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TOO PRECIOUS TO WEAR STATEMENT ON ‘STATUS OF CORAL REEFS OF THE WORLD: 2008’ REPORT

WASHINGTON, D.C. (December 9, 2008) – Climate change, ocean acidification and human impacts are the major threats to coral reefs worldwide, according to a new report released tomorrow, Dec. 10. ‘The Status of Coral Reefs of the World: 2008’, issued by the International Coral Reef Initiative (ICRI), is a global assessment with 370 contributors from 96 countries. The report predicts that we have roughly a decade to reduce carbon emissions or face major losses of coral reefs throughout the world. The 2004 edition of the same report found that 20 percent of the world’s coral reefs were beyond repair.

Too Precious to Wear, a campaign to empower consumers and industry professionals to create a demand for coral conservation, urges policymakers to actively support coral conservation and pass strong legislation in 2009, including a meaningful Coral Reef Conservation Act that addresses the threat of climate change to corals, as well as the unregulated and unsustainable coral trade. Corals are in high demand for use in jewelry, curios and home décor items. Red and pink corals, also known as *Corallium*, are among the most valuable and widely traded of all corals, yet are afforded no international trade protection.

The United States, as the world’s largest documented importer of red and pink corals, has placed significant pressure on these threatened animals, importing more than 26 million pieces from 2001 to 2006. *Too Precious to Wear* is urging the U.S. and other countries to list red and pink corals under Appendix II of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES) at the next Conference of Parties meeting in January 2010.

If threats to corals such as over harvesting and consumer demand are reduced, these marine animals will have a better chance of surviving climate change. *Too Precious to Wear* is encouraging consumers to do their part and refuse to purchase jewelry or other items made from real coral. For a list of coral alternatives, visit www.tooprecioustowear.org.

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For interviews with spokespeople and high-resolution photos of corals, coral alternative products and/or B-roll footage of corals and coral reefs, please contact Corinne Knutson at 808.497.3360 or cknutson@seaweb.org

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For further information, visit www.tooprecioustowear.org or www.seaweb.org. SeaWeb is a communications-based nonprofit organization that uses social marketing techniques to advance ocean conservation. By raising public awareness, advancing science-based solutions and mobilizing decision-makers around ocean conservation, SeaWeb is leading voices for a healthy ocean.