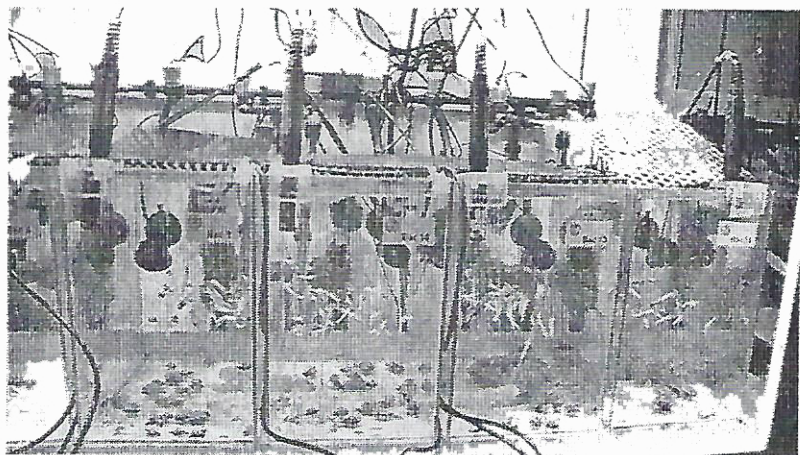


# PICRC receives grant to study effects of microplastics on coral health



The Prince Albert II of Monaco Foundation officially announced the upcoming support to the Palau International Coral Reef Center (PICRC) and the Scientific Center of Monaco (CSM) to conduct research on the effects of microplastics on coral reef health.

The pollution of the world's oceans with plastic debris, and particularly with microplastics, is rapidly increasing. This increase presents a major concern for the health of marine ecosystems. Since plastic particles do not degrade, they persist in the marine environment and can severely impact marine life. Plastic pollution is particularly high in tropical areas, where it constitutes a major concern for coral reefs and was recently described to exacerbate the occurrence of coral disease.

Although plastic pollution has potentially detrimental effects on coral reefs, there is still insufficient information available about the impacts of plastics on the physiology and symbiotic integrity of reef-building corals.

This joint project between PICRC and CSM aims to establish a long-term monitoring survey of microplastic pollution on reefs in Palau and to raise public awareness about the ecological impacts of plastic pollution. Secondly, the project involves several controlled laboratory experiments to distinguish between direct and indirect effects of microplastic pollution on reef-building corals.

The results of this study will help 1) to improve our understanding of the detrimental mechanisms behind microplastic pollution and the health of coral reef organisms and 2) to inform and teach local communities about plastic pollution in order to develop relevant management strategies to preserve our valuable reef ecosystems in the future.

Ultimately, PICRC and CSM hope to achieve two things with this work: educating the public about the environmental problems related to microplastic pollution, and building capacity of Palauan students and researchers to successfully conduct long-term plastic monitoring activities in Palau.