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Port and harbour construction is essential for domestic and international economic development for many coral reef countries and territories.

Dredging in a Sensitive Environment: coral reefs

Coral reefs are found in the waters of 109 countries and territories worldwide. Most of these are developing countries or Small Island Developing States, which rely on shipping and sea transport for trade and tourism. It is essential that coastal development can be achieved without forfeiting the goods and services provided by healthy marine ecosystems such as coral reefs.

Coral reefs support more than one quarter of all marine species. They form the basis of the livelihoods of one billion people world wide and provide annual net benefits of around US\$30 billion.

The UNEP Coral Reef Unit is collaborating with the dredging industry to help reduce the ecological footprint of dredging operations, by promoting the use of engineering solutions based on sound environmental principles.



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Dive tourism is big business with over 10 million PADI registered divers. It accounts for up to 80% of GDP in some Caribbean Islands. This requires the support of significant coastal infrastructure.



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The impact of dredging on coral reefs varies depending on the dredging technique, timing, types of reef organisms in the area, local conditions and influence of any other sources of stress.



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Development for a sustainable future requires attention to social and economic needs, which must be underpinned by sound ecological principles.