's revenue projections for the coming fiscal year were revised downward after the trade disruption.

surge /sɜːdʒ/ *verb*

To increase rapidly and suddenly to a very high level.

Demand for electric vehicles surged after the new subsidy programme was announced.

degrading /dɪˈgreɪdɪŋ/ *verb*

Causing a gradual deterioration in the quality, condition, or value of something.

Years of overuse have been degrading the soil quality of the surrounding farmland.

halt /hɔːlt/ *verb*

To bring something to an abrupt or complete stop; to cause to cease moving or continuing.

The board voted to halt the merger deal pending a further regulatory review.

sustained /səˈsteɪnd/ *adjective*

Maintained or continued over a long period without interruption or weakening.

The research team credited their breakthrough to sustained collaboration between the two institutions.

3 Reading comprehension

EXERCISE 1 Understanding the IUCN Assessment

3 points

Read the following passage carefully and choose the best answer for each question.

1 What does the passage state about the basis for the projected surge in critically endangered reef regions?

(a) The surge calculation combines observed historical changes with expected global heating effects.
(b) The surge is based solely on the fourth global mass bleaching event.
(c) The surge was confirmed by field surveys across all countries in the study.
(d) The surge depends entirely on the number of reef regions in each country.

2 Which phrase best characterises the role of climate change in the IUCN's findings?

(a) It is mentioned as a contributing factor among many equal pressures.
(b) It is identified as the single greatest driver of reef ecosystem failure.
(c) It is described as a theoretical risk not yet confirmed by data.
(d) It is presented as secondary to overfishing and coastal development.

3 What limitation of the assessment does the passage acknowledge?

(a) It was based on data from only a handful of countries.
(b) It failed to account for any mass bleaching event.
(c) It did not fully incorporate the fourth global mass bleaching event.
(d) It excluded tropical reef systems from its analysis entirely.

EXERCISE 2 Key Details from the Assessment

Answer the following questions in brief using information found in the lesson text.

1 Where and at what event was the IUCN assessment presented?

2 Name at least three additional pressures beyond heat stress that degrade reef ecosystems, as cited in the assessment.

3 What did IUCN Director General Grethel Aguilar list as requirements for addressing the crisis?

4 Vocabulary and grammar practice

EXERCISE 3 Formal Register and Precise Word Choice

4 points

Complete each sentence with the correct form of the verb or phrase in brackets, matching the formal register and meaning of the lesson text.

1 The assessment concluded that nearly all shallow-water coral ecosystems _____ (carry) an extremely high probability of ecosystem failure before 2075.

2 These projections _____ (rest) an IPCC climate pathway anticipating warming above pre-industrial levels by the century's end.

3 Of Australia's reef regions, four _____ (be) critically endangered, five endangered and five vulnerable.

4 IUCN Director General Grethel Aguilar _____ (urge) decisive action to tackle climate change and halt ocean warming.

EXERCISE 4 Put the sentences in order

3 points

These sentences are from the story. Put them in the order they appear.

A Beyond heat stress, overfishing of parrotfish and groupers, coastal development, pollution, tourism and intensifying storms are cited as additional pressures degrading reef ecosystems.

B Australia's situation is particularly stark: of 17 reef regions, four were already critically endangered, five endangered and five vulnerable, yet all 17 would shift to critically endangered once projected climate impacts were included.

C These projections rest on an IPCC climate pathway anticipating roughly 2.7 degrees Celsius of warming above pre-industrial levels by the century's end.

Correct order: _____ _____ _____

5 Guided writing

EXERCISE 5 **Critical Commentary on the IUCN Reef Assessment**

Write a critical commentary (within the specified word range) summarising the key findings of the IUCN assessment presented at COP17. Your response must be faithful to the facts stated in the lesson text. You must incorporate the required keywords below. Consider the register appropriate for a formal news analysis. Write 150 to 220 words. Use these words: inaugural, projections, surge, halt.

6 Discussion

Talk with a partner, then share one idea.

EXERCISE 6 **Speaking**

1. The IUCN describes its assessment as the 'inaugural systematic evaluation' of coral reef ecosystems. What significance might the word 'inaugural' carry in terms of how the findings should be interpreted or received by policymakers?
2. The assessment identifies climate change as the 'single greatest driver' of reef ecosystem failure while also listing several additional pressures such as overfishing, pollution, and tourism. Do you think presenting climate change in this way helps or hinders the case for addressing the other pressures? Why?
3. Director General Grethel Aguilar calls for 'decisive action' including emissions cuts, stronger protection, and sustained investment. In your view, what challenges might prevent such a multi-faceted response from being implemented in practice?

Answer key

For the teacher

Keep this page for yourself and copy only the pages before it. Short-answer and writing tasks list one possible answer.

Exercise 1 Understanding the IUCN Assessment

1. A. The surge calculation combines observed historical changes with expected global heating effects. The text states the proportion would surge from the level based on 'observed changes over the past half-century' to a higher figure 'once expected global heating effects are factored in,' indicating a combination of past observation and future climate projection.
2. B. It is identified as the single greatest driver of reef ecosystem failure. The text explicitly states that 'climate change' was 'identified as the single greatest driver,' distinguishing it from the additional pressures listed later.
3. C. It did not fully incorporate the fourth global mass bleaching event. The text notes that 'the assessment did not fully incorporate the fourth global mass bleaching event spanning early 2023 to mid-2025,' meaning it is a partial omission rather than a complete failure to account for bleaching.

Exercise 2 Key Details from the Assessment

1. The assessment was presented at the United Nations' COP17 biodiversity summit held in Yerevan, Armenia. The opening clause of the text specifies both the venue (Yerevan, Armenia) and the event (the United Nations' COP17 biodiversity summit).
2. Beyond heat stress, the assessment cites overfishing of parrotfish and groupers, coastal development, pollution, tourism, and intensifying storms as additional pressures degrading reef ecosystems. The text lists these five factors together in a single sentence following the phrase 'Beyond heat stress.'
3. Grethel Aguilar listed emissions cuts, stronger protection and restoration, and sustained investment in coastal ecosystems and communities as requirements. The final sentence of the text enumerates these three requirements alongside her broader call for decisive action on climate change and ocean warming.

Exercise 3 Formal Register and Precise Word Choice

1. carry The subject 'ecosystems' is plural, so the verb remains in base form 'carry' in the present simple tense.
2. rest on 'Rest on' is the formal phrasal verb used in the text meaning 'depend upon.' The plural subject requires the base form 'rest,' followed by the preposition 'on.'
3. were already The plural subject 'four' requires 'were.' The adverb 'already' mirrors the text's emphasis on the pre-existing condition before climate impacts were projected.
4. urged 'Urged' is the past simple of the formal verb 'urge,' appropriate for reporting a recommendation by an official. It collocates with 'decisive action' in the text.

Exercise 4 Put the sentences in order

C, B, A These projections rest on an IPCC climate pathway anticipating roughly 2.7 degrees Celsius of warming above pre-industrial levels by the century's end. Australia's situation is particularly stark: of 17 reef regions, four were already critically endangered, five endangered and five vulnerable, yet all 17 would shift to critically endangered once projected climate impacts were included. Beyond heat stress, overfishing of parrotfish and groupers, coastal development, pollution, tourism and intensifying storms are cited as additional pressures degrading reef ecosystems.

Exercise 5 Critical Commentary on the IUCN Reef Assessment

The IUCN's inaugural systematic evaluation, presented at the United Nations' COP17 biodiversity summit in Yerevan, Armenia, marks a watershed moment in reef conservation discourse. Covering 127 tropical and subtropical reef systems across more than 80 countries, the assessment concludes that nearly all shallow-water coral ecosystems carry an extremely high probability of ecosystem failure before 2075, with climate change identified as the single greatest driver. The projections rest on an IPCC climate pathway anticipating roughly 2.7 degrees Celsius of warming above pre-industrial levels, under which the proportion of critically endangered reef regions would surge from 24 percent to 96 percent. IUCN Director General Grethel Aguilar urged decisive action to tackle climate change and halt ocean warming, listing emissions cuts, stronger protection and restoration, and sustained investment as essential requirements. One possible answer. Yours will be different and can still be good: check it against the list.