



PREFACE

THE science-fiction author Arthur C. Clarke once said, 'How inappropriate to call this planet Earth when it is quite clearly Ocean'. It is no wonder as our blue ocean covers roughly 71 per cent of the Earth's surface and contains 97 per cent of the planet's water.

Yet less than 5 per cent of this body of blue water has been explored. This very ocean – on which humans depend for food, commerce, transportation and ecosystem services – is facing serious threats. Coral reefs are being destroyed by overfishing, destructive fishing, inappropriate development and climate change. Turtles and terrapins are endangered, and their populations continue to decline. Fish stocks and other seafood are declining throughout the world.

However, there is hope; a large portion of this threatened ocean can be protected. An important area nestled between the Indian and Pacific Oceans is the Coral Triangle. Its boundaries are defined by marine areas containing 500 or more species of coral and it is the world's centre of marine life diversity. In some areas it has over 600 coral species (more than 75 per cent of all known coral species), 53 per cent of the world's coral reefs, 3,000 fish species and the greatest extent of mangrove forests of any region in the world. Sometimes referred to as 'the world's centre of marine biodiversity', the Coral Triangle is comparable to and perhaps even surpasses the Amazon and Congo Basins in numbers of species. In addition, the Coral Triangle serves as the spawning and juvenile growth area for what is probably the largest tuna fishery in the world.

The triangular-shaped Coral Triangle region covers all or parts of the exclusive economic zones of six countries: Indonesia, Malaysia, Papua New Guinea, the Philippines, the Solomon Islands and Timor Leste. The governments of these six countries have signed a pact to protect and sustainably manage this nursery of the seas – the Coral Triangle Initiative for Coral Reefs, Fisheries and Food Security (CTI-CFF).

I applaud the foresight of the Malaysian Government, along with the other five participating countries, in being part of this noble approach to protect and conserve the Coral Triangle – the nursery of the world. Malaysia is fully committed to this initiative by becoming the first country to ratify the agreement and to establish CTI-CFF's

permanent secretariat in Indonesia. The state of Sabah, being the focus of the CTI-CFF in Malaysia, will benefit from this initiative, and I congratulate the government of Sabah for its dedication to translate this to the ground, in continuously engaging all stakeholders to be part of this initiative. The Government of the State of Sabah is encouraging private-public partnerships under this initiative.

I am also happy to see the proactive involvement of local communities in protecting our marine resources and habitats. Local groups in Pitas, Banggi and Semporna are monitoring and reporting fish-bombing activities around their waters. Fishing using bombs home-made from fertilizers is highly destructive to our marine ecosystem. It is destroying reef areas that are not only important to the livelihood of fishermen, but also vital to the tourism industry in Sabah. Therefore, as the then Chairman of the Sabah Tourism Board, I was pleased that the Sabah Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Environment took a positive step in forming the Sabah Anti-Fish Bombing Committee that subsequently held numerous awareness activities at the district and state levels, including the 2012 Regional Anti-Fish Bombing Symposium held in Kota Kinabalu. I am proud to have played a part in combating fish-bombing activities in Sabah, and hope that many more local communities and the private sector can join forces to eradicate fish bombing in Sabah and throughout the Coral Triangle.

Sabah is well on its way towards gazettement of more than 10 per cent of its waters as marine parks. Sabah Parks manages four marine parks with three more soon to be gazetted. One of the proposed three parks was declared to be protected in 2003 by the Sabah State Government. Measuring almost one million hectares, the proposed Tun Mustapha Park (TMP) is named after one of Malaysia's founding fathers.

Sabah Parks has been steadily progressing to make TMP's gazettement a reality by the year 2015. When established, TMP will support the CTI-CFF goals by protecting marine biodiversity and addressing climate change; contribute to the post-2015 development agenda and Sustainable Development Goals; as well as contribute to the Aichi Biodiversity Target of at least 10 per cent protected and managed marine areas.

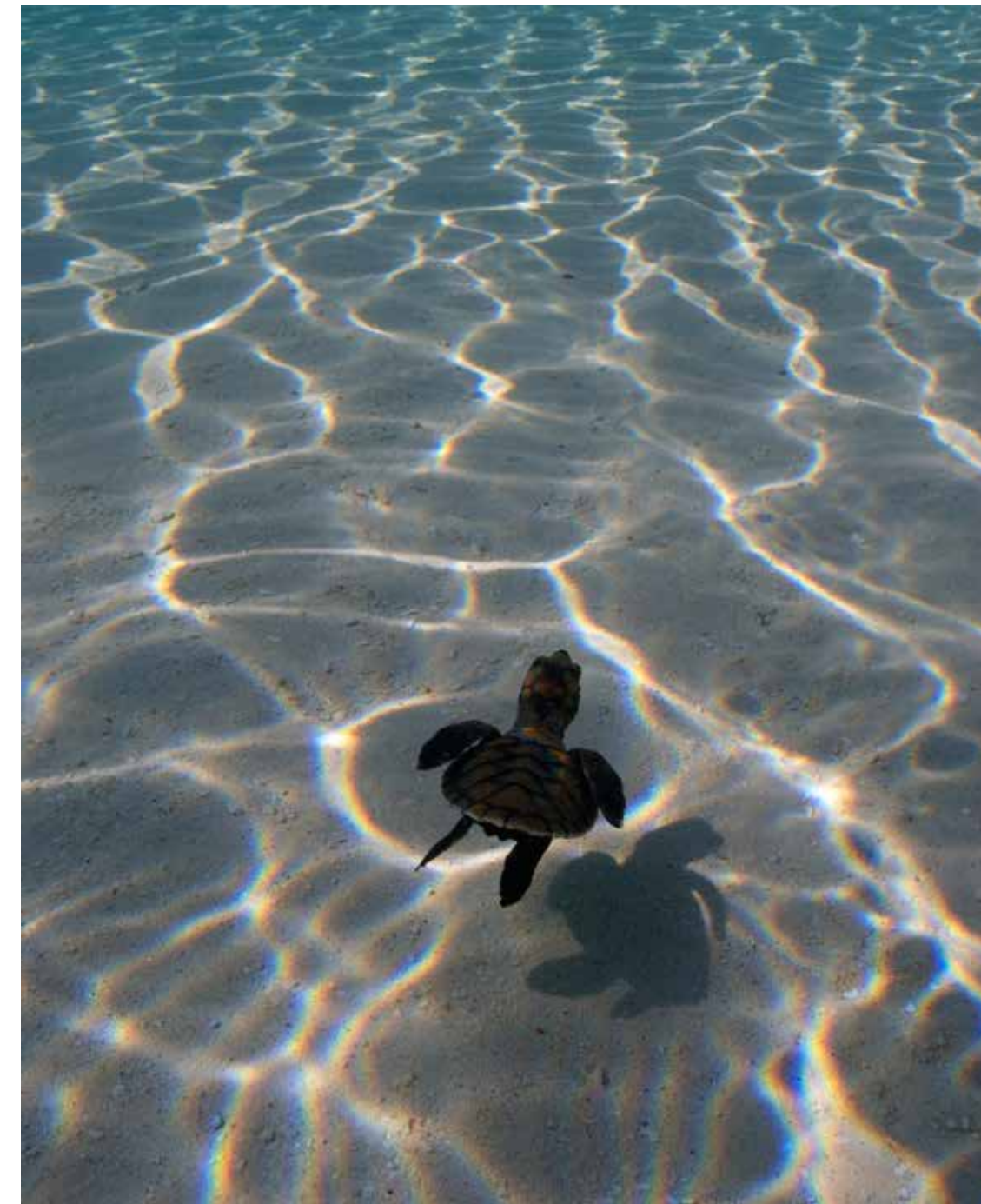
Produced in association with WWF-Malaysia, this book highlights some of the amazing and unique marine features of the Coral Triangle countries. The stories contained in it are examples of the conservation and management efforts of each of the Coral Triangle countries. I hope you enjoy reading it and learning from it as much as I have.

The duo behind this book, author Kenneth Kassem and photographer Eric Madeja, are not natives to the Coral Triangle but they might as well be. Having both lived for over a decade in Borneo – the Malaysian corner of the Coral Triangle – Ken and Eric are no strangers to its shores. Captivated by the beauty and

mysteries contained within this coral treasure chest of biodiversity, they adventured together to record and photograph their personal discoveries in the hope of inspiring many others to understand and commit to safeguarding the Coral Triangle region.

As I often say, you cannot save what you do not love. You cannot love what you do not know. This book helps us to know, love and ultimately save the Coral Triangle.

Dato' Seri Tengku Zainal Adlin
President
WWF-Malaysia



Left: A newly hatched Hawksbill Turtle (*Eretmochelys imbricata*) ventures into the open sea. Turtles are not confined by national boundaries and require all countries in their range to engage in conservation efforts.