

CSD-15 Partnerships Fair Speaker Biography

Dr. Tom Goreau

Dr. Tom Goreau, President of the Global Coral Reef Alliance, a non-profit organization for coral reef protection and sustainable management, has dived longer and in more coral reefs around the world than any scientist. His father was the world's first diving marine scientist, and he grew up swimming in coral reefs as soon as he could walk.

He was previously Senior Scientific Affairs Officer at the United Nations Centre for Science and Technology for Development, in charge of global climate change and biodiversity issues. He has published around 200 papers in all areas of coral reef ecology, and on global climate change, the global carbon cycle, changes in global ocean circulation, tropical deforestation and reforestation, microbiology, marine diseases, soil science, atmospheric chemistry, community-based coastal zone management, mathematical modeling of climate records, visualizing turbulent flow around marine organisms, scientific photography, and other fields. He developed the method to predict the location, timing, and severity of coral bleaching from satellite data with Ray Hayes. He holds patents with Wolf Hilbertz for new methods for preserving coral reefs from global warming and pollution, restoring marine ecosystems, shore protection, mariculture, and non-toxic methods of preserving wood from marine boring organisms, termites, rot, and fire, in order to increase the lifetime of wood and decrease logging. In 1998 he and Wolf Hilbertz were awarded the Theodore M. Sperry Award for Pioneers and Innovators, the top award of the Society for Ecological Restoration.

Dr. Goreau led developing country NGO efforts in marine and climate issues at the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (Rio de Janeiro, 1992), the UN Summits on Development of Small Island Developing States (Barbados, 1994, Mauritius, 2005), and the UN World Summit on Sustainable Development (Johannesburg, 2002). Dr. Goreau works with tropical fishing communities around the world to restore their coral reefs and fisheries, especially the Kuna Indians of Panama, the only Native people of the Americas who have preserved their cultural and political independence. He is also a hereditary leader of the Yolngu Dhuwa Aboriginal clan of Arnhem Land, Australia, that preserves the oldest creation myth in the world. Of Panamanian origin, he was educated in Jamaican primary and secondary schools, at MIT (B.Sc in Planetary Physics), Caltech (M.Sc in Planetary Astronomy), Yale, Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution, and Harvard (Ph.D. in Biogeochemistry), and is a certified nuisance crocodile remover.

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