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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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SAIPAN - One of the foremost policy groups guiding national and international coral reef conservation will convene in Saipan this September for the 2010 U.S. Coral Reef Task Force meeting.

The 24th meeting of the Task Force will take place Sept. 15 and 16 at the Saipan World Resort. Hosting the meeting provides an opportunity for the region to highlight the coral reef conservation work underway throughout the Marianas and Micronesia, including watershed restoration projects and climate change adaptation strategies.

The meeting will highlight the Micronesia Challenge, a commitment made by regional leadership to effectively conserve at least 30 percent of the near-shore marine resources and 20 percent of the terrestrial resources across Micronesia by 2020.

CNMI Governor Benigno R. Fitial is very much pleased that the task force had accepted his invitation to hold their annual meeting in Saipan. Governor Fitial had extended the invitation during a previous meeting with key officials in the nation's capital.

"I am sincerely grateful and elated that the task force will be coming this way in September. This is a great opportunity for our islands to showcase the conservation efforts being implemented locally," said Gov. Fitial.

Prior to the meeting, Task Force members are slated to visit militarization sites in Guam. Afterward, members will head to Pohnpei for meetings with President Emanuel Mori. They will tour Nett Municipality's watershed and water quality project.

The United States Coral Reef Task Force (USCRTF) was established in 1998 by Presidential Executive Order to lead U.S. efforts to preserve and protect coral reef ecosystems. The Task Force represents 12 Federal agencies, and seven Governors from the Territory of Guam, State of Hawaii, State of Florida, Territory of American Samoa, U.S. Virgin Islands, Puerto Rico, Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands and affiliate members include the three Freely Associated States. The USCRTF helps build partnerships, strategies, and support for on-the-ground action to conserve coral reefs.

For further information on the meeting: <http://coralreef.gov/>

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