

**Documents for the**

**23rd IORA Meeting**

**of the**

**Committee of Senior Officials**

**(CSO)**

**Theme: “Harnessing the opportunities of the Indian Ocean sustainably for inclusive development”**

**Platform: Hybrid (in-person at Dhaka and Zoom)**

**Monday, 15November 2021**

**Tuesday, 16November 2021**

**From12:00 to 18:00**

**BST time (GMT+6)**

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**DRAFT AGENDA**

**DAY 1: MONDAY 15 NOVEMBER 2021**

1. **OPENING SESSION**
	1. Welcome Address and Report of the outgoing Chairperson (Outgoing Chair, UAE)

*Handing over of the Chair, Vice Chair, and Past Chair*

* 1. Welcoming and opening remarks by the Incoming Chairperson (Bangladesh)
	2. Opening remarks by Incoming Vice Chairperson (Sri Lanka)
	3. Outline of Arrangements and Adoption of the Agenda (Chair, Bangladesh)
	4. Report of the Acting Secretary-General **(**Secretariat, IORA**)**

*Family photo*

1. **APPOINTMENT OF THE IORA SECRETARY GENERAL**

2.1 Report: Selection of the next Secretary-General of IORA (RSC Chair, UAE)

**3. IORA ACTION PLAN (2017-2021) & SECOND IORA ACTION PLAN**

3.1 Report: Status of the implementation of the IORA Action Plan (2017-2021) (Chair, Bangladesh)

3.2 Report: Workshop to discuss the Second IORA Action Plan and consideration of the Second IORA Action Plan (2022-2027) (Chair, Bangladesh)

3.3 Update: Identification of future Coordinating and Cluster Countries (Secretariat)

3.4 Update: Bi-annual meeting of the IORA Working/ Core Group Chairs/ Priority Area Coordinating Countries (Secretariat)

**4. MEMBERSHIP ELIGIBLITY CRITERIA**

4.1 Update: Workshop to finalize the IORA’s membership eligibility criteria (Chair, Bangladesh)

**5 DIALOGUE PARTNERS: STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT, ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA AND APPLICATIONS**

5.1 Report: Workshop on the strategic management of IORA’s engagement with Dialogue Partners, and criteria/eligibility of potential Dialogue Partners (India)

5.2 Reports: Status of Programmes/Commitments made by Dialogue Partners (Secretariat)

5.3 Update: Application by the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia as Dialogue Partner (Secretariat)

**6. MARITIME SAFETY AND SECURITY (MSS)** – *Coordinating Country: Sri Lanka*

6.1 Update: Progress Report on the Work Plan of the WGMSS (Sri Lanka)

6.2 Update: Preparations for the Third Meeting of the IORA Working Group on Maritime Safety and Security (WGMSS) (Sri Lanka)

6.3 Update: Proposal to investigate greater synergies between IORA and other aspects of the maritime security architecture in the region (France/Reunion)

6.4 Update: Ramifications of ship disasters in the Indian Ocean in the aftermath of the recent MV-X Press Pearl Vessel disaster (Sri Lanka)

6.5 Update: Establishing legal frameworks in the Indian Ocean region in the field of Maritime Safety and Security (MSS) (India)

**7. TRADE AND INVESTMENT FACILITATION (TIF)** –*Coordinating Country: Mauritius*

7.1 Update: Progress Report on the Work Plan of the WGTI (Mauritius)

7.2 Update: Preparations for the 19th Meeting of the Working Group on Trade and Investment (WGTI) (Mauritius)

7.3 Update: Status of the Indian Ocean Rim Business Forum (IORBF) and handing over of the IORBF Chair to Bangladesh and Remarks by Incoming Chair of IORBF (UAE/Bangladesh)

7.4 Update: Collaboration between IORA and Global Trade Review (GTR) (Australia)

7.5 Update: Signature of SME MOU (Secretariat)

7.6 Update: Collaboration between IORA and Financial Times for the Africa Summit, 19 October 2021 (Secretariat)

**8. FISHERIES MANAGEMENT (FM)** – *Coordinating Country: Indonesia*

8.1 Update: Progress Report on the Work Plan of the Core Group on Fisheries Management (CGFM) (Indonesia)

8.2 Report: First Meeting of IORA Core Group on Fisheries Management (CGFM) (Indonesia)

8.3 Report: Activities of the Fisheries Support Unit (FSU)

8.4 Update: Activities under MoU between IORA and AFD (Secretariat)

**9.** **DISASTER RISK MANAGEMENT (DRM)** – *Coordinating Country: India*

9.1 Update: Terms of Reference (TOR) of the Working Group on Disaster Risk Management (CGDRM) and Work Plan for Disaster Risk Management (India)

9.2 Update: Establishing legal frameworks in the Indian Ocean region in the field of Disaster Risk Management (India)

9.3 Update: Signature on Search and Rescue (SAR) MOU (Secretariat)

9.4 New proposal: IORA Sustainable Health Initiative (Mauritius)

9.5 New proposal: MoU between IORA-Coalition for Disaster Resilient Infrastructure (CDRI) (Secretariat)

**10.** **ACADEMIC, SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY COOPERATION (AST)** – *Coordinating Country: India*

10.1 Report: Third Meeting of theSub-Committee on Indian Ocean Rim Association Academic Group (IORAG) Reform (India)

10.2 Report: 26th Meeting of the Indian Ocean Rim Academic Group (IORAG) (India/UAE)

10.3 Report: First Working Group Meeting on Science Technology and Innovation (WGSTI) (India)

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10.5 Update: Implementation of ICE for the IORA Member States (India)

10.6 Update: Establishment of the Research Support Unit (RSU) and the position of Policy Advisor and Research Coordinator (PARC) (India)

10.7 Report: Online course on 'Principles of Ocean Remote Sensing and its applications' (India)

10.8 Report: Online course on 'Fundamentals of Ocean Data Management' (India)

10.9 Report: Activities of the Regional Centre for Science and Technology Transfer (RCSTT)

10.10 Update: Journal of the Indian Ocean Region (JIOR) (Secretariat)

**DAY 2: TUESDAY 16 NOVEMBER 2021**

**11.** **TOURISM AND CULTURAL EXCHANGES (TCE)***– Coordinating Country: UAE*

11.1 Report: Second meeting of the Core Group on Tourism (CGT) (UAE)

11.2 Update: Establishment of the Tourism Resource Centre (TRC) (Secretariat)

11.3 Update: Creation of tourism platforms (digital or otherwise) for sharing of best practices (South Africa)

**12.** **BLUE ECONOMY (BE)** *– Coordinating Country: South Africa*

12.1 Update: Progress Report on the Work Plan of the WGBE (South Africa)

12.2 Update: Preparations for the Fourth IORA Ministerial Blue Economy Conference (BEC-IV) (Sri Lanka)

12.3 Update: Preparations for the Third meeting of the Working Group on Blue Economy (WGBE) (South Africa)

12.4 Update: IORA workshop on Blue Economy (France/Reunion)

12.5 Activities by IORA Blue Carbon Hub

12.5.1 Update: Second round of IORA Blue Carbon Hub Early Career Visiting Scientist programme (Australia)

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12.6 Update: Consideration of IORA White Paper on Blue Carbon Finance (Australia)

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12.8 Update: Research Study on “COVID-19 and Climate Change: Prospects for a “Blue” Recovery in the Indian Ocean Region” (Secretariat)

**13.** **WOMEN’S ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT (WGWEE)** -*Coordinating Country: Australia*

13.1 Report: Fourth Meeting of the Working Group on Women’s Economic Empowerment (WGWEE) and Progress Report on the Work Plan of the WGWEE (Australia/Mauritius)

13.2 Update: Improving gender balance in IORA (Australia)

13.3 Report: Completion of the UN Women-IORA project “Promoting Women’s Economic Empowerment in the Indian Ocean Rim” 2018-21 (Australia)

13.4 Report: IORA Women’s Economic Symposium: Rewriting Business Strategies for the Global Pandemic (Australia)

**14.** **INSTITUTIONAL ARRANGEMENTS AND BROADENING ENGAGEMENT** - *Coordinating Country: South Africa*

14.1 Update: Vacancy for the position of the Human Resource Manager (Secretariat)

14.2 Update: Annual IORA Calendar of events (Secretariat)

14.3 Update: IORA’s Vision on the Indo-Pacific Region (India)

14.4 Update: Streamlining decision-making processes through sub-structures (South Africa)

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14.5.3 Update: Progress in collaboration with the Indian Ocean Commission (IOC) (Secretariat)

14.5.4 Update: Collaboration with the other regional organisations and the UN (Secretariat)

14.6 Strengthening of the IORA Secretariat

14.6.1 Report: Capacity Building Programmes for IORA – Project Management Training (Singapore/ Secretariat)

14.6.2 Update: Refurbishment of the Secretariat (Secretariat)

14.6.3 Update: Capacity building initiatives under Financing Agreements with GIZ (Secretariat)

14.6.4 Update: Capacity building initiatives under Financing Agreements with AFD (Secretariat)

14.6.5 Report: Webinar on “Understanding the Indian Ocean” (Secretariat)

14.7 Update: IORA Media Network (Secretariat)

**15. FINANCE & ADMINISTRATION**

15.1 Report: Sub-Committee on Finance (SCF) (Chair of SCF, Bangladesh)

15.2 Update: Secretariat’s proposed structure and staffing needs (Secretariat)

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15.4 Update: Review of the host country agreement (Secretariat)

15.5 Update: Report on the Workshop to consider non-payment of membership fees (Secretariat)

15.6 Honorarium payment for the Acting Secretary-General (ASG) of 20% of the monthly salary if in charge for more than one month (Bangladesh)

**16.** **IORA SPECIAL FUND**

16.1 Update: Review of the Administrative Arrangements of the Special Fund including the emergency use of the Special Fund for COVID-19 response projects (Secretariat)

16.2 Special Fund projects (approved)

 16.2.1 Update: Creation of an IORA Centre of Excellence for Dispute Resolution, Special Fund (Mauritius)

 16.2.2 Update: High Level Capacity Building Programme on Gender Mainstreaming in the Six Priority Areas of IORA, Special Fund (Mauritius)

 16.2.3 Update: International Relations in the Indian Ocean Region: Collaborative Study Experience, Special Fund (Australia)

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 16.2.6 Report: Third Somalia-Yemen Development Programme (SYDP-III): “Development and Management of Somalia's and Yemen’s Marine Fisheries”, Special Fund (Secretariat)

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16.3.1 Update: Workshop on Nature-based tourism: “Boosting Livelihoods across the Indian Ocean Rim through Nature-Based Tourism”, Special Fund (Mauritius)

16.3.2 IORA Sustainable Development Programme (ISDP) (Secretariat)

**17. IORA SPECIAL PROGRAMMES**

17.1 Update: IORA Human Development Fund (IHDF) (UAE)

17.2 Update: IORA Nelson Mandela Internship Programme (NMIP) (Secretariat)

17.3 Update: Preparations for IORA Day 2022 and 25th Anniversary of IORA (Secretariat)

17.4 Update: IORA “Connecting the Youth of the Indian Ocean Region” Writing Competition (Secretariat)

17.5 Update: Indian Ocean Champion Concept (Secretariat)

17.6 New Proposal: IORA-Dhaka Development Initiative (Chair, Bangladesh)

**18. NEW PROPOSALS BY MEMBER STATES (if any) (Chair, Bangladesh)**

**19. PREPARATIONS FOR THE 21ST COUNCIL OF MINISTERS’ MEETING, DISCUSSION ON:**

19.1 Draft COM Agenda (Chair, Bangladesh)

19.2 Draft Dhaka Communiqué (Chair, Bangladesh)

**20. PREPARATIONS FOR THE NEXT MEETING: 11TH IORA BI-ANNUAL MEETING OF THE COMMITTEE OF SENIOR OFFICIALS (Bangladesh)**

**21. ANY OTHER BUSINESS (AOB) (Chair, Bangladesh)**

**22. ADOPTION OF THE DECISION REPORT AND CLOSING REMARKS (Chair, Bangladesh)**

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**IOR/23CSO-Annual/2021/DOC2**

**DRAFT ANNOTATED AGENDA**

The report of the meeting will primarily be a ‘decision report’ capturing the decisions made in the meeting. The full report will be prepared and made available to the Chair soon after the conclusion of the CSO which would then be circulated to all Member States for final approval. A copy of the 11th Bi-annual CSO decision circulated to Member States on 30 June 2021 is annexed at **Document No. IOR/23CSO-Annual/2021/DOC2.1.**

The IORA Secretariat has prepared the annotated agenda to provide delegates on the status of all activities in IORA.

# 1. OPENING SESSION

## 1.1 Welcome Address and Report of the outgoing Chairperson (Outgoing Chair, UAE)

The Outgoing Chair, the United Arab Emirates (UAE), will welcome participants to the 23rd Committee of Senior Officials (CSO) meeting and present the report on developments during the Chairmanship of the UAE.

*Desired Outcome:* The CSO to note of the outgoing Chairperson’s Report.

*Handing over of the Chair, Vice Chair, and Past Chair*

## 1.2 Welcoming and opening remarks by the Incoming Chairperson (Bangladesh)

After reading the Chairperson's Report, the Outgoing Chair (UAE) will invite the People’s Republic of Bangladesh, which was offered to assume the position of Vice-Chair of IORA from 2019-21 and eventually for the position of Chair for the period of 2021-23 and approved by the COM in its 18thmeeting held on 2 November 2018 in Durban, South Africa, to assumethe Chair of the CSO meeting for 2021-23. Bangladesh, as the new Chair, to address the CSO.

*Desired Outcome:* Bangladesh will assume the Chair of the CSO meeting for a period of two years (2021-23).

The CSO to take note of the remarks by the incoming Chairperson, Bangladesh.

Member States to express appreciation to the Outgoing Chair, UAE for its great contribution to IORA during its Chairship, congratulatethe People’s Republic of Bangladesh for assuming the Chair and to also express appreciation to the Republic of South Africa as Outgoing member of the Troika.

## 1.3 Opening remarks by Incoming Vice Chairperson (Sri Lanka)

After the Incoming Chairperson’s opening remarks and assuming the Chairship, the new Chair, Bangladesh, will invite the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka, which was offered to assume the position of Vice-Chair of IORA from 2021-23 and approved by the COM in its 20thmeeting held virtually on 17December 2020, to assume the Vice-Chair for 2021-23. Sri Lanka, as the new Vice-Chair, to address the CSO.

*Desired Outcome:* The Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka will assume the position of Vice-Chair.

The CSO to take note of the remarks by the Vice Chairperson, Sri Lanka.

Member States to congratulate the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lankafor assuming the Vice-Chair.

## 1.4 Outline of Arrangements and Adoption of the Agenda (Chair, Bangladesh)

*The Chair will introduce the draft Agenda and as per Paragraph 5.1.3 of the Rules of Procedure of the IORA Charter, willinvite the CSO for any comments and/or additions, if any, before adoption.*

The Draft Agenda is attached at **Document No. IOR/23CSO-Annual/2021/DOC1**.

*Desired Outcome:* The Draft Agenda to be adopted by the CSO.

## 1.5 Report of the Acting Secretary-General (Secretariat, IORA)

*The Chair will invite Dr Gatot Hari Gunawan, Acting Secretary-General of IORA, to present his report to the CSO.*

Dr Gunawan will present the report on progress of various projects and major recent developments in IORA and the activities of the Secretariat.

*Desired Outcome:* The CSO to take note of the report of the Acting Secretary-General, IORA*.*

# 2. APPOINTMENT OF THE IORA SECRETARY GENERAL

## 2.1 Report: Selection of the next Secretary-General of IORA (RSC Chair, UAE)

*The RSC Chair, UAE, will present his report to the CSO on the selection of the next Secretary-General of IORA including the report and recommendation of the Recruitment and Selection Committee (RSC).*

Following the Extra-ordinary CSO meeting held virtually on 14 September 2021(a recommendation made by the Ad\_hoc Working Group (AhWG) to convene an extra-ordinary CSO/COM once the AhWG completes its deliberations) and hosted by the IORA Chair, UAE, the following communication went out:

1. 14 September 2021 – Secretariat sought the approval of the CSO IORA Troika to initiate the process on behalf of the Foreign Ministers of the COM TROIKA for the Intercessional Ministerial Decision.One of the agreed outcomes of the Extra-ordinary CSO meetingwas to write to all Member States seeking an Intercessional Ministerial Decision on the Terms of Reference of the Recruitment and Selection Committee (RSC) and the expedited timeline for the selection of the IORA Secretary-General.

As the Rules of Procedure (RoP) of the IORA Charter, which contained the prescribed process for obtaining Intercessional Ministerial Decisions by the COM, mentioned that the Intercessional Ministerial Decision should be obtained from the Foreign Ministers of the COM TROIKA, the Secretariat accordingly sought the approval of the CSO IORA TROIKA to initiate the process on behalf of the Foreign Ministers of the COM TROIKA. The proposal by the Secretariat was approved by the IORA CSO TROIKA.

1. 15 - 30 September 2021 - Following the approval by the IORA CSO Troika, the Secretariat, on 15 September 2021, circulated the Terms of Reference of the Recruitment and Selection Committee (RSC) and the expedited timeline for the selection of the IORA Secretary-General seeking the Intercessional Ministerial Decision of their respective Foreign Ministers.Member States endorsed the Terms of Reference (TOR) of the Recruitment and Selection Committee (RSC) and the expedited timeline for the selection of the IORA Secretary-General except for Mauritius which had no objection to the TOR of the RSC, subject to certain amendments to the TOR RSC and also requested for clarification at Annex A, Paragraph 2.5 (iii) of the TOR relating where two candidates achieved the same score.
2. On 30 September 2021, the IORA Secretariat, while forwarding the feedback received from Member States on the RSC TOR, sought the guidance of the IORA CSO TROIKA on the feedback received from Mauritius. While acknowledging that the amendments were purportedly not substantive but deemed necessary to improve and clarify the language in the TOR of the RSC, the IORA CSO Troika suggested that this would require further Member States endorsement. With regard to Annex A, Paragraph 2.5 (iii), the IORA CSO TROIKA suggested that should the future situation arose whereby two candidates achieved the same score, the CSO can decide on the best way forward in determining the most suitable candidate.
3. 7 October 2021 – The IORA Secretariat, while informing the Member States on the feedback received on the RSC TOR and the expedited timeline, communicated the suggestion by the IORA CSO TROIKA to Member States on Mauritius’ feedback on the document which advised the IORA Secretariat to initiate the selection process and to simultaneously seek Member States’ endorsement for the non-substantive amendments proposed by Mauritius as a matter of utmost urgency. Kenya, Singapore agreed with the version of the draft ToR as amended by Mauritius.
4. 7 October 2021 – The IORA Secretariat wrote to the Member States following alphabetical order seeking interest to be included in RSC until the compliment of four was reached.

15 October 2021 -The IORA Secretariat, following the approval by the IORA Chair, UAE, launched the call for nominations for the new Secretary-General on its behalf and invited Member States to nominate suitable candidates for this position. The said communication also included the RSC TOR with the non-substantive amendment proposed by Mauritius, with a request for their endorsement of the amendments by Wednesday, 27 October 2021.On 18 October, Indonesia presented its candidature to the said available position and nominated H. E. Salman Al Farisi, the Ambassador of the Republic of Indonesia to the Republic of South Africa, as the new Secretary-General of IORA. The information was conveyed to Member States on 21 October 2021. The supporting information (curriculum vitae, statement of claims, and statement of vision for IORA), received from Indonesia was conveyed to Member States on 23 October 2021. In addition, the Secretariat received the nominee from Sri Lanka on 27 October 2021 and which was conveyed to all Member States on 27 October 2021. On the same date, the Secretariat received request from Member States to extend the deadline. After the approval of the TROIKA on the request, the information was conveyed to Member States on 28 October 2021 to extend the deadlines for nomination of the new Secretary-General until Monday, 1st November 2021. The new schedule agreed was as follows:

1. **Monday, 1 November 2021** – Secretariat will send nominations together with the supporting information received from Member States and the marking sheet to RSC.
2. **Tuesday, 2 November 2021 to Monday, 9 November 2021**- Shortlisting and virtual interview by RSC.
3. **Wednesday, 10 November 2021**– RSC Chair to send selected candidate to Secretariat for onward transmission to Member States.
4. **November 15-16, 2021** - Presentation of selected candidate at CSO/COM and adopted by COM on 17 November 2021.
5. **January 1, 2022** - Assumption of Duty by new Secretary-General (SG)

*Desired Outcome:* The CSO to evaluate the recommendation of the Recruitment and Selection Committee (RSC) and to make an appropriate recommendation to COM on the appointment of the next Secretary-General, IORA to assume duty in January 2022.

# 3. IORA ACTION PLAN (2017-2021) & SECOND IORA ACTION PLAN

## 3.1 Report: Status of the implementation of the IORA Action Plan (2017-2021) (Chair, Bangladesh)

*The Chair, Bangladesh, will provide a brief report on the status on the implementation of the IORA Action Plan (2017-2021).*

The CSO will recall that the Secretariat was requested at the 11th Bi-annual CSO meeting, held on 15-16 June 2021, to consolidate further feedback from other Coordinating Countries provided during this CSO meeting for reporting to the Chair Vice-Chair, Bangladesh, as a matter of urgency.

The Secretariat shared the updated IORA Action Plan (2017-2021), which was conveyed to Member States on 19 August 2021, at the Third Session of the Workshop to Discuss the Draft ‘Zero’ of the Second IORA Action Plan and Review of the IORA Action Plan (2017-2021) held on 23 August 2021. The Chair of the workshop, Bangladesh, provided an overview on the current status, on the lessons learnedand pointed out that several activities of the Action Plan have not been implemented because of challenges such as the COVID-19 pandemic and it was difficult to have meetings among the coordinating countries. However, it was mentioned that those incomplete activities could be carried forward in the new Action Plan

*Desired Outcome:* The CSO to note the report by Bangladesh on the status on the implementation of the IORA Action Plan (2017-2021)*.*

## 3.2 Report: Workshop to discuss the Second IORA Action Plan and consideration of the Second IORA Action Plan (2022-2027) (Chair, Bangladesh)

*The Chair, Bangladesh, will provide a brief report on the workshops that was held virtually on 23 August 2021 and 12 October 2021 to discuss the Second IORA Action Plan and the CSO will be invited to consider the final Second IORA Action Plan (2022-2027) and to recommend endorsement by Ministers.*

The CSO will recall that at its meeting held virtually on 15—16 June 2021, it was agreed that the Second IORA Action Plan should be finalised by the next CSO and recommended to the COM for endorsement at the end of the year. In addition, Member States were requested to provide feedback on the draft ‘Zero’ of the Second Action Plan. The feedback received from Member States received attention at the third session of the workshop held on 23 August 2021 and hosted by Bangladesh. During the workshop, it was found that there had not yet been adequate consultation among some Cluster Groups, and draft text for multiple Priority Areas was still outstanding. On the other hand, the inputs reflected on the WEE component in the Action Plan, Australia hosted the fourth Working Group on Women's Economic Empowerment (WGWEE) and worked on the inputs by Member States and developed actions on them. Instead of this meeting reviewing the ‘Draft Zero’ as it currently stood, the meeting requested each Coordinating Country to meet and discuss among their respective Cluster Group members to come up with concrete deliverables on overarching goals for the short-term (0-2 years), medium-term (2-4 years) and long-term (4-6 years) periods.

Some Cluster Group Meetings were held by the relevant Coordinating Countries. The Secretariat received the proposed Overarching Strategic Goals together with the short-medium-long-term deliverables for the Draft ‘Zero’ of the Second IORA Action Plan from all Coordinating Countries and which were collated. In addition, the Secretariat supported Bangladesh with analysis to have a consolidated comprehensive Draft ‘Zero’.

Bangladesh also convened a further session (fourth session) on 12 October 2021. Member States provided their feedback on the “Second IORA Action Plan – Draft One” and the final draft is annexed at **Document No. IOR/23CSO-Annual/2021/DOC2.2** for the consideration by the CSO.

*Desired Outcome:* The CSO to note the report by Bangladesh on the third session to discuss the draft Second IORA Action Plan and Format and Structure of the New Action Plan

The CSO to consider the Second IORA Action Plan (2022-2027) and to recommend endorsement by Ministers.

## 3.3 Update: Identification of future Coordinating and Cluster Countries (Secretariat)

*The Chair will invite the Secretariat to update the CSO on the identification of future Coordinating and Cluster Countries, for Second IORA Action Plan (2022-2027).*

The CSO will note that at the third session of the workshop held on 23 August 2021 to discuss the draft Concept Note on the Drafting Process of the Second IORA Action Plan and Format and Structure of the New Action Plan, the next Coordinating Countries and Cluster Groups of the Second IORA Action Plan received attention. Member States were requested to formally convey to the IORA Secretariat any express of interest to be a Coordinating Country, be part of Cluster Groups, or change Cluster Groups. Existing Cluster Group members would be rolled over unless indicated by the country. Existing Cluster Group members who wished to change (i.e. leave or join a Cluster Group) should communicate this in writing to the Secretariat. Inputs were received from the following Member States Australia, France/Reunion, India, Indonesia, Iran, Kenya, Madagascar, Malaysia, Mauritius, Singapore, Seychelles, Sri Lanka, South Africa.Two Coordinating Country positions did not see any volunteers to lead: Tourism and Cultural Exchange (TCE), and Women’s Economic Empowerment (WEE).

At the fourth session of the workshop on the Second IORA Action Plan held on 12 October 2021, the matter again received attention and Member States were requested to convey on their interest to be a Coordinating Country on either of the two above-mentioned areas that did have volunteers and at the same time to convey their interest to be part of the Cluster Groups or change Cluster Groups. The communication was sent to Member States on 12 October 2021. On 21 October 2021, Iran expressed its interest to be the Coordinating Country on WEE. The IORA Secretariat did not receive any volunteer to lead TCE. The final draft on identification of future Coordinating and Cluster Countries is annexed at **Document No. IOR/23CSO-Annual/2021/DOC2.3**for the consideration by the CSO. Member States are encouraged to express their interest to be the Coordinating Country of TCE.

*Desired Outcome:* The CSO to consider the future Coordinating and Cluster Countries on the Second IORA Action Plan (2022-2027)and to recommend endorsement by Ministers.

## 3.4 Update: Bi-annual meeting of the IORA Working/ Core Group Chairs/ Priority Area Coordinating Countries (Secretariat)

*The Chair of CSO will invite the IORA Secretariat to update the CSO on the proposal on Bi-annual meeting of the IORA Working/ Core Group Chairs/ Priority Area Coordinating Countries.*

The CSO will recall that the Secretariat was requested at the 11th Bi-annual CSO meeting, held on 15-16 June 2021, to recirculate the Concept Note on the proposal for a Bi-annual meeting of the IORA Working/ Core Group/Cluster Group Chairs/ Priority Area Coordinating Countries, for the feedback from Member States. In addition, India proposed for expansion of this Concept Note to include formal definition of Core Group, Cluster Group and Working Group; and for rotation of Coordinating countries for priority areas and Working Group Chairs every 2 years. Moreover, the CSO agreed that the bi-annual meeting of Working/Core Group Chairs/ Priority Area Coordinating countries would be held virtually and not necessarily in the margins of the CSO given that the CSO agenda was already lengthy.

The IORA Secretariat incorporated the inputs received from the Member States and also included the above-mentioned requests from the CSO in June 2021. The revised Concept Note was recirculated on 9 September 2021 to all Member States requesting their feedback by 23 September 2021. The Secretariat received feedback from Australia, India, Singapore and South Africa. On 8 October 2021, the IORA Secretariat re-circulated the revised Concept Note and sought from Member States any feedback on India’s and Australia’s inputs (if any) by 20 October 2021. South Africa provided its feedback on both India’s and Australia’s inputs and the Secretariat also received inputs from Bangladesh on the revised Concept Note. On 1 November, the IORA Secretariat re-circulated the revised consolidated Concept Note to Member States for their feedback by 8 November 2021and at the same time informed them that the IORA Secretariat has further expanded the Concept Note to include formal definition of Coordinating Countries and their roles following several queries by Member States on the same. Only Mauritius provided its views on the revised consolidated Concept Note dispatched to Member States on 1 November 2021. No inputs were received from other Member States by the set deadline of 8 November 2021.

*Desired Outcome:* The CSO to consider the revised Concept Note including the views received by Member States and to recommend endorsement by Ministers.

# 4. MEMBERSHIP ELIGIBLITY CRITERIA

## 4.1 Update: Workshop to finalize the IORA’s membership eligibility criteria (Chair, Bangladesh)

*The Chair, Bangladesh, willupdate the CSO on the IORA Workshop to consider the status of IORA’s membership criteria.*

The CSO, at its last meeting held virtually on 15-16 June 2021, noted the update by Bangladesh on the preparations of the workshop to consider the status of IORA’s membership criteria, including the date would be communicated in due course. The draft Concept Note of the workshop was circulated to Member States on 14 September 2021 for their feedback. Australia, Madagascar, Mauritius, Singapore and South Africa, provided their feedback on the draft. The collated inputs were then forwarded to Bangladesh on 8 October 2021 for their consideration and after looking at the feedback from Member States, Bangladesh proposed to extend the deadline for inputs upto 22 November 2021 so that the Member States can deploy more efforts to come up with constructive and thoughtful views on the draft Concept Note which will pave the way for an in-depth consultation. On 15 October 2021, the Secretariat re-circulated the draft Concept Note of the workshop to all Member States for feedback.

*Desired Outcome:* The CSO to note the report by Bangladesh on the workshop to consider the status of IORA’s membership criteria and to advise on the way forward.

# 5 DIALOGUE PARTNERS: STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT, ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA AND APPLICATIONS

## 5.1 Report: Workshop on the strategic management of IORA’s engagement with Dialogue Partners, and criteria/eligibility of potential Dialogue Partners (India)

*The Chair will invite India to update the CSO on the Workshop held for the criteria/eligibility of potential Dialogue Partners.*

The ‘Structuring IORA's Engagement with Dialogue Partners’ Workshop was held on 30 June 2021, virtually by India. Member States may recall the discussions held during the Workshop on the draft regulations for the engagement with Dialogue Partners and the request made for additional comments and views. The Secretariat circulated the revised regulations as per the outcomes during Workshop on 16 July 2021, along with the Workshop Executive Summary report for consideration. The views and suggestions from the following Member States have been received: Australia on 30 July 2021, Bangladesh on 29 June 2021, Iran on 31 July 2021, Indonesia on 31 July 2021, Madagascar on 27 July 2021, Mauritius on 29 July 2021, and Singapore on 29 July 2021.

In addition, Member States may recall the discussions held under *point number 8: Dialogue Partner Consent* during the Workshop, in which the Islamic Republic of Iran proposed to provide a draft format for consideration. The draft ‘Letter of Engagement Between the Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA) and the IORA Dialogue Partner (Name)’ was submitted by Iran on 05 July 2021 and transmitted to India on 06 July 2021 for consideration. The Secretariat shared the consolidated draft of the ‘Regulations for implementation of Article 4 (b) (i) of the IORA Charter on status of Dialogue Partnership’ and the draft Executive Summary to India on 10 August 2021 for consideration and guidance on the way forward. The Secretariat circulated a reminder to India on 19 October 2021.The IORA Secretariat circulated the updated draft of the ‘Regulations for implementation of Article 4 (b) (i) of the IORA Charter on the status of Dialogue Partnership’ to Member States on 03 November 2021 for consideration. In addition, Member States were requested to provide any additional views by no later than Wednesday, 10 November 2021.

*Desired Outcome:* The CSO to note the update by India on the draft of the ‘Regulations for implementation of Article 4 (b) (i) of the IORA Charter on status of Dialogue Partnership’.

## 5.2 Reports: Status of Programmes/Commitments made by Dialogue Partners (Secretariat)

*The Chair will invite the IORA Secretariat to provide a status report on programmes/commitments made by Dialogue Partners.*

**China:**

The CSO may note that Dr. Gatot H. Gunawan, the Acting Secretary-General received a courtesy call from His Excellency ZHU Liying, the new Ambassador of China in Mauritius, on September 16, 2021, at the Secretariat. The two sides exchanged views on enhancing the cooperation of China-IORA relations. After the courtesy call, a signing ceremony was held for China Contribution to the IORA. China contributed US$90,000 to support the mechanism construction and cooperation projects of IORA, especially IORA and its Member States’ fight against COVID-19. In addition, the CSO may note that China earlier provided medication to the IORA Secretariat for related-Covid-19 mild symptom.

*Desired Outcome:* The CSO to note the update by the IORA Secretariat and that the Secretariat is continuing to engage with China on potential collaboration.

**Egypt:**

The CSO may note that Mr. Rajib Tripura, Director at the Secretariat, paid a courtesy visit to her Excellency Dr.Alya'a Samir Borhan, Ambassador of the Arab Republic of Egypt to Mauritius on 15 October 2021. The Director briefed the Ambassador about IORA and its priority areas and cross cutting issues. He informed that Egypt became IORA Dialogue Partners in March 1999. However, there has not been any concrete action of collaboration. He also mentioned that Egypt submitted a proposal on the potential areas of cooperation a few years back, but no progress is seen so far. He further shared potential areas of cooperation including cultural exchanges, tourism and academic exchanges. He categorically requested to appoint an IORA National Focal Point to establish an institutional communication to discuss about potential partnerships. The Ambassador appreciated for the briefing and information and noted the request of appointing NFP. She said she would send a report to her capital about the meeting with recommendation to appoint an IORA NFP in the Foreign Ministry.

*Desired Outcome:* The CSO to note the update by the IORA Secretariat and that the Secretariat is continuing to engage Egypt on potential collaboration.

**Germany:**

The 11th IORA Bi-Annual Meeting of the Committee of Senior Officials (CSO), held virtually on 15-16 June 2021, welcomed the extensive projects and initiatives envisaged for implementation under the IORA-GIZ partnership and approved the updated draft IORA-GIZ Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) which was signed on 21 December 2020 by the Secretary-General GIZ Project Director, and by Mr Christoph Feldkötter, GIZ Country Director, Madagascar, on 6 January 2021. The MOU extends and expands the programme of cooperation between IORA and GIZ from 1 July 2020 to 30 June 2022.

In March 2021, the Secretariat met with the GIZ Director responsible for the IORA-GIZ MOU, Dr Thomas Krimmel, for an operational planning session to discuss the current Member State, GIZ and Secretariat concepts received for possible projects and initiatives to be submitted for future consideration by CSO under the expanded MOU. This was followed by a meeting with the GIZ Project Director, and by Mr Christoph Feldkötter, on 21 May where the following pipeline of projects were identified for further conceptualisation and CSO approval:

**Blue Economy & Climate Change**

1. Low carbon maritime transport in the Indo-Pacific Region. A GIZ project proposal for IORA to participate in a German € 20 million project to contribute to the exchange of experience, through South-South Dialogue, to promote clean maritime transport within the region is being discussed with the WGBE.
2. Workshops on IORA Actions Against Marine Debris. An Indonesia and GIZ proposal to organize a series of workshops for IORA Member States to develop a specific framework in combating marine debris in Indian Ocean region is being discussed with the WGBE. This will be further discussed under agenda item “12.7 Update: IORA Actions Against Marine Debris (Indonesia)”.
3. Webinar on Maritime Space for the Nationally Determined Contributions (NDC) Revision of IORA Member States. A Kenya and GIZ proposal for a webinar on this topic is being discussed with the WGBE as a means to realizing the full potential for reducing GHG emissions related to the maritime space while protecting and enhancing the use of the GHG absorption potential of coastal areas.
4. Research Study on COVID-19 and Climate Change will be further discussed under agenda item “12.8 Update: Research Study on “COVID-19 and Climate Change: Prospects for a “Blue” Recovery in the Indian Ocean Region” (Secretariat))”.
5. IORA Training Workshop on Sustainable Event Management. A GIZ proposal is being discussed with the Secretariat to host an interactive training workshop for IORA to develop guidelines for arranging IORA events and meetings in a sustainable and resources-friendly manner. Proposal is being developed into a Concept Note.
6. IORA workshop on the appropriate consideration of climate change in IORA´s strategic orientation – Proposal by South Africa under the BEWG, with GIZ support. A Webinar is scheduled to be held on 8 November 2021, organized by RCSTT and GIZ.
7. Workshop Series on Effects of Climate Change on the Indian Ocean Marine Environment – GIZ offer of financial assistance to the RCSTT to host the Workshop series. This will be further discussed under agenda item “15.3.4 Update: Workshop on the Impacts of Climate Change on the Marine Environment for IORA Countries (RCSTT)”. The Workshop will be held in hybrid format in Kish Island, Iran in February or April 2022.

**Disaster Risk Management**

1. UNITAR Training Programme on Geospatial Information Technology (GIT) will be discussed under agenda item “14.5.1 Report: Training Programme Geospatial Information Technology (GIT) for Operational planning and Decision-making in Disaster Risk Management (Secretariat)”
2. IORA Sustainable Health Initiative. Mauritius is proposing a project that will see IORA Member States, their academics and business communities, come together to converse and collaborate to optimise on each other’s’ strengths in the health sector and sub-sectors, in particular with a view to swiftly respond to the appearance of sudden disasters. The Concept Note was circulated on 19 October 2021 to Member States, and a revised version of Concept Note addressing existing Member States view/inputs on 22 October 2021. This will be further discussed under agenda item “9.4 New proposal: IORA Sustainable Health Initiative (Mauritius)”.
3. IORA Disaster Resilient Infrastructure (DRI) Workshop. Mauritius is proposing to host a Workshop for IORA Small Island Developing States (Comoros, Maldives, Mauritius, Singapore. Seychelles) vulnerable to severe weather events. The Workshop is proposed to be held in Mauritius for 5 days during the Second week of December 2021. The Concept Note was circulated to India, Lead Coordinator for DRM on 01 October 2021, and to Member States on 19 October 2021 for consideration.

**Maritime Safety and Security**

1. IORA participation in the Ministerial Conference on Maritime Safety and Security (MASE) in the Western Indian Ocean, organised by Mauritius and IOC – Proposal by Mauritius for GIZ funding of participants from IORA Member States. Mauritius to provide an update on the tentative dates for the Ministerial Meeting.

**Support for the IORA Secretariat**

1. Support for the Nelson Mandela Internship Programme through the provision of ICT equipment (completed) for the interns and the procurement of training programmes (being discussed) in the the NMIP.
2. The status of the current and next Financing Agreement to strengthen the IORA Secretariat will be discussed under agenda item “14.6.3 Update: Capacity building initiatives under Financing Agreements with GIZ (Secretariat)”.

As per article 5.1. of the IORA-GIZ MOU: *“GIZ shall carry out an evaluation of the Project during or after implementation of this MoU. To this end, GIZ shall provide experts/appraisers to evaluate the Project. IORA shall participate in the evaluation and take all reasonable steps to assist the expert(s)/ appraiser(s) in their work and allow them to examine all the relevant documents. IORA shall be informed of the results of the evaluation by means of a report”.*

The evaluation is scheduled to take place from 19 November 2021 until 15 December 2021. The evaluation aims to review progress of the Project so far against its initial and revised objectives, provide feedback on the effectiveness and efficiency of Project activities to date, and to identify lessons learned, with a view to guide the implementation for the remaining project phase until June 2022, and to make recommendations for a possible continuation thereafter. The Review will be undertaken by two senior external and independent experts appointed by GIZ. The immediate recipient and user of the project progress assessment report will be GIZ and the German Foreign Office. A second key recipient and user of the assessment report will be the IORA Secretariat and Member States.

The IORA Secretariat will form an integral part of the assessment process by nominating a representative to constitute part of the assessment team, and that an interactive stakeholder workshop in the IORA Secretariat take place with virtual involvement of CSO representatives on **01 December 2021**.

The Draft Concept Note with the tentative dates for the Progress Review/evaluation and Stakeholder Workshop with the Member States was shared with all Member States on 23 September 2021.  Confirmation of the final dates for the review and the stakeholder workshop on 1 December 2021 was shared with all Member States on 28 October 2021.

*Desired Outcome:* The CSO to note the update by the Secretariat and to welcome the extensive projects and initiatives envisaged for implementation under the IORA-GIZ MOU.

The CSO welcomed the evaluation of the IORA-GIZ project to be conducted by GIZ and encouraged Member States to attend and participate actively at the stakeholder workshop to be held on 01 December 2021.

**Italy:**

Salient current and future activities being discussed with Italy include the following:

1. Italy plans to offer a training course for cruise terminal officers from IORA countries, in collaboration with Civitavecchia’s state-of-the-art cruise terminal. This will be explored once the international travel and health situation normalises.
2. Italy proposed to host a specific high-level meeting with IORA Member States in the Italian Pavilion during Expo Dubai during the 20-26 March 2022 “Water Week”. A proposal from Italy is awaited in this regard.
3. A possible collaboration between the Indian Ocean Rim Academic Group and the University of Genova to conduct more in-depth research on cruise tourism. This will be pursued once the IORAG TOR and work plan have been finalised and approved.
4. Third Somalia-Yemen Development Programme (SYDP-III) on “Development and Management of Somalia's and Yemen’s Marine Fisheries”. It will be further discussed under agenda item “16.2.5Report: Third Somalia-Yemen Development Programme (SYDP-III): “Development and Management of Somalia's and Yemen’s Marine Fisheries”, Special Fund (Secretariat)”.
5. Training programme on Sustainable Development of Coastal Communities. The Secretariat is currently exploring the possibility of Italy hosting a dedicated training programme on Sustainable Development of Coastal Communities conducted by the International Centre for Advanced Mediterranean Agronomic Studies (CIHEAM).
6. It may be recalled that the Secretariat updated the CSO that it had been approached by Italy to discuss potential collaboration with the Union of the Mediterranean (UfM). A virtual meeting between IORA, Italy and Union for the Mediterranean was held on 17 June 2021 to discuss possibility of developing cooperation between the Indian Ocean and the Mediterranean regions. The meeting resolved that the Italian Republic will act as the facilitator for any proposed cooperation with the UfM, and that a draft proposal on the way forward and proposed projects for the CSO’s consideration would be forwarded to the Secretariat in due course.

*Desired Outcome:* The CSO to note the update by the Secretariat and to welcome the extensive projects and initiatives with Italy planned for 2021 and beyond.

**United Kingdom:**

The Secretariat is waiting for an update from the UK on next steps for potential collaboration. At the request of Mauritius as Coordinating Country for Trade and Investment Facilitation (TIF), on 11 June 2021 the Secretariat submitted an invitation for the UK to support by contributing funding for the forthcoming regional study on the investment climate (see agenda item 6.1). On 7 July 2021 the UK advised that it was not able to participate in supporting the regional investment study at this stage, but a mechanism was under consideration whereby the UK could support future projects. The Secretariat has followed up several times with the UK over July-September 2021.

*Desired outcome:* The CSO to note the update by the Secretariat that the UK has indicated it may be in a position to support projects in the future, and that the Secretariat is continuing to engage the UK on potential collaboration.

**United States of America (USA):**

The CSO on 15-16 June 2021 noted the forthcoming virtual IORA Women’s Economic Symposium for women business owners in the Indian Ocean region to be co-hosted by Australia and the USA and implemented by the NGO WEConnect International in collaboration with the Secretariat, following the circulation of a Concept Note on 12 April 2021.

The event was held successfully on 8-9 September 2021. 77 attendees from 18 IORA Member States plus the USA and IORA Secretariat participated in an innovative online platform with presentations, panels, Q&A and networking sessions that provided tangible advice to women business owners looking to integrate into larger supply chains in the Indian Ocean region. The event was publicized by the IORA Secretariat, Australia’s DFAT, the USA’s State Department and others. The Secretariat will promote conference outcomes documents and videos once available from conference organisers to increase post-event impact and exposure.

*Desired outcome:* The CSO to note the update by the Secretariat that Australia and the USA co-hosted the successful IORA Women’s Economic Symposium on 8-9 September 2021.

## 5.3 Update: Application by the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia as Dialogue Partner (Secretariat)

*The Chair will invite the Secretariat to update the CSO on the IORA Dialogue Partnership application from the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.*

At the last meeting held virtually on 15-16 June 2021, the CSO agreed to Iran’s request for more time to consider the application of Saudi Arabia’s to become a Dialogue Partner and also agreed to consider the application from Saudi Arabia again at the next CSO. On 8 October 2021, the Secretariat wrote to Iran requesting its latest position on the application by the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia as Dialogue Partner. Iran informed that the issue was still under consideration while no approach by applicant country has been shown since 11th IORA Bi-annual Committee of Senior Official’s Meeting.”.

*Desired Outcome:* The CSO to consider the position of Member States on the Dialogue Partner application from the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and to make an appropriate recommendation to COM.

# 6. MARITIME SAFETY AND SECURITY (MSS) – *Coordinating Country: Sri Lanka*

## 6.1 Update: Progress Report on the Work Plan of the WGMSS (Sri Lanka)

*The Chair will invite Sri Lanka to update the CSO on the Work Plan of the WGMSS.*

Member States may recall the update provided by Sri Lanka during the 11th Bi-annual Meeting of the CSO, which provided an overview of the updated WGMMS Work Plan discussed during the 2nd Meeting of the WGMSS held from 18 – 19 March 2021, virtually. The Work Plan reflects updated and new activities to support the preparations for the new IORA Action Plan 2022-27 (MSS), with short-, medium- and long-term activities. Outcomes of the 2nd Meeting of the WGMSS further requested Member States to indicate their interest in leading specific unallocated activities for the implementation of the Work Plan. The Secretariat received interest from Mauritius, Singapore, and Iran. The views and suggestions were circulated to Sri Lanka on 06 July and 06 September 2021 respectively.

*Desired Outcome:* The CSO to note the update on the progress made on the WGMSS Work Plan, and its contribution to the next IORA Action Plan 2022–27.

## 6.2 Update: Preparations for the Third Meeting of the IORA Working Group on Maritime Safety and Security (WGMSS) (Sri Lanka)

*The Chair will invite Sri Lanka to provide an update on the Third Meeting of the IORA Working Group on Maritime Safety and Security (3rd Meeting of the WGMSS).*

The 3rd Meeting of the WGMSS is to be held by Sri Lanka as the Lead Coordinator for MSS. Sri Lanka is to provide details for the said Meeting in due course, along with the Meeting agenda and administrative arrangements.

*Desired Outcome:* The CSO to note the update on the preparations for the Third Meeting of the IORA Working Group on Maritime Safety and Security.

The CSO to note the proposed Meeting dates of the WGMSS.

## 6.3 Update: Proposal to investigate greater synergies between IORA and other aspects of the maritime security architecture in the region (France/Reunion)

*The Chair will invite France/Reunion to update the CSO on the proposal to investigate greater synergies between IORA and other aspects of the maritime security architecture in the region.*

The CSO may recall the discussion held under agenda item 5.4 Report: Webinar IORA Capacity Building Workshop on the 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) (India) of the 11h Bi-annual CSO Meeting, and the announcement made by France/Reunion as the current chair of the Indian Ocean Commission (IOC) and Indian Ocean Naval Symposium (IONS), to investigate greater synergies between IORA and other aspects of the maritime security architecture in the region, such as joint initiatives between the IOC and IORA on MSS. France/Reunion to provide further information on its proposals for consideration by the CSO.

*Desired Outcome:* The CSO to note the update by France/Reunion on the proposal to investigate greater synergies between IORA and other aspects of the maritime security architecture in the region.

## 6.4 Update: Ramifications of ship disasters in the Indian Ocean in the aftermath of the recent MV-X Press Pearl Vessel disaster (Sri Lanka)

*The Chair will invite Sri Lanka to update the CSO on the ramifications of ship disasters in the Indian ocean in the aftermath of the recent MV-X Press Pearl Vessel disaster.*

The Secretariat received a Note Verbale form Sri Lanka on 12 July 2021, requesting for an emergency IORA Meeting to discuss ramifications of ship disasters in the Indian Ocean region. The Secretariat requested the approval of the UAE Chair on 13 July 2021 to host the proposed meeting. Approval was granted on 13 July 2021 by the Chair, which was communicated to Sri Lanka on 15 July 2021. The Secretariat requested Sri Lanka in the same communication to provide additional details regarding the Meeting date, agenda, updated Concept Note and virtual administrative arrangements for onward circulation to Member States. The Secretariat is awaiting a response from Sri Lanka.

*Desired Outcome:* The CSO to note the update on the proposed Meeting by Sri Lanka.

The CSO to note the proposed Meeting date.

## 6.5 Update: Establishing legal frameworks in the Indian Ocean region in the field of Maritime Safety and Security (MSS) (India)

*The Chair will invite India to update the CSO on the discussion paper for establishing legal frameworks in the Indian Ocean region in the field of MSS.*

Member States may recall the update provided by the India during the 11th Bi-annual CSO Meeting, on the establishment of legal frameworks in the Indian Ocean region in the field of Disaster Risk Management (DRM), and the additional papers on Maritime Safety and Security (MSS), and Fisheries to be submitted to Member States for consideration. The discussion paper submitted by India on MSS was circulated by the Secretariat on 20 July 2021. View and inputs were received from the following Member States: Australia on 06 August 2021, Bangladesh on 22 August 2021, Madagascar on 13 and 17 August 2021, and Mauritius on 05 August 2021.

*Desired Outcome:* The CSO to note the update by India on the discussion paper on the proposal for establishing legal frameworks in the Indian Ocean region on MSS.

The CSO to provide guidance on the way forward on the discussion papers.

# 7. TRADE AND INVESTMENT FACILITATION (TIF) –*Coordinating Country: Mauritius*

## 7.1 Update: Progress Report on the Work Plan of the WGTI (Mauritius)

*The Chair will invite Mauritius to provide an update on progress implementing the WGTI Work Plan.*

On 27 May 2021 the Secretariat, on behalf of Mauritius, requested Member States to provide updates to the WGTI Work Plan, for response by 30 June 2021. On 5 July the deadline for responses was extended to 30 July 2021. Responses were received from three Member States (Mauritius, Thailand and Sri Lanka) and forwarded to Mauritius on 25 August 2021.

Progress made on items within the WGTI Work Plan since the last meeting of the CSO on 15-16 June includes the following:

* Support implementation of the WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement (TFA) (Item 1): Mauritius continued internal consultations on WTO TFA technical support. This is further to the Concept Note circulated by Mauritius on 8 December 2020 for inputs by 5 February 2021, to which three Member States responded Maldives (requested assistance), Madagascar (requested assistance) and Singapore (nil return).
* Identify and reduce Non-Tariff Barriers (NTBs) (Item 2): On behalf of Mauritius, the Secretariat is currently seeking updates from Indonesia (on potential inclusion of an NTB portal in the IORA Trade Repository website) and Australia (on next steps for lessons sharing exercise on national approaches to NTBs). This is further to the Concept Note circulated on 24 November 2020 for inputs by 22 January 2021, extended to 5 February 2021, to which Australia and Singapore responded. The Secretariat sent the request to Indonesia to submit a template for Member States to submit data in order to populate the Trade Repository. The template will ensure harmonisation in the type of information which will be uploaded on the Trade Repository website.
* Facilitate movement of businesspeople (Item 3): On behalf of Mauritius, on 25 August 2021 the Secretariat requested an update from Australia on next steps on an exercise to collate information from Member States on their experience facilitating the movement of businesspeople.
* Share lessons on improving the business environment (Item 3a): The Secretariat prepared a draft Concept Note and matrix for Member States and Dialogue Partners to indicate willingness to share expertise in improving Ease of Doing Business Rankings, shared with Mauritius on 23 April 2021. Mauritius advised that internal consultations on the draft Concept Note were continuing.
* Promote Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) (Item 4): Mauritius advised it conducted internal consultations on activities to support implementation of the IORA SME MOU in early 2021. The Secretariat notes that the IORA-UN Women partnership (2017-21) included capacity building for women entrepreneurs in line with this item and the SME MOU.
* Conduct a study on key maritime infrastructure bottlenecks (Item 7): Sri Lanka advised the proposed study, to be led by the Lakshman Kadirgamar Institute of International Relations and Strategic Studies (LKIIRSS), has been deferred to 2022 due to the prevailing COVID-19 situation.
* Population of IORA Trade Repository website (Item 9): At the CSO on 15-16 December 2020 Indonesia announced it would lead a process to populate the IORA Trade Repository website. On behalf of Mauritius the Secretariat requested advice on next steps from Indonesia, including by Note Verbale on 26 May 2021 and 26 August 2021.
* Network of Trade and Investment Promotion Agencies (Items 9 and 11): Mauritius circulated a draft MOU between Trade and Investment Promotion Agencies to Member States on 26 May 2021 for responses by 30 July 2021. One response was received from Sri Lanka on 23 August 2021, and sent to Mauritius on 25 August 2021. This follows earlier consultations among the TIF Cluster Group in 2020 (responses were received from Australia, India, Singapore and South Africa).
* IORA presence at the World Expo 2020, Dubai (Item 10): On 24 September 2021 Mauritius requested an update from the Secretariat on IORA’s presence at the World Expo. The Secretariat responded that no information had been provided by the Member States on this item, though Italy has raised the possibility of a potential IORA-Italy collaborative event during Water Week at the World Expo in a meeting with the Secretariat on 17 June 2021, and Italy had indicated it would send a Concept Note on the subject.
* Regional study on investment flows (Item 11): Mauritius circulated draft Terms of Reference for a study on investment regimes in the region to all Member States on 7 July 2021 for responses by 13 August 2021. Three responses were received from Indonesia, Iran and Thailand, and sent to Mauritius on 25 August 2021. The Secretariat approached the UK seeking support for this initiative but was advised this is not possible at this time (refer agenda item 5.2 on Dialogue Partner updates).
* Promote tools to support WEE (Item 12): The IORA-UN Women partnership has successfully concluded, delivering activities in line with this Work Plan item (refer agenda item 12.3 for details) including 13 webinars, 2 online trainings, 2 research reports and one infographic. The IORA Women’s Economic Symposium on 8-9 September 2021 delivered further tangible benefits for women entrepreneurs, co-hosted by Australia and the USA (refer agenda items 5.2 and 13.4).
* Greater public-private dialogue (Item 13): IORBF delegates have been engaged in delivery of IORA-UN Women activities, as well as the IORA Women’s Economic Symposium to be held on 8-9 September 2021. The incoming IORBF Chair (Bangladesh) was briefed on IORA and the WGTI at an introductory meeting on 4 August 2021 (see agenda item 6.3).
* Strengthen dispute resolution mechanisms in the Indian Ocean (Item 15): See below, agenda item 16.2.1.

In addition, Mauritius circulated an updated version of the Scoping Paper on a Framework Agreement to Promote Trade and Investment in the IORA Region to all member States on 26 May 2021 for expressions of interest to join a dedicated virtual meeting on this issue, with responses due by 8 June 2021. One response was received from Thailand and forwarded to Mauritius on 15 June 2021. This follows earlier consultations on the draft Scoping Paper, to which six Member States responded (Australia, Bangladesh, India, Indonesia, Maldives and Sri Lanka).

*Desired outcome:* The CSO to note the progress in implementing the WGTI Work Plan.

## 7.2 Update: Preparations for the 19th Meeting of the Working Group on Trade and Investment (WGTI) (Mauritius)

*The Chair will invite Mauritius to provide an update on preparations for the next meeting of the WGTI.*

On 5 July 2021 the Secretariat, on behalf of Mauritius, advised Member States that the 19th meeting of the WGTI had been postponed (the meeting had been scheduled for the week of 12 July 2021, as advised to Member States on 27 May 2021). New dates and arrangements are expected from Mauritius in due course. The CSO will recall that at its meeting of 15-16 June 2021, the CSO requested the next meeting of the WGTI to consider the longstanding business proposal to facilitate the movement of businesspeople in the region.

*Desired outcome:* The CSO to note the update that dates and arrangements for the next meeting of the WGTI will be communicated by Mauritius in due course.

## 7.3 Update: Status of the Indian Ocean Rim Business Forum (IORBF) and handing over of the IORBF Chair to Bangladesh and Remarks by Incoming Chair of IORBF (UAE/Bangladesh)

*The Chair will invite the UAE to provide an update on the status of the IORBF. The Chair will invite Bangladesh to intervene on the assumption of the IORBF Chair position by Mr Sheikh Fahim.*

The CSO will recall the UAE hosted the 25th meeting of the IORBF virtually on 20 October 2020, and on 6 April 2021 Bangladesh advised its nomination of Mr Sheikh Fazle Fahim as its IORBF delegate and incoming IORBF Chair. The Secretariat is supporting the incoming IORBF Chair with briefing and materials including a comprehensive update on the status of the IORBF circulated to Mr Fahim and the Troika on 23 April 2021. The Secretariat organised an introductory meeting and briefing with Mr Fahim with Past IORBF Chairs from South Africa and Australia on 4 August 2021.

*Desired outcome:* The CSO to note that, Mr Sheikh Fahim of Bangladesh will become the IORBF Chair on the assumption by Bangladesh of the IORA Chairship. The CSO to note that the Secretariat is supporting the incoming IORBF Chair with briefings and introductory meetings.

## 7.4 Update: Collaboration between IORA and Global Trade Review (GTR) (Australia)

*The Chair will invite Australia to provide an update on the IORA-GTR partnership.*

The CSO will recall its endorsement at its meeting on 15-16 December 2020 of the IORBF’s proposal for IORA to partner with GTR to promote and participate in GTR events, led by Australia’s IORBF Delegate, and the MOU subsequently signed between the Secretariat and GTR. The CSO will recall that under this partnership, the Secretariat has facilitated IORA-nominated speakers to participate in GTR MENA (Ms Judi Nwokedi of South Africa, past IORBF Chair presented) GTR India (Mr Manab Majumdar of India presented), and GTR East Africa (Dr Rafaravavitafika Rasata of Madagascar presented). The Secretariat has promoted selected GTR events relevant to the Indian Ocean region on its social media. The Secretariat is liaising with Australia’s IORBF delegate as project lead regarding IORA’s participation in subsequent events in 2021.

The Secretariat maintains a standing list of Member State-endorsed speakers which it provides to GTR for selection per event. The Secretariat has engaged with selected Member States on best-efforts basis to identify appropriate speakers (eg identifying an Indian speaker for GTR India; approaching Comoros, Kenya, Madagascar, Mauritius, Mozambique, Seychelles, Somalia, and Tanzania to identify a speaker for GTR East Africa). Nominations can be made at any time to the Secretariat.

*Desired outcome:* The CSO to note progress in implementing the IORA-GTR partnership, including in strengthening IORA’s profile and private sector engagement.

## 7.5 Update: Signature of SME MOU (Secretariat)

*The Chair will invite the Secretariat to provide an update.*

As at1 October 2021, 19 Member States have signed the *Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) Between the Governments of the Member States of the Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA) for Promotion of Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs)*: Bangladesh, India, Indonesia, Iran, Kenya [see note below re: Kenya], Madagascar, Malaysia, Maldives, Mauritius, Mozambique, Seychelles, Singapore, Somalia, South Africa, Sri Lanka, Tanzania, Thailand, UAE and Yemen.

Regarding Kenya’s signature, on 1 September 2021 the Secretariat received a document signed on 24 February 2021 that differed from the standard signing page of the SME MOU. The Secretariat responded on 30 September 2021 seeking Kenya’s signature of the agreed signing page. The Secretariat will proceed to advertise Kenya’s signature of the SME MOU once the agreed signing page is received.

Member States will recall that implementation of the SME MOU is included as item 4 in the Work Plan of the Working Group on Trade and Investment (WGTI).

*Desired Outcome:* The CSO to note the update.

**7.6 Update: Collaboration between IORA and Financial Times for the Africa Summit, 19 October 2021 (Secretariat)**

*The Chair will invite the Secretariat to provide an update.*

On 29 July 2021 the Secretariat was approached by the Financial Times (FT) with the proposal that IORA partner with the FT for the promotion of the FT’s Africa Summit on 19 October 2021. The proposal entails IORA promoting the event, and the FT providing one free ticket to each IORA Member State and listing IORA as an institutional partner. Mauritius as TIF Coordinating Country and the UAE as IORA Chair endorsed the proposed partnership. The draft partnership agreement was circulated to Member States on 27 August 2021 for responses by 15 September 2021. Three responses were received, all supportive (Australia, Oman, Singapore). On 23 September IORA and the FT executed the agreement. As at 30 September 2021 the Secretariat is standing by for further information from FT before advising Member States how to access free passes and commencing promotion of the event.

*Desired outcome:* The CSO notes the update that the Secretariat has facilitated the partnership with Financial Times for the Africa Summit on 19 October.

# 8. FISHERIES MANAGEMENT (FM) – Coordinating Country: Indonesia

## 8.1 Update: Progress Report on the Work Plan of the Core Group on Fisheries Management (CGFM) (Indonesia)

*The Chair will invite Indonesia to provide the progress report on the Work Plan of the Core Group on Fisheries Management (CGFM).*

At the 1st Meeting of IORA Core Group on Fisheries Management (CGFM), which was held in a virtual platform, on Wednesday, 3rd November 2021, Indonesia tabled the Work Plan and requested Member States to provide commitments in implementing the activities of the CGFM Work Plan.

*Desired Outcome:* The CSO to note the update the progress report on the Work Plan of the Core Group on Fisheries Management (CGFM).

## 8.2 Report: First Meeting of IORA Core Group on Fisheries Management (CGFM) (Indonesia)

*The Chair will invite Indonesia to provide the brief on the First Meeting of IORA Core Group on Fisheries Management (CGFM).*

At the Eleventh Bi-annual IORA Meeting of the Committee of Senior Officials (CSO), Indonesia informed the meeting that it would host the First Meeting of the CGFM in the 2nd semester of 2021. On 11 October 2021, Indonesia informed the Secretariat that it will host the 1st Meeting of IORA Core Group on Fisheries Management (CGFM) in a virtual platform, on Wednesday, 3rd November 2021 at 02.00 pm Indonesia Western Time. The Secretariat circulated the information to the Member States requested them to nominate their participants to the meeting. The CGFM Work Plan was also sent to Member States, to be tabled at the meeting. The First Meeting of the IORA Core Group on Fisheries Management was hosted on 3 November 2021. During the meeting, Member States recommended to nominate Focal Point for the Fisheries Management sector. The Coordinator of the CGFM also requested Member States to express interest in taking the lead for the implementation of projects in the CGFM Work Plan. Member States were also informed that some activities would be implemented under the IORA-FAO collaboration. The Work Plan of the IORA-FAO will be shared with Member States shortly.

*Desired Outcome:* The CSO to note the report by Indonesia on the First Meeting of IORA Core Group on Fisheries Management (CGFM).

## 8.3 Report: Activities of the Fisheries Support Unit (FSU)

*The Chair will invite FSU to update the CSO on the Report of Activities of the FSU.*

At the Eleventh Bi-annual IORA Meeting of the Committee of Senior Officials (CSO), The Director of the FSU presented the activities that was attended by the FSU and gave an overview of the FSU Action Plan, which will be aligned with the Work Plan of the CGFM and the WGBE, as per the recommendation of the previous CSO. He also presented on the proposal of having an IORA Focal Point for the FSU.

The Secretariat requested the FSU to provide its report, including status of its Work Plan on 14 October 2021, to be circulated to Member States prior to the CSO. The Secretariat circulated the draft FSU Report and Work Plan on 8 November 2021 for the consideration by Member States.

Following the meeting with the FSU, CGFM and WGBE that was held on 25 May 2021, the WGBE and CGFM sent their inputs to the Secretariat, while a response is being awaited from FSU. The meeting agreed that each party will review their respective work plans related to activities in fisheries management to avoid overlapping. They also agreed to work together to advance fisheries management at IORA. Regarding the proposal on the appointment of IORA focal points for FSU, comments were received from Madagascar. FSU to provide an update on the status of this proposal.

*Desired Outcome:* The CSO to note the FSU Report.

## 8.4 Update: Activities under MoU between IORA and AFD (Secretariat)

*The Chair will invite the IORA Secretariat to update the CSO on the activities under MoU between IORA and Agence Francaise de Developpement (French Development Agency, AFD).*

The CSO will recall that the Financing Agreement between IORA and the Agence Francaise de Developpement (French Development Agency, AFD) was signed on 28 June 2021 following Member State and AFD agreement to the final text.

Following the Questionnaire surveys related to Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated (IUU) fishing, Ports States Measures Agreement (PMSA), Stock assessment and international trade and markets for fisheries and aquaculture products", reports on the same were circulated to Member States and these include:

i. Compendium of Stock Assessment Training and Courses in the IORA Region; and

ii. Literature Review and Gap Analysis of Information on International Trade and Markets for Fisheries and Aquaculture Products

iii. Review of aquaculture, governance and development of small-scale aquaculture in the IORA region;

iv. Analysis of measures to combat IUU fishing in the IORA region;

v. Assessment of the capacity needs (Human and Institutional) and the current level of Implementation of Port State Measures (PSM) in the IORA region;

vi. Existing capacity uses and needs for stock assessment training and courses in the IORA region; and

vii. International fish trade study – Review of fish trade in the IORA region.

viii. “Examples of existing initiatives in small-scale and rural aquaculture in the IORA region”.

In addition, the following Webinars have been hosted:

i. Webinar on “strengthening regional safety standards and quality assurance of aquaculture products in the IORA” , IORA-AFD, 27 April 2021. The report of the Webinar was circulated to Member States and Dialogue Partners on 5 May 2021;

ii. Webinar on a capacity building programme in fish stock assessment, 13 July 2021. The Report of the Webinar was circulated to Member States and Dialogue partners on 18 August 2021;

iii. Webinar on promotion of small-scale rural aquaculture, 31 August 2021. The Report of the Webinar was circulated to Member States and Dialogue partners on 13 October 2021;

iv. Webinar on combatting illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing and especially through PSMA application in the IORA region, 16 September 2021

v. Webinar on “Enhancing the knowledge of IORA Member States on international trade and markets for fisheries and aquaculture products”, 12 October 2021

vi. AFD is also planning to organise a training programme on enhancing by-catch landing, valorisation, traceability and quality, including the development of safe handling guides and species identification guides, in Seychelles. AFD intends to organize the training by mid- January 2022. AFD is also liaising with the IORA Blue Carbon Hub for 2 projects, namely:

a. Developing a manual of Blue Carbon standard methods to be used for standardized base line data sets

b. Provide a training programme on Blue Carbon study and measurement

*Desired Outcome:* The CSO to note the update by the IORA Secretariat on the activities under MoU between IORA and AFD.

# 9. DISASTER RISK MANAGEMENT (DRM) – *Coordinating Country: India*

## 9.1 Update: Terms of Reference (TOR) of the Working Group on Disaster Risk Management (CGDRM) and Work Plan for Disaster Risk Management (India)

*The Chair will invite India to update the CSO on the* Terms of Reference (TOR) of the Working Group on Disaster Risk Management (CGDRM) and Work Plan for Disaster Risk Management.

The Terms of Reference (TOR) of the Working Group on Disaster Risk Management (CGDRM) was finalised during the First IORA Expert Group Meeting on Disaster Risk Management (1st EGMDRM), held on 19 January 2021, virtually. The Secretariat circulated the finalized ToRs and the Work Plan shared by India as the Lead Coordinator for the WGDRM on 03 August 2021 to Member States.

Additionally, Member States were requested to volunteer and lead on/ conduct at least one activity under the WGDRM Work Plan. The following Member States submitted inputs on the WGDRM Work Plan: France/Reunion on 09 September 2021, Madagascar on 01 September 2021, Singapore on 27 August 2021, and Thailand on 27 August 2021. The updated WGDRM Work Plan, with Member States volunteering to lead on specific activities were circulated to India for consideration on 18 October 2021.

*Desired Outcome:* The CSO to note the update on the TORs and the WGDRM Work Plan.

The CSO to endorse the established WGDRM TORs and Work Plan.

The CSO to note the proposed Meeting date for the First WGDRM Meeting.

## 9.2 Update: Establishing legal frameworks in the Indian Ocean region in the field of Disaster Risk Management (India)

*The Chair will invite India to update the CSO on the establishment of legal frameworks in the Indian Ocean region in the field of DRM.*

Member States may recall the agreed outcome at the 22nd CSO which noted the update by the Secretariat on the discussion paper developed by India in collaboration with the Indian Council of World Affairs (ICWA) for establishing legal frameworks in the Indian Ocean region. The Secretariat recirculated the discussion paper to Member States on 19 May 2021 and shared the views and inputs from Member States to India on 19 May 2021 and on 7 and 15 June 2021. The following Member States provided views: Mauritius on 26 January 2021, Sri Lanka on 10 December 2020, by Malaysia on 07 June 2021, by Madagascar on 11 June 2021. In addition, the CSO noted Bangladesh’s proposal to include nature-based solutions to manage disasters and requested Bangladesh to provide written inputs via the Secretariat. The Secretariat sent a Note Verbale in this regard to Bangladesh on 25 June 2021, to provide its views, and a reminder on 19 October 2021. Bangladesh informed the Secretariat on 21 October that the several recommendations with regard tonature-based solutions were discussed at the 'IORA Blue Carbon Hub think tank meeting Nature-based solutions for coastal risk reduction' which was held virtually by Australia and Bangladesh on 25-27 May 2021, and that the final report for the meeting is yet to be finalized. Bangladesh informed that once the report is finalised, inputs from the report based on renowned experts advice would be suggested for the draft discussion paper for establishing legal frameworks in the Indian Ocean region in the field of DRM. A response is awaited. In addition, the Secretariat worked on a proposal for the way forward to progress this discussion paper and possible steps to implement initiatives agreed by Member States. The proposal for the way forward was circulated by the Secretariat to India on 22 October 2021.

In addition, Member States may recall the mention made by India to submit additional papers on Maritime Safety and Security (MSS), and Fisheries. The paper on MSS was circulated to Member States on 20 July 2021, seeking views and inputs. View and inputs were received from the following Member States: Australia on 06 August 2021, Bangladesh on 22 August 2021, Madagascar on 13 and 17 August 2021, and Mauritius on 05 August 2021. The views and inputs were circulated to India on 22 October 2021.

*Desired Outcome:* The CSO to note the update by India on the discussion paper on the proposal for establishing legal frameworks in the Indian Ocean region.

The CSO to submit the paper to the CSO/COM for approval.

## 9.3 Update: Signature on Search and Rescue (SAR) MOU (Secretariat)

*The Chair will invite the Secretariat to update the CSO on the signature status of the MOU by Member States on Search and Rescue (SAR).*

To date, 16 Member States have signed the MOU on SAR: Australia, Bangladesh, Comoros, India, Indonesia, Madagascar, Maldives, Mauritius, Mozambique, Seychelles, Singapore, Somalia, South Africa, Sri Lanka, Tanzania, and Thailand.

The most recent signature was made by Indonesia virtually on 11 June 2021. The Republic of Kenya expressed its readiness to sign the MOU on 20 August 2021, and the Islamic Republic of Iran on 06 September 2021Reminders to Member States yet to sign the MOU were circulated on 17 August and 18 October 2021. In addition, the Secretariat shared the MOU addendum for France/Reunion on 24 August 2021, for consideration and signature. In addition, Malaysia informed the Secretariat on 07 May2021, that Malaysia is in the midst of developing an internal policy on SAR, and therefore, Malaysia will only be able to look into this matter after the completion of this task.

However, Member States may recall the format of the MoU for SAR, providing only two pages for Member States to sign, and addendums for newly admitted Member States (France/Reunion, Maldives, and Somalia). The format of this MoU does not provide individual signatory pages for Member States to sign, as in the case of the Jakarta Concord and the MoU for the Promotion of Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs). Considering the current difficulty to facilitate the signatories from Member States virtually due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, and the delay caused in signing the MoU during the CSO and the COM Meetings physically, the Secretariat sought the approval from the TROIKA on 06 October 2021 to add a signatory sheet to the MoU for the remaining Member States to sign remotely, and to submit this original signed sheet to the Secretariat for inclusion to the MoU. The incoming Chair, Bangladesh, provided its support to the proposal by the Secretariat on 07 October 2021, South Africa on 07 October 2021, and the United Arab Emirates on 18 October 2021. The signatory sheet to the MoU was circulated to Kenya and Iran on 19 October 2021.

*Desired Outcome:* The CSO to take note of the update by the Secretariat on the signature status of the MOU by Member States, and to approve the proposal to add a signatory sheet to the MOU for the remaining Member States to sign remotely which is to be sent to the Secretariat for inclusion to the original MOU.

## 9.4 New proposal: IORA Sustainable Health Initiative (Mauritius)

*The Chair will invite Mauritius to update the CSO on the IORA Sustainable Health Initiative proposal*

Member States may recall the proposal announced by Mauritius under agenda item 8.6: IORA Sustainable Health Initiative of the 11th Bi-annual Committee of Senior Officials (CSO) held from 15 – 16 June 2021, virtually.  The Secretariat circulated the proposal to Member States on 18 June 2021 and an extension was provided on 20 July to submit views and inputs by 06 August 2021. The following Member States provided views and inputs: Madagascar on 02 August 2021, Mozambique on 21 July 2021, Singapore on 15 July 2021 and South Africa on 06 August 2021, and additional views by Bangladesh on 18 August 2021, and Iran’s support on 01 September 2021.

The views and inputs were submitted to Mauritius on 12 and 18 August 2021.

The proposal is submitted under the MoU between IORA and the GIZ to support project proposals for Member States related to the priority are of Disaster Risk Management (DRM). The Secretariat circulated the project proposal to India, as the Lead Coordinator for DRM on 01 October 2021, for its views and support to strengthen IORA’s DRM area. India requested the Secretariat on 18 October 2021 to circulate the proposal to the WGDRM Cluster Group Members, and Member States to provide inputs/views to the Concept Note. The proposal was circulated to Member States on 19 October 2021.

*Desired Outcome:* The CSO to take note of the update by Mauritius on the IORA Sustainable Health Initiative project proposal.

The CSO to consider the project proposal and timeline for implementation.

## 9.5 New proposal: MoU between IORA-Coalition for Disaster Resilient Infrastructure (CDRI) (Secretariat)

*The Chair will invite the Secretariat to provide an update on the proposal to have a MoU between IORA-Coalition for Disaster Resilient Infrastructure (CDRI)*

Member States may recall the Note Verbal shared by the Secretariat on 03 August 2021 regarding the 1st IORA Expert Group Meeting on Disaster Risk Management (1st EGMDRM) outcome documents, inclusive of the Working Group on Disaster Risk Management (WGDRM) Work Plan. The Work Plan of the IORA WGDRM refers to the development of a Disaster Resilient Infrastructure (DRI) in the region with the aim of preventing future risks. The proposal of the MoU is based on the activities listed in the WGDRM Work Plan, and to strengthen IORA’s agenda in DRM. The Secretariat in consultation with India as the Lead Coordinator for DRM and the CDRI is currently progressing the draft MoU in consultation with the Member States.

The Concept Note prepared by the CDRI, and the proposed draft MoU between IORA and the CDRI for ‘Promoting Resilience of New and Existing Infrastructures to Climate and Disaster Risks within the Indian Ocean region’ was circulated to Member States on 31 August 2021, seeking views and inputs. The inputs and views from the following Member States were received: Bangladesh on 23 September 2021, Mauritius on 23 September 2021, and Oman on 26 September 2021. The updated draft MoU with the consolidated suggestions and views received was circulated to India and the CDRI for consideration on 08 October 2021. CDRI concurred with the suggestions from Member States, which were accepted and added to the MOU respectively. The final draft of the MOU was circulated to Member States on 09 November 2021 for the consideration and adoption at the CSO.

*Desired Outcome:* The CSO to take note of the update by the Secretariat on the proposed MoU for DRM.

The CSO to consider the MoU.

# 10. ACADEMIC, SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY COOPERATION (AST) – *Coordinating Country: India*

## 10.1 Report: Third Meeting of the Sub-Committee on Indian Ocean Rim Association Academic Group (IORAG) Reform (India)

*The Chair will invite India to provide* *a brief report on the Third Meeting of the Sub-Committee on Indian Ocean Rim Association Academic Group (IORAG) Reform.*

The Third Meeting of the IORAG Institutional Reform Sub-Committee (India, Australia, Indonesia, South Africa, and the UAE) was held virtually on 15 July 2021. The final Decision Report, adopted during the meeting, was circulated to all member States on 15 July 2021 for information and record purposes

The meeting endorsed the Draft Modalities and Terms of Reference ToR of the IORAG and the draft IORAG Work Plan and tasked the Secretariat to circulate the revised drafts to all Members of the IORAG, copying National Focal Points, for consideration and inputs before the 26th IORAG meeting hosted by the UAE and Chaired by India. The draft ToR and Work Plan were then further circulated to all Member States on 17 September 2021 with a request for final inputs to be received for consideration at the 26th IORAG meeting on 6 October 2021. Inputs were received on the IORAG draft Modalities & Terms of Reference from South Africa only.

*Desired Outcome:* The CSO to note the report from India and endorse the Decision Report of the Third Meeting of the Sub-Committee on Indian Ocean Rim Association Academic Group (IORAG) Reform.

## 10.2 Report: 26th Meeting of the Indian Ocean Rim Academic Group (IORAG) (India/UAE)

The Chair will invite India to provide a brief report on the 26th Meeting of the Indian Ocean Rim Academic Group (IORAG).

The 26th Meeting of the Indian Ocean Rim Academic Group (IORAG), hosted by UAE and chaired by India was held virtually on 6 October 2021. The meeting was attended by 15 IORA Member States namely Australia, Bangladesh, France/Reunion, India, Indonesia, Kenya, Malaysia, Maldives, Mauritius, Mozambique, Seychelles, South Africa, Sri Lanka, United Arab Emirates and Yemen. The IORA Regional Centre for Science and Technology Transfer (RCSTT) also participated in the meeting.

The meeting approved the IORAG Decision Report, which was circulated to Member States, all registered participants and all IORAG focal points, copied to the IORA National Focal Points, on 08 October 2021. Items for CSO consideration arising out of the meeting are as follows:

Draft Modalities and Terms of Reference ToR of the IORAG. A copy is attached as **Document No. IOR/23CSO-Annual/2021/DOC2.4**.

Draft IORAG Work Plan 2021/2022. A copy is attached as **Document No. IOR/23CSO-Annual/2021/DOC2.5**.

The meeting supported South Africa’s offer to Chair the IORAG for 2022 and 2023, and to host the 27th meeting of the IORAG in South Africa at a date to be communicated by South Africa.

*Desired Outcome:* The CSO to note the report by India and endorse the Decision Report on the 26th Meeting of the Indian Ocean Rim Academic Group (IORAG).

The CSO to further endorse the Modalities and Terms of Reference ToR of the IORAG for onward transmission to the 21st COM for approval.

The CSO to approve the IORAG Draft Work Plan 2021/2022.

The CSO to endorse South Africa’s offer to serve as IORAG Chair for 2022 and 2023 for onward transmission to the 21st COM for approval.

## 10.3 Report: First Working Group Meeting on Science Technology and Innovation (WGSTI) (India)

*The Chair will invite India to provide a brief report on the First Working Group on Science Technology and Innovation (WGSTI).*

The 1st (Virtual) Meeting of the IORA Working Group on Science Technology & Innovation (WGSTI) was held virtually on 30 September 2021. The meeting was attended by 12 IORA Member States namely France/Reunion, India, Indonesia, Kenya, Madagascar, Malaysia, Mauritius, Mozambique, Oman, South Africa, Sri Lanka, Tanzania. The IORA Regional Centre for Science and Technology Transfer (RCSTT) and Western Indian Ocean Marine Science Association (WIOMSA) also participated in the meeting.

The draft Decision Report was circulated to all registered participants, copied to the IORA National Focal Points, on 04 Monday 2021 for inputs and comments by 11 October 2021.

The final Decision Report approved by the WGSTI Chair, India, was circulated to all Member States on 13 October 2021.

*Desired Outcome:* The CSO to note the report from India and endorse the Decision Report from the First Working Group on Science Technology and Innovation (WGSTI).

## 10.4 Indian Ocean Dialogue (IOD)

### 10.4.1 Consideration of IOD Modalities and Terms of Reference (Secretariat)

*The Chair will invite the Secretariat to update the CSO on IOD Modalities and Terms of Reference.*

The CSO may recall that, at the last meeting held virtually on 15-16 June 2021, the IORA Secretariat was in the process of preparing the IOD Terms of Reference and they were requested to address the issue on having no system to track and report on the consideration of IOD recommendations in the draft IOD Terms of Reference (TORs). On 29 July 2021, the Secretariat circulated the draft IOD ToR to all Member States and Australia (with inputs), Bangladesh (with inputs), Kenya (with inputs), Mauritius (with inputs), Singapore (nil inputs), Oman (nil inputs), and Sri Lanka (with inputs) provided feedback on the draft.

*Desired Outcome:* The CSO to note the update by the IORA Secretariat on the IOD Modalities and Terms of Reference.

### 10.4.2 Update: Preparations for the Eighth IOD (India)

*The Chair will invite India to provide an update on the preparations for the Eighth Indian Ocean Dialogue (IOD).*

The CSO may recall that, at the last meeting held virtually on 15-16 June 2021, India announced its readiness to host the Eighth Indian Ocean Dialogue and further details would be circulated in due course.

Following the communication received from India on 24 September 2021, the IORA Secretariat informed Member States on 29 September 2021 on the date of the 8th IOD scheduled to be held virtually on 15 December 2021. In the said communication, Member States’ views were sought on the Draft Concept Note of the 8th IOD relating to the proposed agenda/programme/thematic focus areas by 15 October 2021.Furthermore, by Monday 15 November 2021, Member States were requested to kindly confirm their concurrence to serve as Session Chairs (with short biography) as proposed in the draft programme, and for Member States to provide nominations for speakers (with short biography) through their National Focal Points for each session. A Member State may nominate only one speaker per session i.e. one country can nominate a maximum of 4 speakers, i.e. one for each of the 4 sessions. The selection of speakers by ICWA would be on a ‘first come’ basis i.e. whichever country nominations are received the earliest. However, there would be no limitation on the number of attendees for the Dialogue.

On 15 October 2021, the IORA Secretariat received feedback from South Africa on the draft Concept Note and which was conveyed to India on 18 October 2021. In addition, we received the following nominations to date:

1. Mauritius submitted its nominee to participate as speaker in Session 1: Embracing e-health to fight COVID-19.
2. South Africa submitted its nominee to participate as speaker in Session 2: Investments in e-Education.
3. Maldives nominee would attend the session as a participant.
4. Iran submitted two nominees to participate as speaker in Session 2: Investments in e-Education and Session 4: Digital Shipping, Smart Ports and Trade respectively.
5. Sri Lanka submitted its nominee to participate as speaker in Session 2: Investments in e-Education.
6. India proposed a nominee as speaker under Session: 1 Embracing e-Health to fight COVID-19. India informed that they would send the final names from India for speaker under session1, Chair for session 3: Development through Digital Technologies and for the valedictory address.

Member States are requested that while sending their registration form, to also send the biography and a 150-word brief to be used by the moderator for introduction.

*Desired Outcome:* The CSO to note the update by India on the preparations for the Eighth IOD.

## 10.5 Update: Implementation of ICE for the IORA Member States (India)

*The Chair will invite India to provide an update on the Implementation of ICE for IORA Member States.*

Member States may recall the update from India during the 11th IORA Bi-Annual Meeting of the CSO, informing the CSO that the project is being reinitiated and that further details would be provided to the Secretariat in due course.

The Secretariat is currently in consultation with India seeking the guidance on the way forward for implementing the IORA ICE for IORA Member States.

*Desired Outcome:* The CSO to note the update by India on the implementation of ICE for IORA Member States based on the the finalized criteria to establish IORA Centers of Excellence.

## 10.6 Update: Establishment of the Research Support Unit (RSU) and the position of Policy Advisor and Research Coordinator (PARC) (India)

*The Chair will invite India to update the CSO on the RSU and the PARC.*

Member States may recall the outcome decisions of the 11th Bi-Annual Meeting of the CSO held 15 – 16 June 2021, requesting India and the Secretariat to expedite the circulation of all documents relating to the establishment and funding of the RSU, including the staffing of the vacant PARC position, to the CSO for consideration given its importance to achieving IORA’s objectives. The Secretariat circulated a reminder to India on 13 July 2021, seeking the way forward in finalizing the documents for the RSU and the position of the PARC.

In addition, in the 26th Meeting of the Indian Ocean Rim Academic Group (IORAG) held virtually by India on 06 October 2021, under agenda *item 8. IORA Research Support Unit (RSU) and the position of Academic Policy Advisor & Research Coordinator (PARC),* an update on the progress of the Concept Note was given. The outcomes requested the Secretariat to recirculate the Concept Note to all registered participants and IORAG Focal Points for final inputs and views, by 15 October 2021. Inputs were received from the following Member States: Singapore on 14 October 2021, South Africa on 11 and 14 October 2021, Sri Lanka on 18 October 2021 and Bangladesh on 26 October 2021. The inputs were circulated to India for consideration and guidance on the way forward on 28 October 2021.

*Desired Outcome:* The CSO to note the update from India on the RSU and the PARC, and the suggestions from Member States to the proposal.

The CSO to provide direction on the way forward to establish the IORA RSU and the PARC.

## 10.7 Report: Online course on 'Principles of Ocean Remote Sensing and its applications' (India)

*The Chair will invite India to provide a brief report on the* *online course on 'Principles of Ocean Remote Sensing and its applications'.*

The 4-day online course on 'Principles of Ocean Remote Sensing and its applications' held from 26-30 July 2021 was conducted by the International Training Centre for Operational Oceanography (ITCOOcean), ESSO-INCOIS under the Ministry of Earth Sciences, Government of India.

*Desired Outcome:* The CSO to thank India for hosting the online course on 'Principles of Ocean Remote Sensing and its Applications’ and take note of the report on the course outcomes.

## 10.8 Report: Online course on 'Fundamentals of Ocean Data Management' (India)

*The Chair will invite India to provide a brief report on the online course on 'Fundamentals of Ocean Data Management'.*

The 5-day online course on 'Fundamentals of Ocean Data Management' held from 23-27 August 2021 was conducted by the International Training Centre for Operational Oceanography (ITCOOcean), ESSO-INCOIS under the Ministry of Earth Sciences, Government of India.

*Desired Outcome:* The CSO to thank India for hosting the online course on 'Fundamentals of Ocean Data Management' and take note of the report on the course outcomes.

## 10.9 Report: Activities of the Regional Centre for Science and Technology Transfer (RCSTT)

*The Chair will invite the Regional Centre for Science and Technology Transfer (RCSTT) to provide a brief report on its completed and future activities. After the presentation by RCSTT, the Chair will open the floor for discussion.*

On 8 October 2021, the IORA Secretariat requested RCSTT to submit its report for consideration by the Member States. Following receipt of the report from RCSTT on 21 October 2021, the IORA Secretariat circulated the said report to all Member States on 27 October 2021. The report was attached to the communication (that was dispatched on 29 October 2021 along with the annotated agendas) as **Draft RCSTT Report to CSO\_IOR23CSO-Annual2021DOC2\_6**.

*Desired Outcome:* The CSO to note the RCSTT’s Activity Report.

## 10.10 Update: Journal of the Indian Ocean Region (JIOR) (Secretariat)

*The Chair will invite the Secretariat to provide an update on the JIOR.*

It may be recalled that at the 11th IORA Bi-Annual Meeting of the Committee of Senior Officials (CSO), held virtually on 15-16 June 2021, the CSO noted India’s preference that IORA should have its own official journal rather than subscribing and paying for other journals (JIOR), and that any decision on further funding of Journals for IORA may be deferred till PARC and RSU are established. Mauritius also supported the proposal and indicated that the journal initiated by CIOS (JIORS) be converted to an online newsletter once PARC and RSU are established. This would substantially reduce the costs.

CSO also noted that several Member States welcomed retaining the JIOR as an important academic journal affiliated with and subscribed to by IORA, and that the proposed Research Support Unit (RSU) and the Policy Adviser and Research Coordinator (PARC) at the Secretariat (once recruited) manage the subscriptions going forward. Furthermore, several Member States were of the view that until such time that the IORA RSU and the PARC become functional, the IORA Chair (beginning with Bangladesh who has agreed) will pay for subscriptions to be managed by the Secretariat.

*Desired Outcome**:* The CSO to agree that until such time that the IORA RSU becomes functional, the IORA Chair (beginning with Bangladesh) would provide the Secretariat with funds for JIOR subscriptions upon their specific request.

Member States to indicate to the Secretariat by no later than **15 December 2021** their interest in being provided with the JIOR subscription for 2022.

**DAY 2: TUESDAY 16 NOVEMBER 2021**

# 11. TOURISM AND CULTURAL EXCHANGES (TCE) *– Coordinating Country: UAE*

## 11.1 Report: Second meeting of the Core Group on Tourism (CGT) (UAE)

*The Chair will invite the UAE to provide an update on the preparations for the Second meeting of the Core Group on Tourism (CGT). (Update on the status from UAE is awaited and will be communicated with all Member States in due course)*

*Desired Outcome:* The CSO to note of the update by the UAE (new Chair) on hosting the Second meeting of the Core Group on Tourism (CGT).

## 11.2 Update: Establishment of the Tourism Resource Centre (TRC) (Secretariat)

*The Chair will invite the Secretariat to provide an update on the establishment of the Tourism Resource Centre (TRC).*

It may be recalled that at the 11th IORA Bi-Annual Meeting of the Committee of Senior Officials (CSO), held virtually on 15-16 June 2021, the CSO noted the update that Oman was discontinuing the offer to establish the Tourism Resource Centre (TRC) and the advice from Iran that it would consider the possibility of hosting the TRC.

As requested by the CSO, the Secretariat circulateda Note Verbale along with background information and call for nominations to all Member States on 25 June 2021 requesting Member States who wish to consider hosting the TRC to convey their interest to the Secretariat by 27 August 2021. No response was received by the deadline.

Desired Outcome: The CSO to note the update by the Secretariat on the establishment of the Tourism Resource Centre (TRC) and receive offers from Member States to host the TRC.

## 11.3 Update: Creation of tourism platforms (digital or otherwise) for sharing of best practices (South Africa)

*The Chair will invite South Africa to provide an update on Creation of tourism platforms (digital or otherwise) for sharing of best practices.*

It may be recalled that at the 11th IORA Bi-Annual Meeting of the Committee of Senior Officials (CSO), held virtually on 15-16 June 2021, the CSO noted the update from South Africa that the Concept Paper on the creation of tourism platforms (digital or otherwise) for sharing of best practices had been revised following Member States’ input. The draft Concept Paper was first circulated to Member States for inputs and comments on 5 February 2020. The inputs were incorporated, and the updated Concept Paper was circulated for further inputs. On 31 August 2020, the Concept Paper was presented at the First meeting of the IORA Core Group on Tourism (CGT) hosted by the United Arab Emirates (UAE). The IORA CGT agreed that Member States should be given another opportunity to comment further. Additional inputs were received and incorporated into an updated Concept Paper.

The Secretariat circulated the final Draft Concept Paper, as provided by South Africa, on 18 June 2021 to all Member States for consideration. Inputs were received from Malaysia, Singapore, and Thailand, and conveyed to South Africa in August 2021. The IORA Secretariat re-circulated the final Concept Note on 3 November 2021 to all Member States and were informed that the said draft will be considered by the CSO for endorsement and recommendation to the COM for approval.

*Desired Outcome:* The CSO to consider and endorse the Concept Note on the Creation of Tourism Platforms (digital or otherwise) for Sharing of Best Practices States for recommendation to the 21st Council of Ministers’ Meeting for approval.

# 12. BLUE ECONOMY (BE) – Coordinating Country: South Africa

## 12.1 Update: Progress Report on the Work Plan of the WGBE (South Africa)

*The Chair will invite South Africa, as coordinator of Blue Economy, to update the CSO on the progress report on the Work Plan of the WGBE.*

At the last CSO, the Coordinator of the WGBE provided an update on the status of the implementation of the WGBE Work Plan and the activities that are being carried about by AFD. The WGBE Coordinator hosted the Cluster Group Meeting on the Blue Economy on 07 September 2021, to finalise the high-level deliverable/s for inclusion in the Draft Second IORA Action Plan 2022-2026. In addition, the WGBE Coordinator is exploring the possibility of hosting the 3rd Meeting of the WGBE.

*Desired Outcome:* The CSO to note the status on the progress made on the WGBE Work Plan.

## 12.2 Update: Preparations for the Fourth IORA Ministerial Blue Economy Conference (BEC-IV) (Sri Lanka)

*The Chair will invite Sri Lanka to update the CSO on the preparations for the Fourth IORA Ministerial Blue Economy Conference (BEC-IV).*

It may be recalled that at the At the Eleventh Bi-annual IORA Meeting of the Committee of Senior Officials (CSO), the CSO took note of the update by Sri Lanka on the preparations for the Fourth IORA Ministerial Blue Economy Conference (BEC-IV), including that Sri Lanka is looking to have the conference in physical format. Sri Lanka also informed the meeting that the concept note is under preparation and will be shared shortly.

*Desired Outcome:* The CSO to note the update by Sri Lanka on the preparations for the Fourth IORA Ministerial Blue Economy Conference (BEC-IV).

## 12.3 Update: Preparations for the Third meeting of the Working Group on Blue Economy (WGBE) (South Africa)

*The Chair will invite South Africa to update the CSO on the preparations of the Third meeting of the Working Group on Blue Economy (WGBE).*

*Desired Outcome:* The CSO to note the update by South Africa on the preparations of the Third meeting of the Working Group on Blue Economy (WGBE).

## 12.4 Update: IORA workshop on Blue Economy (France/Reunion)

*The Chair will invite France/Reunion to update the CSO on the preparations of the IORA workshop on Blue Economy.*

It may be recalled that at the At the Eleventh Bi-annual IORA Meeting of the Committee of Senior Officials (CSO), France informed the meeting that it planned to host a workshop on Blue Economy at La Reunion in the second semester to share working experience on this sector. France to update the meeting on the status of the project.

*Desired Outcome:* The CSO to note the update by France/Reunion on the preparations of the IORA workshop on Blue Economy.

## 12.5 Activities by IORA Blue Carbon Hub

### 12.5.1 Update: Second round of IORA Blue Carbon Hub Early Career Visiting Scientist programme (Australia)

*The Chair will invite Australia to update the CSO on the Second round of IORA Blue Carbon Hub Early Career Visiting Scientist programme.*

It may be recalled that at the Eleventh Bi-annual IORA Meeting of the Committee of Senior Officials (CSO), Australia informed the meeting that the second round of IORA Blue Carbon Hub Early Career Visiting Scientist programme could not take place owing to the COVID-19 related travel restrictions and that the programme will resume when countries open borders. Australia informed that the second-round intake was postponed due to COVID-related travel restrictions. Australia is reviewing options, with a view to holding the second round in 2022, subject to developments with COVID-related travel restrictions.

*Desired Outcome:* The CSO to note the update by Australia on the Second round of IORA Blue Carbon Hub Early Career Visiting Scientist programme.

### 12.5.2 Update: Workshop on Earth Observation Project (Australia)

*The Chair will invite Australia to update the CSO on the preparations of the Workshop on Earth Observation Project.*

The concept note has been circulated to Member States on 16 September 2021 for intersessional approval and following inputs from Member States, the same was sent to the IORA Blue Carbon Hub. The revised concept note has been received for further action on 29 September 2021 while the draft administrative note was received on 12 October 2021. The Secretariat circulated both documents on 13 October 2021, requesting Member States to nominate their participants to the meeting.

*Desired Outcome:* The CSO to note the update by Australia on the preparations of the Workshop on Earth Observation Project.

## 12.6 Update: Consideration of IORA White Paper on Blue Carbon Finance (Australia)

*The Chair will invite Australia to update the CSO on IORA White Paper on Blue Carbon Finance.*

The concept note on white paper provides a summary of the key issues to be addressed by the White Paper, as well as those experts and Member States which have expressed an interest in taking it forward, was circulated to Member States on 16 April 2020. It may be recalled that at the At the Eleventh Bi-annual IORA Meeting of the Committee of Senior Officials (CSO), Australia informed the meeting that it remains committed to develop the IORA White paper, which will be circulated to Member States in due course.

*Desired Outcome:* The CSO to note the update by Australia on the IORA White Paper on Blue Carbon Finance.

## 12.7 Update: IORA Actions Against Marine Debris (Indonesia)

*The Chair will invite Indonesia to update the CSO on IORA Actions Against Marine Debris.*

The concept note received from the host, Indonesia, was circulated to Member States on 12 May 2021 for views/comments. Comments received by the set deadline were sent to Indonesia for consideration. It may be recalled that at the at the Eleventh Bi-annual IORA Meeting of the Committee of Senior Officials (CSO), Indonesia informed the meeting that it is now incorporating the comments in the concept note and will re-circulate the concept note in due course. Germany, through the German Development Fund or GIZ, has pledged its support for this programme. Indonesia and GIZ are liaising with the relevant stakeholders to start implementing the project.it is proposed to have a questionnaire survey with the IORA Member States to have an overview on the Current situation of waste management in the country, Knowledge and information about marine litter, and an outlook on priorities of the Member States. Indonesia to provide more details on the status of the project.

*Desired Outcome:* The CSO to note the update by Indonesia on IORA Actions Against Marine Debris.

## 12.8 Update: Research Study on “COVID-19 and Climate Change: Prospects for a “Blue” Recovery in the Indian Ocean Region” (Secretariat)

*The Chair will invite the IORA Secretariat to update the CSO on the Research Study: “COVID-19 and Climate Change: Prospects for a “Blue” Recovery in the Indian Ocean Region”.*

The draft concept note and TOR of the study were circulated to Member States on 6 July 2021, requesting them to convey the documents to their respective Blue Economy Focal Points for its views/comments. On 9 August 2021, the revised draft concept note and the TOR, with comments of Member States incorporated, were re-circulated to Member States for information and to India, as the IORAG Chair, for further action. India, as the IORAG Chair, was kindly requested on 9 August 2021, to assist with the provision of the draft Call-for-Proposals and the underlying Criteria as soon as possible, preferably before the end of August 2021. This will allow the Secretariat to transmit the draft Call-for-Proposals and underlying criteria to the WGBE Chair for approval as soon as possible in September 2021. A response is being awaited from India. India to provide an update on the status of the project.

*Desired Outcome:* The CSO to note the update by the Secretariat on the Research Study: “COVID-19 and Climate Change: Prospects for a “Blue” Recovery in the Indian Ocean Region”.

The CSO to note the update by India on the status of the project.

# 13. WOMEN’S ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT (WGWEE) - *Coordinating Country: Australia*

## 13.1 Report: Fourth Meeting of the Working Group on Women’s Economic Empowerment (WGWEE) and Progress Report on the Work Plan of the WGWEE (Australia/Mauritius)

*The Chair will invite Australia to provide an update on the fourth meeting of the WGWEE.*

The fourth meeting of the Working Group on Women’s Economic Empowerment (WGWEE) was held on 22 July 2021, co-chaired by Australia and Mauritius and hosted virtually by the Secretariat. The final Decision Report of the meeting was circulated to all Member States on 6 August 2021. As reflected in the report, key outcomes of the meeting included:

* A dialogue on COVID-19 impacts, with key takeaways for WEE cooperation in IORA (item 6)
* Request for Australia to prepare a Concept Note for the consideration of the CSO to increase women’s participation in IORA, including draft text for a proposed ministerial ‘IORA Gender Equality Pledge’ (item 7)
* Welcoming the WEE Symposium on 8-9 September 2021 to be hosted by Australia and the USA (item 8)
* Request to all Member States to publicise the outputs of the IORA-UN Women partnership (item 9)
* An updated WGWEE Work Plan, with three activities prioritised for COVID-19 response (Annex 2).

*Desired outcome:* The CSO to note the outcomes of the fourth meeting of the WGWEE, including the refinement of the WGWEE Work Plan to prioritise three activities for COVID-19 response.

## 13.2 Update: Improving gender balance in IORA (Australia)

*The Chair will invite Australia to provide an update on this item.*

The fourth meeting of the WGWEE (see item 12.1) requested Australia to prepare a Concept Note for the CSO to increase women’s participation in IORA. The WGWEE’s request came after consideration of the Secretariat’s report, *Gender Balance in IORA: An internal review conducted by the IORA Secretariat January 2019 – August 2020*. The *Gender Balance in IORA* report was considered at the third meeting of the WGWEE on 26 November 2020 and submitted to the CSO for consideration by Note Verbale on 11 December 2020. The CSO at its meeting on 15-16 December 2020 noted that the report had been submitted and requested Member States to consider the report by 4 February 2021, noting no response constitutes endorsement. No responses were received from Member States, indicating that the *Gender Balance in IORA* report and its recommendations was endorsed by the CSO.

The WGWEE requested Australia to prepare a Concept Note so that IORA can begin to take forward the six recommendations in the *Gender Balance in IORA* report, including draft text for a Ministerial pledge on gender equality. The Secretariat circulated a Note Verbale along with the draft Concept Note and drafting timeline to all Member States on 14 October 2021 requesting Member States to provide its views and inputs to the Secretariat by 01 November 2021.Inputs were received from 6 Member States (Mauritius, Somalia, Thailand, Bangladesh, Singapore and France) and incorporated by Australia into the revised Concept Note (track changes and clean copies)which was circulated to all Member States on 9 November 2021 for CSO consideration. A copy of the clean copy can be accessed at **Document No. IOR/23CSO-Annual/2021/DOC2.7**.

*Desired outcome:* The CSO to consider the Concept Note and the draft zero ‘IORA Gender Equality Pledge’ at their next meeting on 15-16 November 2021 and agree to recommend the Council of Ministers (COM) on 17 November 2021 to endorse its further development, with a view to Ministers endorsing the final version intersessionally for publication on International Women's Day 2022 (8 March 2022).

## 13.3 Report: Completion of the UN Women-IORA project “Promoting Women’s Economic Empowerment in the Indian Ocean Rim” 2018-21 (Australia)

*The Chair will invite Australia to provide an update on this item.*

The CSO will recall UN Women partnered with IORA on a three-year, AUD750,000 project to promote WEE in the Indian Ocean Rim region, particularly the Women’s Empowerment Principles (WEPs), supported by Australia. The project has completed. The project addressed data gaps on women’s economic participation in the region by publishing two detailed research reports, building on earlier UN Women-IORA research. The partnership also provided direct capacity building to women entrepreneurs and government officials. In total, the partnership supported 13 webinars, 2 online training sessions (on Government Responsive Procurement and WEE in Tourism), 2 world-class research reports, and one interactive infographic.

The partnership has been profiled as a ‘Flagship Project’ on the IORA website given its substantial and practical contributions. Resources including the two research reports, ‘key takeaways’ from entrepreneur roundtables, and webinar recordings have been uploaded to the IORA website and Youtube channel for easy and open access to the general public.

*Desired outcome:* The CSO to note the successful conclusion of the three-year IORA-UN Women partnership, supported by Australia. The CSO to encourage Member States to make use of resources for women entrepreneurs created by the partnership, available on the IORA website, and to promote them nationally.

## 13.4 Report: IORA Women’s Economic Symposium: Rewriting Business Strategies for the Global Pandemic (Australia)

*The Chair will invite Australia to provide an update on this item.*

Background for this item is above under agenda item 5.2 (USA).

*Desired outcome:* The CSO to note the outcomes of the IORA Women’s Economic Symposium.

# 14. INSTITUTIONAL ARRANGEMENTS AND BROADENING ENGAGEMENT - *Coordinating Country: South Africa*

## 14.1 Update: Vacancy for the position of the Human Resource Manager (Secretariat)

*The Chair will invite the Secretariat to provide an update on the vacancy for the position of the Human Resource Manager at the IORA Secretariat.*

The CSO may recall that, at thelast meeting held virtually on 15-16 June 2021, it was stressed on the importance of establishing a dedicated position of HR Manager in the Secretariat and requested the Secretariat to carry out a budget analysis to determine whether this position could be funded through savings in other budget areas. The CSO requested the Secretariat to provide this analysis to Mauritius and the Troika by 16 July 2021.

On 20 August 2021, the Secretariat wrote to Mauritius and requested Mauritius to consider seconding an HR Manager to the Secretariat to handle HR issues. The Terms of Reference, which included the detailed duties and responsibilities of the HR Manager, was submitted to Mauritius upon their request. Mauritius may also update the CSO on the position of the Human Resource Manager.

*Desired Outcome:* The CSO to note the update by the Secretariat and Mauritius on the vacancy for the position of the Human Resource Manager and to encourage Mauritius to facilitate and expedite in filling the said position at the Secretariat.

The CSO to welcome the offer from Mauritius in seconding a Human Resource Manager at the IORA Secretariat.

## 14.2 Update: Annual IORA Calendar of events (Secretariat)

*The Chair will invite the IORA Secretariat to update the CSO on the Annual IORA Calendar of events.*

The CSO may recall that, at the last meeting held virtually on 15-16 June 2021, the Secretariat was requested to circulate the calendar as well as the IORA Directory of contact points together, once per quarter, for Member States ready reference and regular submission of updates.

The Secretariat would like to inform the CSO that it has prepared an IORA Directory and would circulate the Directory once per quarter, for Member States ready reference and regular submission of updates. Similarly, the calendar will be dispatched to all Member States which are encouraged to send dates of all future events.

*Desired Outcome:* The CSO to note the progress made on the Annual Calendar of events and the IORA Directory.

## 14.3 Update: IORA’s Vision on the Indo-Pacific Region (India)

*The Chair will invite India to update the CSO on IORA’s Vision on the Indo-Pacific Region.*

Member States may recall the outcome decisions of the 11th Bi-annual CSO Meeting, requesting the Secretariat to recirculate the paper to all Member States for any final inputs by 14 July 2021. The Secretariat recirculated the paper on 13 July 2021 for the consideration of Member States. Additional inputs and views were received from the following Member States: Australia on 27 July 2021, Bangladesh on 31 August 2021, Indonesia on 26 July 2021, Singapore on 21 July 2021, South Africa on 27 July 2021, and Sri Lanka on 27 July 2021. The consolidated draft was circulated to India on 11 August, 31 August, and 06 September 2021 respectively.

India provided an update to the Secretariat on 09 September 2021, concurring with grammatical inputs from Member States provided to the Concept Note, and by announcing the possibility of hosing a final review meeting to finalise the Concept Note with the intention to adopt the Concept Note at the CSO and COM. The Secretariat circulated a reminder to India on 06 October 2021, seeking the final review meeting dates and administrative arrangements. India informed on 08 October 2021 to host the meeting on 21 October 2021, virtually. The updated Concept Note and announcement of the final review meeting was circulated to Member States on 08 October 2021. In addition, the Meeting was rescheduled to accommodate all IORA Member States participation, to 21 October 2021. The notice was communicated by the Secretariat with approval from India to Member States on 12 October 2021. A reminder and the draft Meeting agenda were circulated on 19 October 2021 to Member States. The updated draft Concept Note discussed at the Meeting was updated and finalised by the Secretariat and circulated to India on 21 October 2021.

The Final review Meeting on IORA’s Vision on the Indo-Pacific Region was held on 21 October 2021, and as per the discussions of the Meeting, the Secretariat circulated the updated version of the Concept Note to India on 21 October 2021 for consideration. The revised Indo-Pacific Concept Note, Version 3, was circulated to Member States on 08 November 2021 for discussion and consideration at the CSO.

*Outcome:* The CSO to note the update by Indiaon IORA’s Vision on the Indo-Pacific Region.

The IORA Vision document for the Indo-Pacific is foreseen as a deliverable at the 21st Meeting of the IORA COM after its finalization by the IORA CSO.

## 14.4 Update: Streamlining decision-making processes through sub-structures(South Africa)

*The Chair will invite South Africa to update the CSO on the proposal on streamlining decision-making processes through sub-structures.*

The CSO will recall that, at its last virtual meeting on 15-16 June 2021, the Secretariat was requested to circulate the updated and consolidated final draft of the paper for endorsement at the next CSO/COM meeting. On 5 August 2021, the IORA Secretariat conveyed for the attention of the Member States the updated and consolidated final draft of the Concept Note on Streamlining the IORA Decision-Making Process received from South Africa, the Lead Coordinator of this proposal. South Africa considered and incorporated the inputs received from the Member States as best as possible, of which a copy can be accessed at **Document No. IOR/23CSO-Annual/2021/DOC2.8**. Following the circulation of the consolidated final draft, the Secretariat was informed by Kenya that they have shared the Concept Note to their relevant Ministries and Departments. Feedback was received from Malaysia which welcomed the proposal and mentioned that it would assist IORA to improve its decision-making efficiency and productivity. Malaysia added that the proposal would act as a catalyst for IORA to become a prominent organisation and remain relevant in a fast-changing world.

*Desired Outcome:* The CSO to note the update by South Africa on the proposal on streamlining decision-making processes through sub-structures and while considering the views by Member States, to consider endorsing the proposal.

## 14.5 Status of Institutional arrangements with other regional organisations and the UN (Secretariat)

### 14.5.1 Report: Training Programme Geospatial Information Technology (GIT) for Operational planning and Decision-making in Disaster Risk Management (Secretariat)

*The Chair will invite the IORA Secretariat to provide a brief report the CSO on the* *Training Programme Geospatial Information Technology (GIT) for Operational planning and Decision-making in Disaster Risk Management.*

The Introductory Online Training Programme on Geospatial Information Technology (GIT) for Operational Planning and Decision-making in Disaster Risk Management was held from 20 September - 04 October 2021. The training was conducted by the United Nations Satellite Centre UNOSAT of the United Nations Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR) and under the auspices of the IORA-UNITAR Memorandum of Understanding that was signed in December 2018. The training was hosted in partnership with and sponsored by the Deutsche Gesellschaft fürInternationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH under the auspices of the IORA-GIZ MOU signed in December 2019.

Participants from 16 Member States (Australia, Bangladesh, France, India, Iran, Kenya, Madagascar, Mauritius, Mozambique, Oman, Seychelles, South Africa, Sri Lanka, Tanzania, Thailand and United Arab Emirates) and 3 Dialogue Partners (China, Egypt and Germany) registered for the training.

The training was officially launched through a special live Webinar held on 20 September 2021. The webinar aimed to introduce participants to the Training Programme “Geospatial Information Technology (GIT) for Operational Planning and Decision Making in Disaster Risk Management (DRM)” and to highlight the importance and applications of Geospatial Information Technology for DRM in the context of the IORA member states. A closing ceremony was held on 18 October 2021.

The 2-week introductory online course, aimed to introduce participants with the basic concepts and terminologies of Disaster Risk Reduction and Geospatial Information Technology including an overview of relevant GIT applications for DRR.

UNITAR’s training and summary evaluation report was circulated to all Member States for review and record purposes on 11 November 2021.

The Secretariat is in discussions with GIZ and UNITAR to conduct the second phase of the Training Programme when the international travel and health situations allows for the training to be conducted, preferably in Thailand (where UNOSAT technical expertise and trainers are based), in-person. The Secretariat will update Member States intersessionally.

*Desired Outcome:* The CSO to note the report from the Secretariat and welcome the Training Programme Geospatial Information Technology (GIT) for Operational planning and Decision-making in Disaster Risk Management as a successful example of IORA/UNITAR/GIZ trilateral collaboration.

The CSO welcomed the intention to conduct the second phase of the Training Programme when the international travel and health situations allows for the training to be conducted, preferably in Thailand (where UNOSAT technical expertise and trainers are based), in-person.

### 14.5.2 Update: The World Bank Proposal - Letter of Intent between IORA, SACEP and Parley or the project on “Plastic Free Rivers and Seas for Nations of the Indian Ocean Rim” (Secretariat)

*The Chair will invite the IORA Secretariat to update the CSO on The World Bank Proposal - Letter of Intent between IORA, SACEP and Parley or the project on “Plastic Free Rivers and Seas for Nations of the Indian Ocean Rim”.*

It may be recalled that at the Eleventh Bi-annual IORA Meeting of the Committee of Senior Officials (CSO), the Secretariat informed the meeting that it contacted Dr Pawan Patil from the World Bank, who confirmed that the World Bank does not have a mechanism for establishing MOU with IORA and requested IORA to explore potential ways for broadening engagement with the World Bank. Dr Patil suggested that the Secretariat send the comments from Member States so that the LOI could be revised accordingly. The Secretariat sent the Concept Note on IORA Actions Against Marine Debris for World Bank to consider and express interest in partnering with IORA for this project. A response is being awaited from Dr Patil.

*Desired Outcome:* The CSO to note the update by the IORA Secretariat on The World Bank Proposal - Letter of Intent between IORA, SACEP and Parley or the project on “Plastic Free Rivers and Seas for Nations of the Indian Ocean Rim”.

### 14.5.3 Update: Progress in collaboration with the Indian Ocean Commission (IOC) (Secretariat)

*The Chair will invite the IORA Secretariat to update the CSO on progress made in collaboration with the Indian Ocean Commission (IOC).*

The CSO will recall that, at its last virtual meeting on 15-16 June 2021, it was mentioned that a draft framework Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) was being prepared between the IORA and IOC Secretariats. Following the submission of the draft framework MoU(English and French version) by the IOC Secretariat on 15 October 2021, the document (English version) was circulated to Member States on 18 October 2021 for feedback by the deadline of 1 November 2021. The IORA Secretariat received feedback from France/Reunion (19 October 2021 – nil inputs) ,Singapore (20 October 2021 – nil inputs) and Bangladesh (26 October 2021-with inputs).

In addition, the IOC Secretariat has informed that they will require the signature on the two versions (English and French) since French was the working language of the IOC in accordance with its founding acts, and that the draft memorandum was drafted in both versions. Moreover, they mentioned that this draft document will be submitted to their upcoming IOC Council of ministers for endorsement on 26 November 2021.

*Desired Outcome:* The CSO to note the progress in collaboration with the Indian Ocean Commission (IOC) and to also note that the draft MoU (English version) was circulated to Member States for their views.

The CSO to consider and endorse that:

1. Final approval for the MoU will be confirmed intersessionally after both Secretariats are in agreement of the MoU.
2. Both versions of the MoU (English and French) are signed by the Acting Secretary-General or the Secretary-General on behalf of IORA as per the request of the IOC Secretariat.

### 14.5.4 Update: Collaboration with the other regional organisations and the UN (Secretariat)

*The Chair will invite the IORA Secretariat to update the CSO on the status of Institutional arrangements with other regional organisations and the UN.*

**Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN)**

The CSO will recall that, at its last virtual meeting on 15-16 June 2021, the Secretariat was requested to approach the ASEAN Secretariat to explore potential collaboration based on the Concept Note and update the CSO on the response. On 16 July 2021, the IORA Secretariat wrote to H.E. Dato Lim Jock Hoi, Secretary-General of ASEAN submitting the Concept Note on the IORA-ASEAN future cooperation. The IORA Secretariat received a response from ASEAN on 9 September 2021 where they informed that they consulted the ASEAN Member States on IORA’s interest in exploring possible cooperation with ASEAN, and that they would like to suggest pursuing practical cooperation between the ASEAN Secretariat and the Secretariat of IORA in the forms of:

1. sharing of experiences and best practices in fund management,
2. managing cooperation with its external partners and
3. other areas of mutual interests.

The communication also mentioned a suggestion that the Secretariats of ASEAN and IORA coordinate further to pursue the afore-mentioned cooperation. The IORA Secretariat is planning to initiate some engagements including organizing of virtual workshops and visit of the ASEAN Secretariat by the officials of IORA Secretariat. The guidance of CSO is also sought on the collaborations of the two Secretariats

*Desired Outcome:* The CSO to note the update by the IORA Secretariaton engagement with the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and CSO to guide on the way forward.

**International Renewable Energy Agency (IRENA)**

The CSO will recall that, at its last virtual meeting on 15-16 June 2021, it was mentioned that the IORA Secretariat wrote to IRENA to convey draft proposals suggested by the Chair of the WGBE and the Secretariat was requested to update the CSO on the response once received from IRENA.

The Secretariat is awaiting a response from IRENA following its communication dated 11 June 2021 to IRENA.A reminder was sent to IRENA on 17 October 2021.

*Outcome:* The CSO to note the update by the IORA Secretariat on the International Renewable Energy Agency (IRENA).

**International Solar Alliance (ISA)**

The CSO will recall that, at its last virtual meeting on 15-16 June 2021, the IORA Secretariat was requested to conclude the process to extend the MOU as a priority.

The MoU was signed remotely by Dr. Gatot H. Gunawan, the Acting Secretary-General, IORA, on behalf of IORA and Dr. Ajay Mathur, Director General, for the International Solar Alliance (ISA). The MoU was accordingly circulated to all Member States on 30 August 2021 while requesting Member States to consider potential initiatives to promote solar energy within IORA in line with the MoU, and were reminded of the availability of Special Fund support. that collaboration between IORA and IOC-UNESCO can commence whilst waiting for the formal completion of the MOU. The collaboration between IORA and ISA can commence and Member States are encouraged to list potential initiatives to promote solar energy within IORA in line with the MoU.

*Desired Outcome:* The CSO to note the update by the IORA Secretariat on the signature of the extension to the MoU between IORA and International Solar Alliance (ISA) which was signed remotely by Dr. Gatot H. Gunawan, the Acting Secretary-General, IORA, on behalf of IORA and Dr. Ajay Mathur, Director General, for the International Solar Alliance (ISA).

The CSO to note the list of potential initiatives proposed by Member States to promote solar energy within IORA in line with the MoU while encouraging Member States to circulate the Concept Note of the proposals to the Secretariat for onward transmission to Member States for feedback.

**Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission of UNESCO (IOC-UNESCO)**

The IOC-UNESCO informed the Secretariat that it was preparing the MoU for the visa of its Executive Board in October 2021. The Secretariat will be informed of any updates.

*Desired Outcome:* The CSO to note the update by the IORA Secretariat on the engagement with the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission of UNESCO (IOC-UNESCO).

**The International Seabed Authority (ISA)**

The ISA informed the Secretariat on 1 April 2021 that the draft MoU between the ISA and IORA has already been processed by the official documentation services and is already online on https://isa.org.jm/files/files/documents/ISBA\_26\_C\_16-2006701E.pdf. The Secretariat wrote on 20 August 2021 to request for an update regarding the signing of the MOU, as well as expressing IORA’s interest in collaborating with the ISA under the following areas of action: Policy development; capacity development; and Sustainability & partnerships for the Women in Deep Sea Research (WIDSR) draft Project Framework.

*Desired Outcome:* The CSO to note the update by the IORA Secretariat on the engagement with The International Seabed Authority (ISA).

**The Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) of the United Nations**

On 5 May 2021, the Secretariat wrote to Dr Manini, Senior Liaison Officer and RSN Secretary, Fisheries Global and Regional Processes, Fisheries and Aquaculture Division (NFI), FAO, to continue exploring the possibility of establishing an MOU and developing a Work Plan with the FAO. The FAO and the Secretariat had a virtual meeting on 8 July 2021, after which the FAO sent the MOU and Work Plan template for consideration. The Secretariat is working closely with the FAO on the draft Work Plan and MOU and the same would be circulated to Member States when completed.

*Desired Outcome:* The CSO to note the update by the IORA Secretariat on the engagement with The Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) of the United Nations.

## 14.6 Strengthening of the IORA Secretariat

### 14.6.1 Report: Capacity Building Programmes for IORA – Project Management Training (Singapore/ Secretariat)

*The Chair will invite Singapore and the IORA Secretariat to update the CSO on the Project Management Training Programme.*

The Training Programme on Project Management, which was opened to IORA Member States and the IORA Secretariat, took place virtually on 25 to 29 October 2021. The said programme was sponsored by the Singapore Cooperation Programme (SCP) and was conducted by Singapore Polytechnic International via Zoom.

This virtual training programme aimed to help participants to develop an action plan on possible enhancements to their current system of project planning and management for their respective Governments. This course also aimed to equip participants with the skills on how to initiate, plan, execute, manage, and deliver projects in a structured and systematic approach. Through this course, participants learnt about:

1. Principles of Governance in Project Planning & Management
2. Project Budgeting and Financing Systems
3. Project Risk Management and Audit Best Practices
4. Project Completion Report Writing

Singapore is requested to provide a brief report on the training programme: the number of participants, the outcome of the programme.

*Desired Outcome:* The CSO to note the report by Singapore on the Project Management Training.

The CSO to thank Singapore for organizing the virtual training programme on “Project Management”.

### 14.6.2 Update: Refurbishment of the Secretariat (Secretariat)

*The Chair will invite the IORA Secretariat to update the CSO on the refurbishment of the Secretariat.*

The CSO will recall that, at its last virtual meeting held on 15-16 June 2021, the IORA Secretariat was liaising with potential service providers on the refurbishment of the Secretariat. The IORA Secretariat is still working with the service providers and Member States will be informed on the latest developments in due course.

*Desired Outcome:* The CSO to note the update by the IORA Secretariat on the refurbishment of the Secretariat.

### 14.6.3 Update: Capacity building initiatives under Financing Agreements with GIZ (Secretariat)

*The Chair will invite the IORA Secretariat to update the CSO on the Capacity building initiatives under* *Financing Agreements with GIZ to strengthen the capacity of the Secretariat.*

On 22 September 2021, the Acting Secretary General, Dr Gatot Gunawan, requested GIZ to consider extending the current Financing Agreement (September 2019 – September 2021) until 31 December 2021, and to re-programme some of the financial expenditures. This request was premised on the fact that the 2nd lockdown imposed in Mauritius in response to the COVID-19 global pandemic had not enabled the Secretariat to expend the remaining funds under the FA, with the result that additional time was needed to finalise all procurements. Furthermore, the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic had not allowed the Secretariat to finalise the procurement of potential expert services and the concomitant procurement of marketing items. It was therefore requested that this financial allocation be re-programmed to meet identified staff training needs and goods. The extended FA was signed by the IORA Acting Secretary General on 22 September and by GIZ on 7 October 2021.

The Secretariat is also currently in the process of drafting a Financing Agreement with GIZ to strengthen the Secretariat under the auspices of the extended and expanded IORA-GIZ MOU (July 2021 – June 2022). A proposal covering the period January 2022 to June 2022 will be provided to the CSO for intersessional consideration in due course.

*Desired Outcome:* The CSO to note the update from the Secretariat on the Capacity building initiatives to strengthen the Secretariat under the Financing Agreements with GIZ.

### 14.6.4 Update: Capacity building initiatives under Financing Agreements with AFD (Secretariat)

*The Chair will invite the IORA Secretariat to provide an update on the status of the Capacity building initiatives under Financing Agreements with the Agence Francaise de Developpement (AFD).*

The CSO will recall that the Financing Agreement between IORA and the Agence Francaise de Developpment (French Development Agency, AFD) was signed on 28 June 2021 following Member State and AFD agreement to the final text.

Further to the questionnaire surveys, the following reports were developed and circulated to Member States:

i. Compendium of Stock Assessment Training and Courses in the IORA Region; and

ii. Literature Review and Gap Analysis of Information on International Trade and Markets for Fisheries and Aquaculture Products

iii. Review of aquaculture, governance and development of small-scale aquaculture in the IORA region;

iv. Analysis of measures to combat IUU fishing in the IORA region;

v. Assessment of the capacity needs (Human and Institutional) and the current level of Implementation of Port State Measures (PSM) in the IORA region;

vi. Existing capacity uses and needs for stock assessment training and courses in the IORA region; and

vii. International fish trade study – Review of fish trade in the IORA region.

viii. “Examples of existing initiatives in small-scale and rural aquaculture in the IORA region”.

In addition, the following Webinars have been hosted:

i. Webinar on “strengthening regional safety standards and quality assurance of aquaculture products in the IORA”, IORA-AFD, 27 April 2021. The report of the Webinar was circulated to Member States and Dialogue Partners on 5 May 2021;

ii. Webinar on a capacity building programme in fish stock assessment, 13 July 2021. The Report of the Webinar was circulated to Member States and Dialogue partners on 18 August 2021;

iii. Webinar on promotion of small-scale rural aquaculture, 31 August 2021. The Report of the Webinar was circulated to Member States and Dialogue partners on 13 October 2021;

iv. Webinar on combatting illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing and especially through PSMA application in the IORA region, 16 September 2021

v. Webinar on “Enhancing the knowledge of IORA Member States on international trade and markets for fisheries and aquaculture products”, 12 October 2021

AFD is also planning to organise a training programme on enhancing by-catch landing, valorisation, traceability and quality, including the development of safe handling guides and species identification guides, in Seychelles. AFD intends to organize the training by mid- January 2022. AFD is also liaising with the IORA Blue Carbon Hub for 2 projects, namely:

a. Developing a manual of Blue Carbon standard methods to be used for standardized base line data sets

b. Provide a training programme on Blue Carbon study and measurement

*Desired Outcome:* The CSO to note the update on the status of the capacity building initiatives under Financing Agreements with AFD.

### 14.6.5 Report: Webinar on “Understanding the Indian Ocean” (Secretariat)

*The Chair will invite the IORA Secretariat to update the CSO on Webinar on “Understanding the Indian Ocean”.*

Australia hosted a 5-part webinar series, “Understanding the Indian Ocean” from 10 June – 8 July 2021. The course was run by Dr David Brewster, an Indian Ocean expert at the Australian National University. Foreign ministry and government officials from Member States participated. Other participants included secretariat staff from the Indian Ocean Commission, and staff at the Regional Maritime Information Fusion Centre (Madagascar), and the Regional Coordination Operations Centre (Seychelles) and staff at the IORA Secretariat. The Webinar provided a good opportunity to enhance the Secretariat’s capacity and knowledge base on the issues which were very relevant to IORA’s priority areas as could be noted in the five sessions below:

Session 1: Geopolitical Developments in the Indian Ocean

Session 2: Maritime Safety and Security in the Indian Ocean

Session 3: Environmental Security Threats in the Indian Ocean

Session 4: The Blue Economy in the Indian Ocean

Session 5: Regional Cooperation in the Indian Ocean

*Desired Outcome:* The CSO to note the update from the Secretariat on the Webinar on “Understanding the Indian Ocean”.

## 14.7 Update: IORA Media Network (Secretariat)

*The Chair will invite the Secretariat to update the CSO on the IORA Media Network.*

The Secretariat is pleased to inform Member States of the established Media Network which is to be managed by the IORA Secretariat Public Diplomacy and Communications Unit. The Secretariat established a dedicated email group: iora.media@iora.int on 07 October 2021. Member States may recall the discussions held to date to increase the visibility of IORA. The IORA Media Network aims to:

* disseminate IORA media press releases and other materials (brochures etc.) from the Secretariat;
* establish rapport focused on developments of IORA’s priority and focus areas within Member States, building on the earlier successes of the First and Second IORA Media Familiarization Visits held in 2017 (India) and 2019 (South Africa); and
* circulate other news from Member States relating to the development of the Indian Ocean Region.

Media personnel and journalist nominations from the following Member States are included to the Media Network: Bangladesh, France/Reunion, India, Indonesia, Mauritius, Mozambique, South Africa, Sri Lanka, and the UAE. A reminder for additional nominations form Member States yet to nominate was circulated on 12 October 2021.

*Desired Outcome:* The CSO to take note of the update by the Secretariat on the established IORA Media Network.

The CSO to encourage more media personnel and journalist nominations from Member States to join the network.

# 15. FINANCE & ADMINISTRATION

## 15.1 Report: Sub-Committee on Finance (SCF) (Chair of SCF, Bangladesh)

*The Chair of CSO will invite the Chair of the Sub-Committee on Finance to present the report of the meeting held on 9 November 2021. The Chair will open the floor for discussions. Member States are welcomed to provide their views (if any) on the recommendations made by the SCF meeting.*

The CSO will note that issues under SCF Annotated Agenda '7. Staffing Issues' has been deferred to a special CSO after this 23rd CSO meeting. About 7.1 New Staff Salary Scale, it was decided that the Secretariat will come up with a new proposal after HR/Legal expert consultation. In addition, Sub-item 2.2 Consideration of the Proposed rotation of Audit (Tanzania) has been deferred.

*Desired Outcome:* The CSO to consider the Chairperson’s Report from the Sub-Committee on Finance including its recommendations and to recommend endorsement by Ministers.

## 15.2 Update: Secretariat’s proposed structure and staffing needs (Secretariat)

*The Chair will invite the IORA Secretariat to update the CSO on the Secretariat’s proposed structure and staffing needs.*

The CSO will recall that, at its last virtual meeting held on 15-16 June 2021, it was endorsed that the Secretariat can proceed with urgent recruitment needs as previously approved by the Troika. Moreover, the Secretariat was requested to ensure that all Member State comments are taken into account in the compiled table of Member State inputs with regards to the setting up of a selection committee for recruitment of local staff. Furthermore, the Secretariat was requested to carry out a budget analysis to determine whether position of HR Manager in the Secretariat could be funded through savings in other budget areas.

The recruitment on the following positions such as “Senior Program officer/Program Officer”, 1 “Research Assistant”, Communication Expert and Coordination/ Protocol Officer is still under process. The salary scale for the local staff is in the process to be finalized. On the position of HR Manager in the Secretariat, refer to sub-item 14.1 above.

*Desired Outcome:* The CSO to note the update by the IORA Secretariat on the Secretariat’s proposed structure and staffing needs.

## 15.3 Report: Sub-Committee for the Review and Finalisation of IORA Secretariat Financial and Staff Regulations, HR and Finance Manuals, Code of Conduct, Grievance Policy and Procedures, Disciplinary Code & Procedures, Recruitment and Selection Procedures, etc (Secretariat)

*The Chair will invite the IORA Secretariat to update the CSO on the finalisation of IORA Secretariat Financial and Staff Regulations, HR and Finance Manuals, Code of Conduct, Grievance Policy and Procedures, Disciplinary Code & Procedures, Recruitment and Selection Procedures, etc.*

The CSO may note inputs were received on the following documents and the IORA Secretariat incorporated the inputs received from the following Member States (UAE, Bangladesh, India, Mauritius and Tanzania) and which were circulated to all Member States on 12 October 2021 for any further inputs, if any. Inputs were also received from Singapore.

1. Finance Regulations for the IORA Secretariat (version 3)
2. Financial Management Manual for the IORA Secretariat (version 3)
3. Procurement Manual for the IORA Secretariat (version 3)
4. Human Resource Management Manual for the IORA Secretariat (version 3)
5. Staff Regulations for the IORA Secretariat (version 3)

The CSO may also recall that the Sub-Committee, to consider the IORA manuals and that met on 19 May 2021,endorsed the documents (Finance Management Manual, Finance Regulations, Human Resource Management Manual, Staff Regulations, Procurement Manual, Procurement Regulations, Code of Conduct, Grievances Policy and Procedures, Recruitment and Selection Policy) as lived documents and that there would be two periodic reviews taking place every year where the manuals will be reviewed and updated every six months at the two Sub-Committee on Finance (SCF) meetings.

The CSO to consider the recommendations by the SCF in its meeting held on 9 November 2021.

*Desired Outcome:* The CSO to note the update by the IORA Secretariat on the IORA manuals and to consider endorsing the manuals as lived documents and to be reviewed and updated every six months at the two Sub-Committee on Finance (SCF) meetings. The manuals are:

1. Finance Regulation and Finance Management Manual
2. Staff Regulation and Human Resource Manual
3. Procurement Regulation and Procurement Manual
4. Code of Conduct and Disciplinary Code and Procedures
5. Grievance policy

## 15.4 Update: Review of the host country agreement (Secretariat)

*The Chair will invite the IORA Secretariat to update the CSO on the review of the host country agreement.*

The CSO will recall that, at its last virtual meeting held on 15-16 June 2021, the Secretariat was requested to engage with Mauritius to discuss the way forward on this issue. The consultation is under process and Member States will be updated in due course.

*Desired Outcome:* The CSO to note the update by the Secretariat onthe host country agreement.

## 15.5 Update: Report on the Workshop to consider non-payment of membership fees (Secretariat)

*The Chair will invite the Secretariat to provide an update to the CSO on the report of the Workshop to consider non-payment of membership fees.*

The CSO, at its last virtual meeting held on 15-16 June 2021, the Secretariat was requested to recirculate the draft report of the Workshop for any further inputs from Member States within one month of the date of circulation. The Secretariat will then consolidate and recirculate a revised version to all Member States.

The CSO may note that the following documents were re-circulated on 4 August 2021 to all Member States for inputs to be provided by 30 August 2021. South Africa (inputs on 5 August 2021), Mauritius (25 August 2021), and Singapore (30 August 2021) provided their inputs. Inputs were also received earlier from Bangladesh on 23 December 2020.

1- Outcome report -2 September 2020

2- Outcome Report Budget workshop- 16 September

3- Concept note- Revised Organisational structure and budgetary measures

The documents were re-circulated to all Member States on 25 October 2021. Mauritius provided its views which were forwarded to all Member States on 26 October 2021.

The CSO is requested to consider the recommendations made by the Sub-Committee on Finance (SCF) in their meeting held on 9 November 2021.The recommendation on membership arrears for LDCs will have to be reflected in the Administrative Arrangements for the Special Fund documents if endorsed by the CSO.

*Desired Outcome:* The CSO to note the update by the Secretariat on the report of the Workshop to consider non-payment of membership fees, and to consider endorsing the recommendations made by the Sub-Committee on Finance (SCF) in their meeting held on 9 November 2021.

## 15.6 Honorarium payment for the Acting Secretary-General (ASG) of 20% of the monthly salary of SG if in charge for more than one month (Bangladesh)

*The Chair willupdate to the CSO on the new proposal for an honorarium payment for the Acting Secretary-General (ASG) of 20% of the monthly salary of SG if in charge for more than one month.*

The CSO is aware that as per paragraph (5) (d) (iv) of the IORA Charter , in the absence of the Secretary-General, the most senior Director will act on behalf of the Secretary-General. The CSO may note that as per the rule Dr Gunawan was appointed as Acting Secretary General in the last COM in 2020. Bangladesh feels that an Acting Secretary-General should be paid monthly honorarium and proposes an amount of 20% of the monthly salary of SG if the SG in charge for more than one month.

*Desired Outcome:* The CSO toconsider the monthly honorarium payment for the Acting Secretary-General (ASG) of 20% of the monthly salary of SG if in charge for more than one month.

# 16. IORA SPECIAL FUND

## 16.1 Update: Review of the Administrative Arrangements of the Special Fund including the emergency use of the Special Fund for COVID-19 response projects (Secretariat)

*The Chair will invite the IORA Secretariat to provide an update on the status of the review of the Special Fund.*

The CSO may recall that, at its last virtual meeting held on 15-16 June 2021, requested the Secretariat to prepare a consolidated clean version of amendments to be circulated at least two months before the next CSO meeting, to enable the next CSO to recommend the amendments to the COM for approval.

The consolidated clean version of the Administrative Arrangements for the IORA Special Fund was circulated to all Member States on 24 September 2021 for further feedback, if any by 18 October 2021. The IORA Secretariat incorporated the inputs received from the Member States as best as possible. Member States may note the following:

1. The Secretariat has consulted with those Member States (India and Mauritius) on their comments provided on the Administrative Arrangements for the IORA Special Fund and their inputs have been incorporated accordingly. Following the inputs of the Member States, Secretariat included some comments. Member States are requested to kindly provide their feedback on the comments.
2. The Secretariat has proposed improvements on some Annexures.
3. The Secretariat has, as far as possible, matched the rules, provided in the main text, in the Annexures.

Mauritius provided its feedback on 25 October 2021.

*Desired Outcome:* The CSO to consider the consolidated clean version of the Administrative Arrangements for the IORA Special Fundand to recommend endorsement by Ministers.

## 16.2 Special Fund projects (approved)

### 16.2.1 Update: Creation of an IORA Centre of Excellence for Dispute Resolution, Special Fund (Mauritius)

*The Chair will invite Mauritius to provide an update on this Special Fund project, being implemented by the Mauritius Chamber of Commerce and Industry (MCCI).*

The CSO will recall that the end date of the project has been extended from December 2021 to December 2022. A comparative study of dispute resolution mechanisms in the region is underway, led by the successful tenderer, Cdr Mr Madhvendra Singh of India. On receiving an offer of pro bono support for the project from international law firm Freshfields Bruckhaus Deringer LLP, as welcomed by the CSO on 15-16 June 2021, the Secretariat facilitated an introductory meeting between MCCI, Freshfields and Mr Singh on 28 May 2021. Subsequently, Freshfields has engaged directly with MCCI and Mr Singh on the technical aspects of the support. A letter of engagement between Freshfields and the MCCI was signed on 21 June 2021.

The CSO will also recall Singapore’s offer made at the CSO on 15-16 June 2021 to connect arbitration institutions in Singapore with the project. In June-July 2021 the Secretariat and the Singapore National Focal Point facilitated the connection of the MCCI, Mr Singh and the Singapore Ministry of Law, to establish direct communication to enable technical exchanges.

On 1 September 2021 Mauritius submitted the duly completed bi-annual Project Monitoring Report as required under the Special Fund rules (Annex F under provision 6.1). The Report indicated that the project is on schedule, within budget and on target to meet objectives.

*Desired outcome:* The CSO to note the update from the Secretariat that project implementation is on track, and support is being provided by international law firm Freshfields Bruckhaus Deringer and arbitration institutions in Singapore.

### 16.2.2 Update: High Level Capacity Building Programme on Gender Mainstreaming in the Six Priority Areas of IORA, Special Fund (Mauritius)

*The Chair will invite Mauritius to provide an update on the project*.

The CSO will recall that at the 11th Bi-annual CSO Meeting held virtually on 15-16 June 2021, the initiative had been delayed and that new dates would be communicated in due course by Mauritius.

*Desired Outcome:* The CSO to note the update on the project.

### 16.2.3 Update: International Relations in the Indian Ocean Region: Collaborative Study Experience, Special Fund (Australia)

*The Chair will invite Australia to provide a status update on the International Relations in the Indian Ocean Region: Collaborative Study Experience that is to be funded with the support of the IORA Special Fund.*

It may be recalled that the planned July 2020 course in Perth was postponed due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The 22nd Meeting of the Committee of Senior Officials (CSO) noted the update from Australia that the University of Western Australia had agreed to conduct an online course, and that a second course using the Special Fund monies would be held in person in late 2021, if possible.

The online course was delivered from 1-11 February 2021. This was the fourth iteration of the annual course, previously delivered in 2017 (Jakarta), 2018 (Jakarta) and 2019 (Pretoria).

It may be further recalled that at the 11th IORA Bi-Annual Meeting of the Committee of Senior Officials (CSO), held virtually on 15-16 June 2021, the CSO noted the update from Australia on the International Relations in the Indian Ocean Region: Collaborative Study Experience that the in-person course has further delayed due to associated health risks and travel restrictions, as well as obtaining future student mobility funding and that new dates would be communicated in due course.

*Desired Outcome:* The CSO to note the update from Australia on the hosting of the International Relations in the Indian Ocean Region: Collaborative Study Experience.

### 16.2.4 Update: IORA-India Cruise Tourism Conference “Spotlight on the Indian Ocean”, Special Fund (India)

*The Chair will invite India to provide an update on the IORA-India Cruise Tourism Conference “Spotlight on the Indian Ocean”, which was scheduled to be held on 27-28 February 2020 in Mumbai, India, with the support of the IORA Special Fund.*

On 13 February 2020 the IORA Secretariat informed Member States and Dialogue Partners that the Conference unfortunately was postponed due to the COVID-19 pandemic, and that the new dates of the conference would be communicated in due course.

It may be further recalled that at the 11th IORA Bi-Annual Meeting of the Committee of Senior Officials (CSO), held virtually on 15-16 June 2021, the CSO noted the update by India that the IORA-India Cruise Tourism Conference “Spotlight on the Indian Ocean” had been further delayed and new dates would be communicated in due course.

*Desired Outcome:* The CSO to note the update by India on the hosting of the IORA-India Cruise Tourism Conference “Spotlight on the Indian Ocean”.

### 16.2.5 Update: Workshop on the Impacts of Climate Change on the Marine Environment for IORA Countries, Special Fund (RCSTT)

*The Chair will invite RCSTT to provide an update on the preparations of the Workshop on the Impacts of Climate Change on the Marine Environment for IORA Countries.*

It may be recalled that at the Second Meeting of the Working Group on the Blue Economy (WGBE), which was held virtually on 12 April 2021, the IORA Regional Centre for Science & Technology Transfer (RCSTT) proposed to hold a series of online workshops/webinars, which will cover the topics on the effects of climate change on the physical, chemical, biological and meteorological properties of the Indian Ocean and adjacent seas. RCSTT hosted the first of the Webinar Series on The Effects of Climate Change on the Indian Ocean Marine Environment” on 10 May 2021. The report of the webinar was circulated to Member States and Dialogue Partners on 24 May 2021. RCSTT in cooperation with GIZ and WGBE is planning to hold the second phase in the series as a virtual workshop on “the Urgency of Climate Change and its Consideration as a Topic in IORA” on 8 November 2021. The concept note of the webinar was sent to the IORA Chair on 13 October 2021 to seek approval on the same and for its circulation to Member States for nomination of participants. The RCSTT and GIZ, in collaboration with the IORA Secretariat, hosted the Second (Virtual) Workshop on “The Urgency of Climate Change and its Consideration as a Topic in IORA” on 8 November 2021. RCSTT also informed the Secretariat on 21 October 2021 that it intends to organise the third of the Workshop series on Climate Change on Marine Environment for IORA Countries as a real (in person) event or in hybrid format. The RCSTT also inform the Secretariat that considering the progressive control of Covid-19 in Iran and other countries in the IORA region, it would be now possible to hold the event in person or as a hybrid programme in the first quarter of 2022. RCSTT to provide more information on this item.

*Desired Outcome:* The CSO to note the update by RCSTT on the preparations of the Workshop on the Impacts of Climate Change on the Marine Environment for IORA Countries.

### 16.2.6 Report: Third Somalia-Yemen Development Programme (SYDP-III): “Development and Management of Somalia's and Yemen’s Marine Fisheries”, Special Fund (Secretariat)

*The Chair will invite the IORA Secretariat to report to the CSO on the third edition of the Somalia-Yemen Development Programme (SYDP-III).*

The Third SYDP (SYDP-III) entitled “Development and Management of Somalia's and Yemen’s Marine Fisheries”, was hosted by Italy on 27th September 2021 to 1st October 2021and saw the participation of 4 participants from Yemen and 4 participants from Somalia, with an additional participant from Somalia funded by FAO. The workshop was being jointly organized by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Italy, HOPE and FEDERPESCA, in collaboration with the IORA Secretariat. The report of the meeting is being prepared and will be shared with Member States upon completion. Italy to provide the accountability report.

*Desired Outcome:* The CSO to note the report by the IORA Secretariat on the third edition of the Somalia-Yemen Development Programme (SYDP-III) that took place in Italy on 27 September to 1 October 2021.

### 16.2.7 Update: Project on Ocean Knowledge Education Programme to strengthen the Blue Economy concept in the IORA region – A pilot study incorporating “Sustainable Ocean Management” into the curriculum for 12 to 13 yr old" (Secretariat)

*The Chair will invite the IORA Secretariat to update the CSO on the project on Ocean Knowledge Education Programme to strengthen the Blue Economy concept in the IORA region – A pilot study incorporating “Sustainable Ocean Management” into the curriculum for 12 to 13 yr old.*

The Secretariat has sent the grant letter, the Funding Terms and Conditions, the Project Monitoring Report and the IORA Project Completion/ Accountability Report to Seychelles on 21 June 2021. The co-signed grant letter and the letter confirming the counter amount were received on 15 September 2021 but the signed Funding Terms and Conditions and the bank details were not provided. The Secretariat sent an email on 16 September 2021 to Seychelles to request for the missing documents which are the Funding Terms and Conditions of the IORA Special Fund Grant. A reminder was sent to Seychelles on 13 October 2021 and a response is being awaited from Seychelles. Seychelles to provide an update on this item.

*Desired Outcome:* The CSO to note the update by the Secretariat and Seychelles on the project on Ocean Knowledge Education Programme to strengthen the Blue Economy concept in the IORA region – A pilot study incorporating “Sustainable Ocean Management” into the curriculum for 12 to 13 years old.

## 16.3 Consideration of Proposals for future funding under Special Fund (Secretariat)

### 16.3.1 Update: Workshop on Nature-based tourism: “Boosting Livelihoods across the Indian Ocean Rim through Nature-Based Tourism”, Special Fund (Mauritius)

*The Chair will invite Mauritius to provide a status update on the Workshop on Nature-based tourism: “Boosting Livelihoods across the Indian Ocean Rim through Nature-Based Tourism”, and which Mauritius requested that the proposal be funded from the IORA Special Fund.*

It will be recalled that the Mauritius Ministry of Tourism wished to host the workshop from 10-12 June 2020 but was postponed owing to the COVID-19 pandemic.

It may be further recalled that at the 11th IORA Bi-Annual Meeting of the Committee of Senior Officials (CSO), held virtually on 15-16 June 2021, the CSO noted the update by Mauritius that the workshop would be held in 2022 or 2023, subject to travel restrictions in the region, and that a revised Concept Note and Program would be circulated in due course.

*Desired Outcome:* The CSO to note the update by Mauritius on the Workshop on Nature-based tourism: “Boosting Livelihoods across the Indian Ocean Rim through Nature-Based Tourism”.

### 16.3.2 IORA Sustainable Development Programme (ISDP) (Secretariat)

*The Chair will invite the IORA Secretariat to update the CSO on the IORA Sustainable Development Programme (ISDP).*

The Secretariat circulated a list of potential projects, based on previous workshops’ recommendations and the current Work Plan of the Core Group on Fisheries Management (CGFM), to the LDC Member States, requesting them to express interest in conducting any of the listed project or identify any project of interest, to be carried out under the ISDP programme. Bangladesh and Madagascar wrote back to the Secretariat indicating their projects of interest. Secretariat has requested both countries to provide a timeline for the indicated projects given that the ISDP is a yearly programme, with one project be implemented per year. A response has been received from Bangladesh and the concept note for their project will be sent in due course, while a response from Mozambique is being awaited. Bangladesh and Mozambique to provide an update on the same. Other LDC Member States to express interest in hosting project under ISDP.

*Desired Outcome:* The CSO to note the update by the IORA Secretariat on the IORA Sustainable Development Programme (ISDP).

# 17. IORA SPECIAL PROGRAMMES

## 17.1 Update: IORA Human Development Fund (IHDF) (UAE)

*The Chair will invite UAE to update the CSO on the status of the IORA Human Development Fund (IHDF).*

The CSO will recall that, at the last virtual CSO meeting held on 15-16 June 2021, that UAE was undertaking consultations with internal stakeholders and would update Member States in due course. The UAE reiterated that these consultations may necessitate an entirely new concept, while retaining the central objective of enhancing human development outcomes in the Indian Ocean region.

The CSO also noted Mauritius’ proposal for the Secretariat to commission a study on, inter alia, the benefits, financial sustainability and modalities of accessing an IORA Development Fund. In this context, the CSO requested the Secretariat to engage with Member States and Dialogue Partners regarding the proposed study.

On 5 August 2021, the Secretariat wrote to all Member States and Dialogue Partners and requested them to indicate willingness to fund a technical study to see what could be the best modalities in which a human development fund for IORA can be shaped and implemented. The IORA Secretariat received feedback from Germany. While Germany mentioned that were ready for assisting the setting-up of the Fund, they queried on the following: How do IORA intend to undertake this study? Through one or more consultants? Could Germany be part of the study team? The queries were forwarded to the Chair, UAE, for guidance and the Chair advised the Secretariat as follows:

1. To take forward this study, perhaps in discussion with those other Member States that proposed the study at the last CSO.
2. To prepare a note or proposal with a recommended approach that addresses the questions raised by Germany: "Who will select the Consultant to conduct the study and who will prepare the ToR of the study, who will bear the cost, etc?".
3. Given GIZ's eagerness, perhaps they could be engaged for the purposes of this study, should the Secretariat, Mauritius, and South Africa agree that this is an appropriate and beneficial collaboration.

With regard to UAE undertaking consultations with internal stakeholders, UAE informed the Secretariat that were still conducting their own internal consultations with regards to potential programmes that will support development outcomes within IORA. They mentioned that at this stage, they foresaw a pivot away from the fund model initially proposed to something that can be delivered before the end of the UAE's Chairship. As such, they viewed the study proposed at the last CSO as an entirely separate, longer-term track and stood ready to collaborate on any study, and support its outcome, in the future.

*Desired Outcome:* The CSO to note the update by UAE on the IORA Human Development Fund (IHDF) and to advise on the way forward.

## 17.2 Update: IORA Nelson Mandela Internship Programme (NMIP) (Secretariat)

*The Chair will invite the Secretariat to provide a status update on the possibility of the IORA Nelson Mandela Internship Programme being hosted in Mauritius during the course of 2022.*

It may be recalled that at the 19th COM Meeting on 7 November 2019, UAE, approved the first Programme to be held from 15 July 2020 – 15 December 2020. However, owing to the COVID 19 pandemic, the commencement was postponed.

It may be further recalled that at the 11th IORA Bi-Annual Meeting of the Committee of Senior Officials (CSO), held virtually on 15-16 June 2021, the CSO requested the Secretariat to closely monitor the situation and advise Member States as soon as possible when circumstances allow the program to proceed.

Mauritius reopened its borders to fully vaccinated visitors on 1 October 2021. Subject to approval from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Trade of Mauritius, consideration may be given to reintroduce the application process, with preferential consideration being given to those individual candidates already approved in March 2021, if still available.

*Desired Outcome:* The CSO to note the update by the Secretariat and to approve the Secretariat to reintroduce to reintroduce the application process, with preferential consideration being given to those individual candidates already approved in March 2021, if available.

## 17.3 Update: Preparations for IORA Day 2022 and 25th Anniversary of IORA (Secretariat)

*The Chair will invite the Secretariat to update the CSO on the Preparations for IORA Day 2022 and 25th Anniversary of IORA.*

The Secretariat wishes to inform Member States that the Public Diplomacy and Communications Unit under the management of the IABE Unit, is currently working on proposal for IORA Day 2022 and the celebrations for the 25th Anniversary of IORA, celebrating its Silver Jubilee.

The proposed celebrations for the 25th Anniversary of IORA include the following:

1. 25 years commemorative publication;
2. Official video launch of IORA 25th Anniversary of Establishment;
3. Launch new website
4. A reception Indoor/Outdoor;
5. A Cultural Festival and Exhibition;
6. The IORA “Connecting the Youth of the Indian Ocean Region” Writing Competition;
7. Street billboards for visibility;
8. Postal Stamps for IORA’s Silver Jubilee;
9. Seminar on IORA’s Past, Present, Future;
10. A Sports Tournament
11. T-Shirt, Mug, Pen, Writing Pad
12. Youth Day at University of Mauritius (lectures, Seminar)
13. Beach/Island Clean-up Day

The proposed events will be funded by GIZ project.

*Desired Outcome:* The CSO to take note of the update by the Secretariat on the Preparations for IORA Day 2022 and 25th Anniversary of IORA, celebrating its Silver Jubilee.

The CSO to propose activities for IORA Day 2022, and its Silver Jubilee.

## 17.4 Update: IORA “Connecting the Youth of the Indian Ocean Region” Writing Competition (Secretariat)

*The Chair will invite the Secretariat to update the CSO on the IORA “Connecting the Youth of the Indian Ocean Region” Writing Competition*

Member States may recall the official launch of the IORA “Connecting the Youth of the Indian Ocean Region” Writing Competition on the occasion of the First IORA Day 2021 virtual celebrations held on 25 March 2021. However, due to the lack of funding resources for the competition, the IORA “Connecting the Youth of the Indian Ocean Region” Writing Competition is proposed to be postponed and to coincide with the 25th Anniversary of IORA. This will be funded now by GIZ project.

*Desired Outcome:* The CSO to take note of the update by the Secretariat on the IORA “Connecting the Youth of the Indian Ocean Region” Writing Competition.

## 17.5 Update: Indian Ocean Champion Concept (Secretariat)

*The Chair will invite the IORA Secretariat to provide an update on the Indian Ocean Champion Concept.*

The CSO will recall that, at its virtual meeting held on 15-16 June 2021, the Secretariat was requested to circulate the arrangements on the preparation of the Terms of Reference/Technical Arrangements for the Indian Ocean Champion Concept. The Terms of Reference/Technical Arrangements is under preparation by the IORA Secretariat and would be shared with Member States after the CSO meeting.

*Desired Outcome:* The CSO tonote the update by the IORA Secretariat on the preparation of the Terms of Reference/Technical Arrangements for the Indian Ocean Champion Concept.

## 17.6 New Proposal: IORA-Dhaka Development Initiative (Chair, Bangladesh)

*The Chair will brief the CSO on the new proposal entitled “IORA-Dhaka Development Initiative.”*

The CSO may note that Bangladesh proposes a concept note on IORA-Dhaka Development Initiative with aim at creating an institutional mechanism for development initiative. The Secretariat circulated the draft ‘Zero’ of the IORA-Dhaka Development Initiative (IORA-DDI) received from Bangladesh to all Member States on 5 November 2021. Member States were requested to provide their feedback (in track changes) on the draft Concept Note by 30 November 2021. Bangladesh has informed that they will introduce the proposal in the CSO meeting at this stage and it is planned that the proposal may be finalized in the next Bi-annual CSO in 2022 or intersessionally.

*Desired Outcome:* The CSO to note the brief by Bangladesh on the new proposal entitled “IORA-Dhaka Development Initiative.”

The CSO to request Bangladesh to circulate the proposal to all Member States for consideration.

# 18. NEW PROPOSALS BY MEMBER STATES (if any) (Chair, Bangladesh)

*The Chair will invite Member States to present any project proposals (if any) for the consideration of the CSO.*

Member States are reminded that before any new proposals (whether planned to be funded by the IORA Special Fund or Self-Funded) may be introduced to the CSO, they have to provide the Concept Note as an introduction of the project for consideration by Member States as the first step before the draft programme, logistics and administrative arrangements are to be circulated by the Secretariat. The proposed Project Concept Note should include the following information:

1. Background Information;
2. Proposal;
3. Aims and Objectives;
4. Envisioned Outcomes;
5. Benefit to Member States;
6. Host; and
7. Funding; An indication whether it is envisaged that any contribution may be required from the IORA Special Fund or self-funding

Member States are reminded that the use of nomenclature in the documents should follow the IORA Charter. Member States will recall that the IORA Secretariat developed a template for IORA events that was endorsed at the Eighth Bi-annual CSO meeting held in Durban on 30-31 July 2018. The document is not prescriptive, but serves as a guideline, developed from the lessons learned from previous IORA activities, for use by Member States planning to host future IORA events. The Secretariat can provide a copy of the template for IORA events if a Member State has not received same.

*Desired Outcome:* The CSO to note the proposals (if any) noting that details of the same will be forwarded to the IORA Secretariat for circulation to Member States for their consideration.

# 19. PREPARATIONS FOR THE 21ST COUNCIL OF MINISTERS’ MEETING, DISCUSSION ON:

## 19.1 Draft COM Agenda (Chair, Bangladesh)

*The Chair will invite Member States to provide their views (if any) on the draft Agenda of the 21st COM meeting to be held on 17November 2021.A copy of the draft Agenda is annexed as* ***Document No. IOR/23CSO-Annual/2021/DOC2.8****.*

*Desired Outcome:* The CSO to consider and finalise the draft Agenda of the 21st COM.

## 19.2 Draft Dhaka Communiqué (Chair, Bangladesh)

*The Chair will invite Member States to provide their views on the draft Dhaka Communiqué.*

The Dhaka Communiqué is one of the COM outcomes document. The draft Communiqué was circulated on 2 November 2021*.* The IORA Secretariat received feedback from France/Reunion (5 November 2021) Iran (7 November 2021), Australia (11 November 2021) and Singapore (11 November 2021).

*Desired Outcome:* The CSO to consider and finalise the Dhaka Communiqué and to recommend it for endorsement by the COM.

# 20. PREPARATIONS FOR THE NEXT MEETING: 11TH IORA BI-ANNUAL MEETING OF THE COMMITTEE OF SENIOR OFFICIALS (Bangladesh)

*The Chair may indicate the tentative date and format of the 12th Bi-annual Meeting of the Committee of Senior Officials (CSO) in 2022.*

*Desired Outcome:* The CSO to take note of the date and format of the 12th Bi-annual Meeting of the Committee of Senior Officials (CSO) in 2022.

# 21. ANY OTHER BUSINESS (AOB) (Chair, Bangladesh)

*The Chair will invite Member States to raise any other matters not covered under the items mentioned above.*

*Desired Outcome:* The CSO to take note of the matters raised by Member States and to provide guidance on the way forward.

# 22. ADOPTION OF THE DECISION REPORT AND CLOSING REMARKS (Chair, Bangladesh)

*The CSO will be invited to adopt the decision report of the 23rd annual meeting. The Chair will briefly summarise the discussions and convey his closing remarks before formally closing the meeting.*

A draft decision report of the meeting will be prepared by the Secretariat. The report will capture the recommendations and decisions taken at the meeting. The draft decision report will be considered and adopted in this session.

The full discussion report, that will capture both the decisions and broad discussions from the CSO meeting, will be prepared and made available to the Chair for consideration. The full report, upon approval from the Chair, will be circulated to Member States for any amendments they wish to propose regarding their individual interventions. The final report will be made available upon receipt of comments received from Member States.

*Outcome:* The CSO to adopt the draft report of the meeting.

The CSO to take note of the closing remarks by the Chair.

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## ANNEXES

##### IOR/23CSO-Annual/2021/DOC2.1 – Decision report of the 11th Bi-annual CSO Meeting

**INTRODUCTION**

The Eleventh Bi-annual Meeting of the Committee of Senior Officials (CSO)took place virtually via the Cisco Webex platform on 15-16 June 2021. The Meeting was chaired by H.E. Abdulnasser Alshaali, Assistant Minister for Economic and Trade Affairs, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, United Arab Emirates (UAE), and was attended by representatives of IORA Member States, namely the **Commonwealth of Australia, People's Republic of Bangladesh, Union of Comoros, French Republic, on account of Reunion only (henceforth France/Reunion), Republic of India, Republic of Indonesia, Islamic Republic of Iran, Republic of Kenya, Republic of Madagascar, Malaysia, Republic of Maldives, Republic of Mauritius, Republic of Mozambique, Sultanate of Oman, Republic of Seychelles, Republic of Singapore, Republic of South Africa, Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka, United Republic of Tanzania, Kingdom of Thailand, United Arab Emirates and Republic of Yemen.** The **Acting Secretary-General**, **Regional Centre for Science and Technology Transfer (RCSTT)**, and the **Fisheries Support Unit (FSU)** also attended the meeting. The List of Delegates is annexed as **Document No. IOR/11BI-CSO/REP/2021/1.1.**

**1. OPENING SESSION**

**1.1 Welcome Address and Opening Remarks (Chair, UAE)**

*Outcome:* The CSOnoted the Chairperson’s opening remarks.

* 1. **Remarks by the Vice-Chair (Vice-Chair, Bangladesh)**

*Outcome:* The CSO noted the remarks by the Vice-Chair and the Past Chair.

**1.3 Outline of Arrangements and Adoption of the Agenda (Chair)**

*Outcome:* The CSO adopted the Agenda.

**1.4 Report of the Acting Secretary-General (Secretariat, IORA)**

*Outcome:* The CSO noted the report of the Acting Secretary-General*.*

**2. IORA ACTION PLAN (2017-2021) AND PREPARATIONS FOR A NEW IORA ACTION PLAN**

**2.1 Update: Progress on the current IORA Action Plan (2017-2021) (Vice-Chair & Coordinating Countries of each Priority Area)**

*Outcome:* The CSO noted the update by the Vice-Chair on the progress on the implementation of the current IORA Action Plan (2017-2021), as reflected in the Secretariat’s progress report, including the substantial number of items that remained to be implemented.

The CSO noted that prior to the CSO meeting, feedback had been received from Mauritius (Trade and Investment Facilitation) and Sri Lanka (Maritime Safety and Security). The CSO requested the Secretariat to consolidate further feedback from other Coordinating Countries provided during this CSO meeting for reporting to the Vice-Chair, Bangladesh, as a matter of urgency.

**2.2 Report: Concept Note and Workshop to prepare new IORA Action Plan (Vice-Chair)**

*Outcome:* The CSO noted the report from the Vice-Chair on the workshop held on 20 May 2021 on the preparation of the Second IORA Action Plan, including that the Second IORA Action Plan required clear timeframes and allocations of responsibilities.

The CSO noted the Secretariat’s communication of 2 June 2021 requesting Member State input on the draft report of the meeting, and Coordinating Country input on the ‘Draft Zero’ of the Second IORA Action Plan, by 11 June 2021. To date, Mauritius, Singapore, Sri Lanka and the UAE had responded. The CSO requested Member States to provide their inputs by the rescheduled deadline of 25 June 2021.

The CSO agreed that the Second IORA Action Plan should be agreed by the next CSO and recommended to the COM for endorsement at the end of the year.

**3. DIALOGUE PARTNERS: STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT, ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA AND APPLICATIONS**

**3.1 Update: Concept Note and Workshop on the strategic management of IORA’s engagement with Dialogue Partners, and criteria/eligibility of potential Dialogue Partners (India)**

*Outcome:* The CSO welcomed the update by India that a revised Concept Note had been circulated to all Member States which now included discussion on the eligibility criteria of potential Dialogue Partners as well on strategic management of Dialogue Partners.

The CSO welcomed advice from India that the proposed workshop would be scheduled by the end of June 2021. The CSO requested any final comments from Member States on the revised Concept Note to be sent to the Secretariat before Friday 25 June 2021.

The CSO agreed that the guidelines for strategic management and criteria for Dialogue Partners should be finalised for endorsement at the next meeting of the CSO for endorsement by the COM.

The CSO noted the Acting Secretary-General’s update that Germany had requested CSO guidance on how the Germany-IORA partnership would progress after the conclusion of the current IORA-GIZ MOU concludes at the end of June 2022, which would be informed by the initiative led by India.

**3.2 Reports: Status of Programmes/Commitments made by Dialogue Partners (Secretariat)**

**China:**

*Outcome:* The CSO noted the update that the IORA Secretariat was in the process of consulting China on future collaborations.

**Egypt:**

*Outcome:* The CSO noted the update that the IORA Secretariat was in the process of consulting Egypt on future collaborations.

**Germany:**

*Outcome:* The CSO noted the update by the IORA Secretariat and welcomed the extensive projects and initiatives envisaged for implementation under the MOU.

**Italy:**

*Outcome:* The CSO noted the update by the IORA Secretariat and welcomed the extensive projects and initiatives with Italy planned for 2021 and beyond.

**Japan:**

*Outcome:* The CSO noted the update on the current proposal to host IORA-Japan Workshop on Multi-Hazard Warning Systems (MHWS).

**Republic of Korea:**

*Outcome:* The CSO noted the update by the IORA Secretariat and the Second ROK-IORA Partnership Seminar to be hosted by the ROK on 8-9 July 2021.

**Turkey**:

*Outcome:* The CSO noted the update on the proposed cooperation in Disaster Risk Management (DRM) with Turkey.

**United States of America (USA):**

*Outcome:* The CSO noted the update by the IORA Secretariat on the forthcoming virtual IORA Symposium for women business owners in the Indian Ocean region to be co-hosted by Australia and the USA, including that a draft agenda and further details would be circulated in due course.

**United Kingdom (UK):**

*Outcome:* The CSO noted the update that the UK had recently indicated an interest in supporting a trade and investment initiative, and that the Secretariat was currently liaising with Mauritius as TIF Coordinating Country in this regard.

**3.3 Update: Application by the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia as Dialogue Partner (Chair/ Secretariat)**

*Outcome:* The CSO agreed to Iran’s request for more time to consider the application of Saudi Arabia’s to become a Dialogue Partner. The CSO agreed to consider the application from Saudi Arabia again at the next CSO.

**3.4 Update: Application by the Russian Federation as Dialogue Partner (Chair/ Secretariat)**

*Outcome:* The CSO agreed to recommend the acceptance of the Russian Federation as a Dialogue Partner of IORA and agreed to present this recommendation to the COM for approval.

**4. MEMBERSHIP ELIGIBLITY CRITERIA AND APPLICATIONS**

**4.1 Update: IORA Workshop to consider the status of IORA’s membership criteria (Bangladesh)**

*Outcome:* The CSO noted the update by Bangladesh on the preparations of the workshop to consider the status of IORA’s membership criteria, including that dates would be communicated in due course.

**4.2 Report: Signature of IORA Instrument of Acceptance by France (Secretariat)**

*Outcome:* The CSO welcomed the signing by France/Reunion of the IORA Instrument of Acceptance, and noted that France/Reunion was in the process of preparing its annual membership contribution.

**5. MARITIME SAFETY AND SECURITY (MSS) – *Coordinating Country: Sri Lanka***

**5.1 Update: Progress Report on the IORA Action Plan 2017-21 (MSS) and Work Plan of the WGMSS (Sri Lanka)**

*Outcome:* The CSO expressed its deep concern and sympathy with Sri Lanka with respect to the marine disaster of the grounding and leaking of the “X-Press Pearl” off the coasts of Sri Lanka.

The CSO noted the update on the pending tasks under MSS in the IORA Action Plan 2017-21. The CSO requested Member States that had not yet nominated the MSS focal points to the WGMSS to do so via the Secretariat as soon as possible.

The CSO requested Member States who have not yet signed the IORA SAR MoU to consider signing it as early as possible.

The CSO requested the IORA Secretariat to update the IORA Action Plan 2017-21 progress report on Pending Tasks (Under Progress and No Progress) under MSS (IOR/11BI-CSO/21/DOC2.2) based on the update from Sri Lanka.

The CSO noted the report by Sri Lanka on the progress of the Work Plan of the WGMSS.

**5.2 Report: Second Meeting of the IORA Working Group on Maritime Safety and Security (WGMSS) (Sri Lanka)**

*Outcome:* The CSO noted the outcomes of the Second Meeting of the WGMSS held from 17 – 19 March 2021, including a meeting of Cluster Countries on 17 March 2021. The CSO noted edits to the WGMSS Work Plan to strengthen its focus on implementation.

The CSO noted the updated Work Plan had been circulated to guide the way forward for the MSS objectives for the Second IORA Action Plan (2022-2026).

The CSO also noted the deadline of 8th June 2021 set for Member States to indicate their interest to lead activities listed in the “Summary of the WGMSS Work Plan” which was circulated among Member States as an outcome document of the Second Meeting of the WGMSS held from 17-19 March 2021.

**5.3 Report: Webinar on Port State Control and Maritime Safety and Security in the Indian Ocean Region (Sri Lanka)**

*Outcome:* The CSO noted the report by Sri Lanka on the Webinar held on Port State Control (PSC) and MSS in the Indian Ocean Region and that the Outcome Report would be circulated by Sri Lanka in due course.

**5.4 Report: Webinar IORA Capacity Building Workshop on the 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) (India)**

*Outcome:* The CSO noted the report by India on the Webinar IORA Capacity Building Workshop on the 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) held virtually on 29 January 2021. The CSO noted that an edited volume of the discussions from the webinar was being prepared and would be circulated to Member States once finalised.

The CSO noted the update from France/Reunion that France/Reunion was the current chair of the Indian Ocean Commission (IOC) and Indian Ocean Naval Symposium (IONS), from the end of June 2021). The CSO welcomed France/Reunion’s proposal to investigate greater synergies between IORA and other aspects of the maritime security architecture in the region, such as joint initiatives between the IOC and IORA in this area. The CSO requested France/Reunion to provide further information on its proposals for consideration.

The CSO noted the update from Mauritius on preparations for the third regional Ministerial Conference on Maritime Safety and Security (MSS) which is being jointly organised with the Indian Ocean Commission. Mauritius informed that it will provide further information on the event in due course.

**6. TRADE AND INVESTMENT FACILITATION (TIF) –*Coordinating Country: Mauritius***

**6.1 Update: Progress Report on the IORA Action Plan 2017-21 (TIF) and Work Plan of the WGTI (Mauritius)**

*Outcome:* The CSO noted the update on pending tasks under Trade and Investment Facilitation of the IORA Action Plan 2017-21, and progress in implementing the WGTI Work Plan. The CSO requested the Secretariat to update the IORA Action Plan progress report as necessary.

The CSO noted the longstanding business proposal to facilitate movement of businesspeople in the region, and requested the next meeting of the WGTI to consider this issue.

**6.2 Update: Preparations for the 19th Meeting of the Working Group on Trade and Investment (WGTI) (Mauritius)**

*Outcome:* The CSO noted the update by Mauritius that the next meeting of the WGTI will be held virtually in the week of 12 July 2021, and that further information would be circulated in due course. The CSO requested Member States who are yet to confirm their commitments under items 4 and 6 of the WGTI Work Plan to communicate same to the Secretariat in preparation for the next WGTI meeting and any other updates on the WGTI Work Plan, by 30 June 2021, as per the Secretariat’s request to Member States dated 27 May 2021.

**6.3 Update: Status of the Indian Ocean Rim Business Forum (IORBF) (UAE)**

*Outcome:* The CSO noted the update that the last meeting of the IORBF was held virtually on 20 October 2021, and that a new incoming IORBF Chair had been nominated by Bangladesh, Mr Sheikh Fazle Fahim.

The CSO welcomed the nomination of the incoming Chair of the IORBF, Mr Sheikh Fazle Fahim, by Bangladesh.

**6.4 Update: Creation of an IORA Centre of Excellence for Dispute Resolution (Mauritius)**

*Outcome:* The CSO noted the update on the Creation of an IORA Centre of Excellence for Dispute Resolution, including the selection of arbitration expert from India (Mr Madhvendra Singh) to complete the comparative study on dispute resolution mechanisms in the Indian Ocean region.

The CSO welcomed the offer from the international law firm Freshfields Bruckhaus Deringer to provide pro bono support to the project.

The CSO welcomed Singapore’s offer to connect the relevant dispute resolution agencies in Singapore with Mr Singh for purposes of the comparative study of dispute resolution mechanisms in the Indian Ocean region, and requested the Secretariat to liaise with Singapore to make this connection.

**6.5 Update: Signature of SME MOU (Secretariat)**

*Outcome:* The CSO noted the update on the SME MOU, including signatures by Indonesia and Iran since the last CSO.

The CSO welcomed Kenya’s announcement that Kenya had signed the SME MOU and would provide the necessary documentation to the IORA Secretariat in due course.

**6.6 Update: Collaboration between IORA and Global Trade Review (GTR) (Australia)**

*Outcome:* The CSO noted the update on the IORA-GTR partnership, and welcomed its success in lifting IORA’s profile among the global business community.

The CSO encouraged Member States to submit nominations for the standing list of nominated speakers, maintained by the Secretariat, and to participate in GTR events.

**6.7 Update: IORA’s partnership with Italy and Assoittica Italia for the Digital Seafood Trade Show, 20-21 May 2021 (Secretariat)**

*Outcome:* The CSO noted the update on the partnership with Italy and Assoittica Italia for the Digital Seafood Trade Show.

The CSO noted the low level of participation from seafood companies from the region, and encouraged greater participation in future such events.

**7. FISHERIES MANAGEMENT (FM) – Coordinating Country: Indonesia**

**7.1 Update: Progress Report on the IORA Action Plan 2017-21 (FM) and Work Plan of the Core Group on Fisheries Management (CGFM)**

*Outcome:* The CSO noted the update on the pending tasks under Fisheries Management in the IORA Action Plan 2017-21 and the status on the implementation of the CGFM Work Plan, and requested the Secretariat to update the IORA Action Plan progress report accordingly.

**7.2 Update: Preparations for the** **First CGFM meeting (Indonesia)**

*Outcome:* The CSO noted the update from Indonesia on the preparations for the First Core Group on Fisheries (CGFM), envisaged for the second half of 2021, and that further information would be provided in due course.

The CSO noted advice from Iran that the Iranian Port Authority and Fisheries Organisation was willing to share lessons and experiences on fisheries management.

**7.3 Report: Activities of the Fisheries Support Unit (FSU)**

*Outcome:* The CSO noted the FSU Report, FSU Work Plan and the Concept note on the nomination of Focal Points for FSU.

**7.4 Update: Meeting between the FSU and the Chair of the CGFM (Indonesia) and the Chair of the WGBE (South Africa) to confirm working arrangements for the alignment of the work of the FSU, CGFM and WGBE (Secretariat)**

*Outcome:* The CSO noted the update from the IORA Secretariat on the engagement between FSU and the Chair of the CGFM (Indonesia) and the Chair of the WGBE (South Africa).

The CSO welcomed efforts to align the activities of the FSU, CGFM and WGBE, and encouraged these efforts to be embedded to ensure ongoing close collaboration between these bodies.

**8. DISASTER RISK MANAGEMENT (DRM) – *Coordinating Country: India***

**8.1 Update: Progress Report on the IORA Action Plan 2017-21 (DRM) and Work Plan of the Core Group on Disaster Risk Management (CGDRM)**

*Outcome:* The CSO noted the update by India on Progress Report on the IORA Action Plan 2017-21 (DRM) and Work Plan of the Core Group on Disaster Risk Management (CGDRM), and requested the Secretariat to update the IORA Action Plan progress report accordingly.

**8.2 Update: IORA Guidelines for Human Assistance and Disaster Relief (HADR) (India)**

*Outcome:* The CSO noted the update and the guidance provided by India to finalise the IORA Guidelines for HADR.

The CSO endorsed the HADR guidelines as circulated by India and recommended them to the COM for adoption.

**8.3 Report: First IORA Expert Group Meeting on Disaster Risk Management (EGMDRM) (India)**

*Outcome:* The CSO noted the report by India on the First IORA Expert Group Meeting on Disaster Risk Management (1st EGMDRM) that took place virtually on 19 January 2021.

**8.4 Update: Establishing legal frameworks in the Indian Ocean region in the field of Disaster Risk Management (India)**

*Outcome:* The CSO notedthe update by India on the discussion paper circulated to Member States on the proposal for establishing legal frameworks in the Indian Ocean region in the field of DRM.

The CSO requested the Secretariat to propose a way forward to progress this discussion and possible steps to implement initiatives agreed by Member States.

The CSO noted Bangladesh’s proposal to include nature-based solutions to manage disasters, and requested Bangladesh to provide written inputs via the Secretariat.

**8.5 Update: Signature on Search and Rescue (SAR) MOU (Secretariat)**

*Outcome:* The CSO noted the update by the Secretariat on the signature status of the MOU by Member States encouraged Member States yet to sign to do so.

The CSO welcomed Indonesia’s notification that it had signed the MOU and would forward the signed signature page to the Secretariat in due course.

The CSO welcomed advice that India is preparing an implementation plan for the MOU in the form of Search and Rescue Guidelines for IORA.

**8.6 New proposal: IORA Sustainable Health Initiative (Mauritius)**

*Outcome:* The CSO noted Mauritius’ proposal that, given the ongoing COVID pandemic, it was timely to consider the establishment of health as a priority area of cooperation of the IORA.

The CSO noted the update by Mauritius on the new proposal for the establishment of an IORA Sustainable Health Initiative. The CSO requested the Secretariat to circulate the proposal to all Member States for inputs. The CSO agreed that further discussion was required on whether this proposal will be progressed under the DRM Priority Area or under Academic, Science and Technology

CSO noted the support of Australia and India on this proposal.

**9. ACADEMIC, SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY COOPERATION (AST) – *Coordinating Country: India***

**9.1 Update: Progress Report on the IORA Action Plan 2017-21 (AST) (India)**

*Outcome:* The CSO noted the update on the pending tasks under Academic, Science and Technology of the IORA Action Plan 2017-21.

The CSO welcomed establishment of the Working Group on Science, Technology and Innovation (WGSTI) to accelerate progress on items in the IORA Action Plan under AST.

The CSO noted that the IORAG had not been able to meet since its last meeting in India in December 2019, and that progress was expected once the Sub-Committee on Indian Ocean Rim Association Academic Group (IORAG) Reform was able to meet to consider the draft Terms of Reference and Work Plan of a reformed IORAG.

**9.2 Update: Preparations for the First Working Group on Science Technology and Innovation (WGSTI) (India)**

*Outcome:* The CSO noted the update from India on the preparations for the First meeting of the Working Group on Science Technology and Innovation (WGSTI), including the tentative timing of September 2021.

**9.3 Update: Preparations for the Third Meeting of theSub-Committee on Indian Ocean Rim Association Academic Group (IORAG) Reform (India)**

*Outcome:* The CSO noted the postponement of the 3rd meeting of the Sub-Committee on Indian Ocean Rim Association Academic Group (IORAG) Reform owing to the prevailing COVID-19 situation in India.

The CSO noted that the Third Meeting of the Sub-Committee on Indian Ocean Rim Association Academic Group (IORAG) Reform would be scheduled in July 2021.

**9.4 Update: Preparations for the 26th Meeting of the Indian Ocean Rim Academic Group (IORAG) (UAE)**

*Outcome:* The CSO noted the update by UAE that the 26th Meeting of the Indian Ocean Rim Academic Group (IORAG) would be scheduled as soon as possible after the third meeting of the Sub-Committee on Indian Ocean Rim Association Academic Group (IORAG) Reform.

**9.5 Indian Ocean Dialogue**

**9.5.1 Consideration of IOD Terms of Reference (Secretariat)**

*Outcome:* The CSO noted the update that the IORA Secretariat was in the process of preparing the IOD Terms of Reference and would circulate in due course.

The CSO noted there was currently no system to track and report on the consideration of IOD recommendations, and requested the Secretariat to address this issue in the draft IOD Terms of Reference (TORs).

**9.5.2 Report: Seventh Indian Ocean Dialogue (IOD) (UAE)**

*Outcome:* The CSO noted the update by the UAE that the UAE hosted the Seventh Indian Ocean Dialogue on 2-3 February 2021.

**9.5.3 Update: Preparations for the Eighth IOD (India)**

*Outcome:* The CSO noted the update by India that preparations for hosting the Eighth Indian Ocean Dialogue virtually were underway and further details would be circulated in due course.

The CSO noted the proposal from India that since the IOD Terms of Reference are under formulation, it would be in IORA’s interest if the IOD is hosted by different member states every year in the spirit of promoting inclusiveness and transparency in IORA, rather than India hosting the same every alternate year.

Given the previous CSO decision to traditionally have India and the IORA Chair host the IOD and IORAG back-to-back, the CSO requested India to discuss this proposal for IOD ToR with the incoming IORA Chair, Bangladesh.

**9.6 Update: Implementation of ICE for the IORA Member States (India)**

*Outcome:* The CSO noted the update that India remained committed to establishing an IORA Centre of Excellence in India, and would restart internal consultations now that the criteria to establish IORA Centers of Excellence had been finalized.

**9.7 Report: Activities of the Regional Centre for Science and Technology Transfer (RCSTT)**

*Outcome:* The CSO noted the RCSTT’s Activity Report.

**9.8 Update: Future Role of the Chair in Indian Ocean Studies (CIOS) (India)**

*Outcome:* The CSO noted India’s recommendation that the position of Policy Advisor and Research Coordinator (PARC) be funded through the IORA Secretariat budget for the Research Support Unit (RSU), using Member State membership fees. The remuneration and other allowances for PARC may be based on an equivalent position within the Mauritian public sector. Mauritius supported India’s proposal. The Secretariat will work with Mauritius to finalize the note in this regard.

The CSO noted that the agenda item considering this issue in future meetings should be titled “Establishment of the Research Support Unit (RSU) and the position of Policy Advisor and Research Coordinator (PARC)”.

The CSO requested India and the Secretariat to expedite the circulation of all documents relating to the establishment and funding of the RSU, including the staffing of the vacant PARC position, to the CSO for consideration given its importance to achieving IORA’s objectives.

The CSO noted that all the initiatives and activities related to the former CIOS (including the reform of JIORS) would be considered after the establishment of the RSU and the recruitment of the PARC.

**9.9 Update: Journal of the Indian Ocean Region (JIOR) (Secretariat)**

*Outcome:* The CSO recalled that the 2014 COM had “welcomed IORAG’s formal association with the Journal of the Indian Ocean Region as an initiative that will foster greater academic collaboration among IORA countries”.

The CSO noted India’s preference that IORA should have its own official journal rather than subscribing and paying for other journals (JIOR), and that any decision on further funding of Journals for IORA may be deferred till PARC and RSU are established. Mauritius also supported the proposal and indicated that the journal initiated by CIOS (JIORS) be converted to an online newsletter once PARC and RSU are established. This would substantially reduce the costs.

CSO also noted that several Member States welcomed retaining the JIOR as an important academic journal affiliated with and subscribed to by IORA, and that the proposed Research Support Unit (RSU) and the Policy Adviser and Research Coordinator (PARC) at the Secretariat (once recruited) manage the subscriptions going forward. Furthermore, several Member States were of the view that until such time that the IORA RSU and the PARC become functional, the IORA Chair (beginning with Bangladesh) will pay for subscriptions to be managed by the Secretariat.

**10. TOURISM AND CULTURAL EXCHANGES (TCE) *– Coordinating Country: UAE***

**10.1 Update: Progress Report on the Action Plan 2017-21 (TCE) (UAE)**

*Outcome:* The CSO noted the update by UAE on the pending tasks under Tourism and Cultural Exchanges of the IORA Action Plan 2017-21 and requested the Secretariat to update the Progress Report on the IORA Action Plan accordingly.

The CSO noted Mauritius’ advice that it was revising its Concept Note on the proposed IORA Tourism Awards initiative and that the revised Concept Note would be recirculated

to Member States in due course.

The CSO noted that the UAE reiterated its openness to handing over as coordinating country, should another Member State be interested in assuming this role.

**10.2 Update: Preparations for the Second meeting of the Core Group on Tourism (CGT) (UAE)**

*Outcome:* The CSO noted the update by UAE on hosting the Second meeting of the Core Group on Tourism (CGT) and that internal consultations were continuing.

The CSO noted advice from Iran that it was willing to cooperate and lead initiatives to strengthen tourism, and requested Iran to convey details to the Secretariat and the CGT.

**10.3 Establishment of the Tourism Resource Centre (TRC) (Oman)**

*Outcome:* The CSO noted the update that Oman was discontinuing the offer to establish the Tourism Resource Centre (TRC). The CSO thanked Oman for its efforts to date with respect to the proposed TRC.

The CSO requested the Secretariat to circulate a Note Verbale to all Member States with background and calling for nominations from Member States who may be prepared to consider hosting the proposed TRC.

The CSO noted advice from Iran that it would consider the possibility of hosting the proposed TRC.

**10.4** **Creation of tourism platforms (digital or otherwise) for sharing of best practices (South Africa)**

*Outcome:* The CSO noted the update from South Africa that the Concept Note on the creation of tourism platforms (digital or otherwise) for sharing of best practices had been revised following Member State input.

The CSO requested the Secretariat to circulate the final Concept Note on the creation of tourism platforms for the CSO’s endorsement and recommendation to the COM for approval.

**11. BLUE ECONOMY (BE) – Coordinating Country: South Africa**

**11.1 Update: Progress Report on the Action Plan 2017-21 (BE) and Work Plan of the WGBE (South Africa)**

*Outcome:* The CSO noted the update on the pending tasks under Blue Economy in the IORA Action Plan 2017-21 and requested the Secretariat to update the IORA Action Plan progress report accordingly.

The CSO noted the status on the progress made on the WGBE Work Plan, including significant progress on assessments of capacity needs in Member States, fish stocks and IUU fishing with the support of the IORA-AFD partnership.

**11.2 Update: Preparations for the Fourth IORA Ministerial Blue Economy Conference (BEC-IV) (Sri Lanka)**

*Outcome:* The CSO noted Sri Lanka’s advice that Sri Lanka intended to host the fourth IORA Ministerial Blue Economy Conference as soon as circumstances allow, and that a Concept Note would be circulated in due course.

**11.3 Report: Second meeting of the Working Group on Blue Economy (WGBE) (South Africa)**

*Outcome:* The CSO noted the update by South Africa on the Second meeting of the Working Group on Blue Economy (WGBE) that took place virtually on 12 April 2021.

The CSO noted South Africa’s proposal that IORA consider ways to incorporate climate change as a priority in its work, including through a brainstorming session and discussion paper in early 2022, with outcomes to be reported to the CSO. The CSO requested further information be circulated by South Africa on the proposal.

The CSO welcomed France/Reunion’s advice that it would host an IORA workshop on Blue Economy issues in La Reunion in the second half of 2021, and would circulate more information in due course.

The CSO noted advice from Iran that it was willing to share experiences on the blue economy, particularly aquaculture and fish farming.

**11.4 Activities by IORA Blue Carbon Hub**

**11.4.1 Update: Second round of IORA Blue Carbon Hub Early Career Visiting Scientist programme (Australia)**

*Outcome:* The CSO noted the update by Australia on the Second round of IORA Blue Carbon Hub Early Career Visiting Scientist programme.

The CSO noted the postponement of the second round of the visiting scientist programme due to the prevailing COVID situation, and that new dates would be conveyed in due course.

The CSO welcomed the announcement by Australia of a forthcoming initiative by Australia, India and France/Reunion for an “Earth Observation Project” being a 1.5 track workshop to assist Member States to build capacity to access data from devices that observe the earth, and to enhance Member States’ abilities to strengthen their Blue Economy sectors. The CSO noted a Concept Note would be circulated in due course.

**11.4.2 Update: Webinar on Blue Carbon Initiatives in IORA (Australia)**

*Outcome:* The CSO noted the update by Australia on the preparation of the Webinar on Blue Carbon Initiatives in IORA.

**11.4.3 Report: Webinar entitled “Towards a sustainable blue forest economy (Australia)**

*Outcome:* The CSO noted the report by Australia on the Webinar entitled “Towards a sustainable blue forest economy” that took place on 10 March 2021.

**11.4.4 Report: Workshop entitled “IORA Blue Carbon Hub think tank meeting- Nature Based Solution for Coastal Risk Reduction (Australia/ Bangladesh)**

*Outcome:* The CSO noted the report by Australia on the Workshop entitled “IORA Blue Carbon Hub think tank meeting- Nature Based Solution for Coastal Risk Reduction” that took place virtually on 25-27 May 2021.

**11.5 Update: Consideration of IORA White Paper on Blue Carbon Finance (Australia)**

*Outcome:* The CSO noted the update by Australia on the IORA White Paper on Blue Carbon Finance, which will outline policy options to catalyse financing of blue carbon assets in the Indian Ocean region.

The CSO noted that the draft of the White Paper would be circulated to Member States in August 2021.

**11.6 New proposal: IORA Actions Against Marine Debris (Indonesia)**

*Outcome:* The CSO welcomed the update by Indonesia on the new proposal on IORA Actions Against Marine Debris, including that Indonesia would collaborate with GIZ on a series of workshops with Member States on initiatives to minimise plastic waste on land to prevent debris entering the sea. The CSO noted India’s support for this proposal and expression of intent to explore synergies on this issue with the Indo-Pacific Ocean’s Initiative (IPOI).

The CSO noted that Indonesia will revise the Concept Note based on Member States’ inputs and will circulate the revised version and further information in due course.

**11.7 New proposal: Research Study on “COVID-19 and Climate Change: Prospects for a “Blue” Recovery in the Indian Ocean Region” (Secretariat)**

*Outcome:* The CSO noted the update by the Secretariat on the new proposal for the IORAG to conduct a Research Study on “COVID-19 and Climate Change: Prospects for a “Blue” Recovery in the Indian Ocean Region”.

The CSO noted that India was in the process of preparing its inputs on the proposal, and that the WGBE was in the process of preparing the Terms of Reference for the study.

The CSO requested the Secretariat to consider revising the proposed title of the study in consultation with the WGBE.

**11.8 Update:** **Activities under MoU between IORA and AFD (Secretariat)**

*Outcome:* The CSO noted the update by the IORA Secretariat on the activities under MoU between IORA and AFD.

**12. WOMEN’S ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT (WGWEE) - *Coordinating Country: Australia***

**12.1 Update: Progress Report on the Action Plan 2017-21 (WEE) and Work Plan of the WGWEE (Australia)**

*Outcome:* The CSO noted the update on the Women’s Economic Empowerment components of the IORA Action Plan 2017-21, and asked the Secretariat to update the IORA Action Plan Progress Report accordingly.

The CSO noted the progress in implementing the WGWEE Work Plan.

The CSO welcomed the announcement by Australia of the formal launch of the UN Women report “Women’s Economic Empowerment in the Indian Ocean Rim: Progress and Challenges” produced under the IORA-UN Women partnership.

The CSO encouraged Member States to promote the report and its recommendations to increase the visibility and impact of IORA through this initiative, and noted that a social media package was available from the Secretariat on request.

The CSO expressed its appreciation to Australia for its effective implementation of the three-year IORA-UN Women partnership.

**12.2 Update: Preparations for the Fourth Meeting of the Working Group on Women’s Economic Empowerment (WGWEE) (Australia/Mauritius)**

*Outcome:* The CSO noted the update that the next meeting of the WGWEE would be convened on 22 July 2021, and that details would be circulated shortly.

The CSO encouraged Member States to consider what outcomes they wished to seek from the WGWEE meeting, given the UN Women partnership was concluding, and raise the level of ambition for what IORA may seek to achieve in Women’s Economic Empowerment.

The CSO noted the update from Mauritius that its period as Chair of the WGWEE would come to an end at the end of 2021. The CSO called on any Member State interested in assuming the position of Chair of the WGWEE to convey this at the upcoming meeting of the WGWEE on 22 July 2022.

The CSO noted that, as with other Priority Areas, support was available from the IORA Secretariat and Special Fund.

**12.3 Update: Progress in implementing the UN Women-IORA project “Promoting women’s economic empowerment in the Indian Ocean Rim” (Australia)**

*Outcome:* This item was discussed under item 12.1.

**12.4 Update: IORA virtual symposium on Building Women’s Economic Resilience in the face of COVID-19 (Australia)**

*Outcome:* The CSO noted the update from Australia that it would co-host a virtual symposium with the USA later in 2021 for women business owners in the region, and further details would be circulated in due course.

**13. INSTITUTIONAL ARRANGEMENTS AND BROADENING ENGAGEMENT - *Coordinating Country: South Africa***

**13.1 Report: Status of Ad-hoc Working Group (AhWG) for the eligibility and criteria for selecting the Secretary-General (Sri Lanka)**

*Outcome:* The CSO noted the report by Sri Lanka, the Chair of the AhWG, that the AhWG had met three times, most recently on 8 and 14 June 2021, and had come to consensus on the eligibility criteria and composition of the Selection Committee for the position of Secretary-General.

The CSO noted that the AhWG was continuing to deliberate on the selection process for the position of Secretary-General. The CSO noted that Sri Lanka would host the next meeting of the AhWG on Tuesday 22 and Wednesday 23 June 2021.

The CSO agreed that an extraordinary CSO and COM meeting will be hosted by the IORA Chair, to consider and endorse the report and recommendations of the AhWG once the AhWG completes its deliberations.

**13.2 Update: Vacancy for the position of the Corporate Services Manager/ Director (Secretariat)**

*Outcome:* The CSO welcomed the nominee from Mauritius, Mr. Cholakumar Ramchurn for the position of Supervisor: Finance, Budgeting, Accounting and Human Resources who joined the Secretariat on 4 May 2021 replacing the former secondee from Mauritius, Mr. Navin Rughoonundun. The CSO noted that the tenure of Mr. Ramchurn is for one year, with a possibility of renewal .

The CSO thanked the Government of Mauritius for the services of Mr. Navin Rughoonundun who had occupied the position since 15 May 2019.

The CSO welcomed Tanzania’s advice that it was considering seconding an officer to the position of Corporate Services Manager/Director at the Secretariat when it next became vacant.

**13.3 Update: Annual IORA Calendar of events (Secretariat)**

*Outcome:* The CSO noted the progress made on the Annual Calendar of events and agreed on the requests made by the IORA Secretariat in scheduling the meetings:

a) to avoid planning (if possible) any events one month prior to the CSO-COM meetings in order not to delay sending the documents for the said meetings;

b) to avoid any virtual meetings that are scheduled for times that require other Member States to attend outside office hours, due to the time difference; and

c) to take this into account when scheduling meetings, including by not scheduling meetings for Fridays (noting that Muslim-majority Member States are also not often in the office on Fridays).

The CSO requested that the Secretariat circulate the calendar as well as the IORA Directory of contact points together, once per quarter, for Member States ready reference and regular submission of updates.

**13.4 Update: IORA’s role in the Indo-Pacific (India)**

*Outcome:* The CSO notedthe update by Indiaon the paper on IORA’s role in the Indo-Pacific and expressed its appreciation to India for leading this process.

The CSO requested the Secretariat to recirculate the paper to all Member States for any final inputs by 14 July 2021.

The CSO noted the intention to submit the paper to the CSO/COM for approval.

**13.5 Update: Streamlining decision-making processes through sub-structures (South Africa)**

*Outcome:* The CSO noted the update by South Africa on the proposal on streamlining decision-making processes through sub-structures, and expressed its appreciation to South Africa for leading this process.

The CSO requested the Secretariat to circulate the updated and consolidated final draft of the paper for endorsement at the next CSO/COM meeting.

**13.6 Status of Institutional arrangements with other regional organisations and the UN (Secretariat)**

**13.6.1 Update: Status of cooperation with the United National Institute for Training and Research (Secretariat)**

**13.6.1.1 Training Programme Geospatial Information Technology (GIT) for Operational planning and Decision-making in Disaster Risk Management (Secretariat)**

*Outcome:* The CSO welcomed the GIZ support for the provision of the online component to the GIT training programme from 20-24 September 2021, and encouraged Member States to participate.

**13.6.2 Update: The World Bank Proposal - Letter of Intent between IORA, SACEP and Parley or the project on “Plastic Free Rivers and Seas for Nations of the Indian Ocean Rim” (Secretariat)**

*Outcome:* The CSO noted the update by the IORA Secretariat that it was liaising with the Chair of the WGBE on a way forward with respect to the World Bank Proposal - Letter of Intent between IORA, SACEP and Parley and IORA’s proposed involvement in the “Plastic Free Rivers and Seas for Nations of the Indian Ocean Rim” to be proposed to the CSO for its consideration.

**13.6.3 Update: progress in collaboration with the Indian Ocean Commission (IOC) (Secretariat)**

*Outcome:* The CSO welcomed the progress in IORA’s collaboration with the IOC, including that a draft framework Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) was being prepared between the IORA and IOC Secretariats.

The CSO agreed to accelerate cooperation with the IOC and requested Member States to liaise with the Secretariat on any tangible activities that could be undertaken between IORA and the IOC, subject to the approval of the CSO.

**13.6.4 Update: Other regional organisations and the UN (Secretariat)**

*Outcome:* The CSO endorsed the Secretariat’s Concept Note on engagement with the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN).

The CSO requested the Secretariat to approach the ASEAN Secretariat to explore potential collaboration based on the Concept Note, and update the CSO on the response.

**International Renewable Energy Agency (IRENA) (UAE/Secretariat)**

*Outcome:* The CSO noted the update by the IORA Secretariat that it had written to IRENA to convey draft proposals suggested by the Chair of the WGBE.

The CSO requested the Secretariat to update the CSO on the response once received from IRENA.

**International Solar Alliance (ISA)**

*Outcome:* The CSO noted the update by the IORA Secretariat that an extension to the MOU between IORA and the International Solar Alliance (ISA), which had previously been approved by the CSO, had not yet been signed.

The CSO requested clarification from the Secretariat on the reasons behind the delay in signing an extension to the MOU, to be circulated to Member States.

The CSO requested the Secretariat to conclude the process to extend the MOU as a priority.

**Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission of UNESCO (IOC-UNESCO)**

*Outcome:* The CSO noted the update by the IORA Secretariat on the engagement with the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission of UNESCO (IOC-UNESCO), including that the draft MOU between IORA and IOC-UNESCO was under consideration by the IOC-UNESCO.

**The Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) of the United Nations**

*Outcome:* The CSO noted the update by the IORA Secretariat on the engagement with The Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) of the United Nations.

**The International Seabed Authority (ISA)**

*Outcome:* The CSO noted the update by the IORA Secretariat on the engagement with The International Seabed Authority (ISA). The CSO noted that the Secretariat had conveyed IORA’s agreement to the draft MOU to the ISA, and was waiting for an indication that the ISA also agreed to the MOU.

**13.7 Strengthening of the IORA Secretariat**

**13.7.1 Capacity Building Programmes for IORA – Offer of Project Management Training (Singapore/ Secretariat)**

*Outcome:* The CSO noted the update by Singapore that it was awaiting confirmation from the Secretariat on the dates and content for the proposed capacity building programme on project management, to be delivered virtually for the IORA Secretariat and Member States in the second half of 2021.

**13.7.2 Update: Refurbishment of the Secretariat (Secretariat)**

*Outcome:* The CSOnoted the update by the IORA Secretariat on the refurbishment of the Secretariat, including that the Secretariat continued to liaise with potential service providers.

**13.7.3 Update: Capacity building initiatives under Financing Agreements with GIZ (Secretariat)**

*Outcome:* The CSO noted the update from the Secretariat on the Capacity building initiatives under Financing Agreements with GIZ.

**13.7.4 Update: Capacity building initiatives under Financing Agreements with AFD (Secretariat)**

*Outcome:* The CSO endorsed the revised Financing Agreement between IORA and AFD and authorised the immediate signature of the Financing Agreement by the Acting Secretary-General.

The CSO expressed its appreciation to France/Reunion for this forthcoming support to strengthen the Secretariat.

**13.8 Update: Bi-annual meeting of the IORA Working/ Core Group Chairs/ Priority Area Coordinating Countries (Secretariat)**

*Outcome:* The CSO requested the Secretariat to recirculate the Concept Note on the proposal for a Bi-annual meeting of the IORA Working/ Core Group Chairs/ Priority Area Coordinating Countries, with Member State inputs to be provided to the Secretariat by 28 July 2021.

The CSO noted India’s proposal for expansion of this Concept Note to include formal definition of Core Group, Cluster Group and Working Group ; and for rotation of Coordinating countries for priority areas and Working Group Chairs every 2 years.

The CSO noted the proposal to hold the bi-annual meeting of Working/Core Group Chairs / Priority Area Coordinating countries virtually and not necessarily in the margins of the CSO given that the CSO agenda is already lengthy.

**13.9 Update: IORA Media Network (Secretariat)**

*Outcome:* The CSO welcomed the report by the IORA Secretariat on the status of the proposed IORA Media Network.

The CSO encouraged nominations from Member States yet to join the Media Network.

The CSO requested the Secretariat to audit the IORA website and ensure all pages are correct and up to date.

The CSO requested the Secretariat to consider new and innovative ways to present IORA virtually, including the possibility of a short video about IORA and the Secretariat to be posted online.

**13.10 Report: IORA Day 2021 & preparations for 2022 (Secretariat)**

*Outcome:* The CSO noted the report on the IORA Day 2021 virtual celebrations and thanked the Secretariat for its efforts to promote IORA in Mauritius and to other Member States online. The CSO appreciated India’s efforts in hosting the IORA Workshop on Yoga and Holistic Living in the times of COVID-19.

The CSO encouraged Member States to suggest programmes and/or a workshop/seminar for the IORA Day 2022 virtual celebrations.

**14. FINANCE & ADMINISTRATION**

**14.1 Report: Sub-Committee on Finance (SCF) (Chair of SCF, UAE)**

*Outcome:* The CSO endorsed the Decision Report of the SCF that was held on 9 June 2021.

The CSO noted that Mauritius had sent a detailed list of follow-up questions to the Secretariat, and requested the Secretariat to provide its written response to Mauritius and the Troika by 30 June 2021.

The CSO noted that several decisions of the previous meeting of the SCF on 15 December 2020 had not been implemented, and requested the Secretariat to ensure implementation of all SCF decisions moving forward.

The CSO requested the Secretariat to circulate the financial documents well in advance of the SCF meeting to enable more comprehensive review by Member States in advance of the SCF meeting.

The CSO noted the update from the Secretariat that the next audit for the Secretariat’s financial and administrative processes would commence in July 2021.

The CSO noted the proposal to rotate responsibility for conducting audits of the Secretariat among Member States. The CSO requested Tanzania to prepare a Concept Note on the proposal to circulate to Member States by 13 August 2021, for consideration at the next SCF meeting. Mauritius indicated its willingness to be a permanent member of any Audit committee given that it hosts the Secretariat.

**14.2 Update: Secretariat’s proposed structure and staffing needs (Secretariat)**

*Outcome:* The CSO noted the update by the IORA Secretariat on the Secretariat’s proposed structure and staffing needs, and endorsed the Secretariat proceeding with urgent recruitment needs as previously approved by the Troika.

The CSO noted that inputs from Mauritius with regards to the setting up of a selection committee for recruitment of local staff had not been fully reflected in the compiled table of Member State inputs circulated by the Secretariat, and requested the Secretariat to ensure that all Member State comments are taken into account.

The CSO noted the importance of establishing a dedicated position of HR Manager in the Secretariat, and requested the Secretariat to carry out a budget analysis to determine whether this position could be funded through savings in other budget areas. The CSO requested the Secretariat to provide this analysis to Mauritius and the Troika by 16 July 2021.

**14.3 Update: Study of the Secretariat’s staffing & budget needs (Secretariat/Indonesia)**

*Outcome:* The CSO recalled the Secretariat’s internal study on Human Resource Management, carried out by the Secretariat in 2020, and requested the Secretariat to circulate the duly filled implementation plan to Member States by 16 July 2021.

The CSO recalled the offer from Indonesia to fund an external study on staffing and budget needs, should this be required.

**14.4 Update/ Report: Sub-Committee for the Review and Finalisation of IORA Secretariat HR and Finance Manuals, Code of Conduct, Grievance Policy and Procedures, Disciplinary Code & Procedures (Secretariat)**

*Outcome:* The CSO noted the update by the IORA Secretariat that the IORA manuals were discussed at a dedicated meeting of interested Member States on 19 May 2021.

The CSO agreed that a dedicated meeting would be convened by the Secretariat in August 2021 to provide Member States ample time to consider and endorse the IORA manuals as living documents for the endorsement of the CSO/COM.

The CSO requested the Secretariat to update the manuals according to Member State inputs, and circulate the updated manuals and a list of responses to Member State inputs well in advance of the meeting in August. The CSO requested the Secretariat to finalise the revised Financial Regulations and Staff Regulations for CSO endorsement and COM approval. The CSO also requested that where differences of approach between Member States were identified, the Secretariat would draft and propose a preferred way forward.

**14.5 Update: Review of the host country agreement (Secretariat)**

*Outcome:* The CSO noted the update by the Secretariat that the review of the host country agreement had been delayed. The CSO requested the Secretariat to engage with Mauritius to discuss the way forward on this issue.

**14.6 Update: Workshop to consider non-payment of membership fees (Secretariat)**

*Outcome:* The CSO noted the update by the Secretariat on the Workshop to consider non-payment of membership fees.

The CSO requested the Secretariat to recirculate the draft report of the Workshop for any further inputs from Member States within one month of the date of circulation. The Secretariat will then consolidate and recirculate a revised version to all Member States.

The CSO noted this was a longstanding issue and encouraged Member States to finalise the following outstanding issues, among others: longstanding arrears; access to SYDP and other Special Fund support if in arrears; whether remittance plans could be considered; the proposal to adjust contributions based on development levels of Member States.

The CSO noted the preference of some Member States to not list publicly those Member States currently in arrears, and to ensure that measures would not constitute further economic burden and pressure, and would not go against the IORA goal of economic development and solidarity.

**15. IORA SPECIAL FUND**

**15.1 Update: Review of the Administrative Arrangements of the Special Fund including the emergency use of the Special Fund for COVID-19 response projects (Chair/ Secretariat)**

*Outcome:* The CSO noted the update from the IORA Secretariat on the circulation of the Review of the Administrative Arrangements of the Special Fund including the emergency use of the Special Fund for COVID-19 response projects.

The CSO agreed that Small Island Developing States (SIDS) should have the same access to, and be treated in the same way as, Least Developed Country (LDC) Member States in the Administrative Arrangements of the Special Fund.

The CSO agreed to discuss the issue of whether Member States currently in arrears of membership fees would, or would not, be able to apply for Special Fund support, as part of its deliberations on the non-payment of membership fees.

The CSO requested the Secretariat to provide further clarifications as requested directly to India, and to prepare a consolidated clean version of amendments to be circulated at least two months before the next CSO meeting, to enable the next CSO to recommend the amendments to the COM for approval.

The CSO requested that the Secretariat liaise with India on devising an appropriate way to prioritize project applications that were reflected under Provision Four: Arrangements for allocation of funds (“Member States should prioritise the order in which projects qualify for funding.”). This should be included in the clean version of the document to be circulated.

The CSO agreed, in the unlikely event of no consensus on the Administrative Arrangements of the Special Fund in the next CSO meeting, to seek mandate from the COM to discuss and determine the parameter and technical approval for the emergency use of the Special Fund for COVID-19 response projects.

**15.2 Special Fund projects (approved)**

**15.2.1 Update: International Relations in the Indian Ocean Region: Collaborative Study Experience, Special Fund (Australia)**

*Outcome:* The CSO noted the update from Australia on the International Relations in the Indian Ocean Region: Collaborative Study Experience that an in-person course has been delayed and new dates would be communicated in due course.

**15.2.2 Update: IORA-India Cruise Tourism Conference “Spotlight on the Indian Ocean” (India)**

*Outcome:* The CSO noted the update by India that the IORA-India Cruise Tourism Conference “Spotlight on the Indian Ocean” had been delayed and new dates would be communicated in due course.

**15.2.3 Update: High Level Capacity Building Programme on Gender Mainstreaming in the Six Priority Areas of IORA, Special Fund (Mauritius)**

*Outcome:* The CSO noted the update on the High-Level Capacity Building Programme on Gender Mainstreaming in the Six Priority Areas of IORA, including that the initiative had been delayed and that new dates would be communicated in due course.

**15.2.4 Update: Workshop on the Impacts of Climate Change on the Marine Environment for IORA Countries(RCSTT)**

*Outcome:* The CSO noted the update by RCSTT on the preparations of the Workshop on the Impacts of Climate Change on the Marine Environment for IORA Countries including that the workshop had been delayed, and that new dates would be communicated in due course.

**15.2.5 Update: Creation of a Centre of Excellence for Dispute Resolution (Mauritius)**

*Outcome:* The CSO noted the update on the Creation of a Centre of Excellence for Dispute Resolution, including the extension of the project by one year to end in December 2022, and the provision of pro-bono support for the project by law firm Freshfields Bruckhaus Deringer.

**15.3 Consideration of Proposals for future funding under Special Fund (Secretariat)**

**15.3.1 Update: Ocean Knowledge Education Programme to strengthen the Blue Economy concept in the IORA region – A pilot study incorporating “Sustainable Ocean Management” into the curriculum for 12 to 13 years old (Seychelles)**

*Outcome:* The CSO noted the update by Seychelles on the project on Ocean Knowledge Education Programme to strengthen the Blue Economy concept in the IORA region – A pilot study incorporating “Sustainable Ocean Management” into the curriculum for 12 to 13 years old.

The CSO endorsed the Special Fund application that had been circulated to Member States on 31 May 2021.

**15.3.2 Update: Workshop on Nature-based tourism: “Boosting Livelihoods across the Indian Ocean Rim through Nature-Based Tourism”, Special Fund (Mauritius)**

*Outcome:* The CSO noted the update by Mauritius on the Workshop on Nature-based tourism: “Boosting Livelihoods across the Indian Ocean Rim through Nature-Based Tourism” including that the initiative had been delayed and would be held in 2022 or 2023, subject to travel restrictions in the region.

**15.3.3 Third Somalia-Yemen Development Programme (SYDP-III): “Development and Management of Somalia's and Yemen’s Marine Fisheries” (Secretariat)**

*Outcome:* The CSO approved the SYDP-III project and Special Fund application as circulated to Member States on 24 May 2021.

**15.3.4 IORA Sustainable Development Programme (ISDP) (Secretariat)**

*Outcome:* The CSO noted the update by the IORA Secretariat on the IORA Sustainable Development Programme (ISDP) and encouraged LDC Member States to propose projects to host under the ISDP.

**16. IORA SPECIAL PROGRAMMES**

**16.1 Update: IORA Human Development Fund (IHDF) (UAE)**

*Outcome:* The CSO noted the update by UAE on the IORA Human Development Fund (IHDF), that the UAE was actively considering alternatives to the IHDF. The UAE further noted that it was undertaking consultations with internal stakeholders and would update Member States in due course. The UAE reiterated that these consultations may necessitate an entirely new concept, while retaining the central objective of enhancing human development outcomes in the Indian Ocean region.

The CSO noted Mauritius’ proposal for the Secretariat to commission a study on, inter alia, the benefits, financial sustainability and modalities of accessing an IORA Development Fund. In this context, the CSO requested the Secretariat to engage with Member States and Dialogue Partners regarding the proposed study. The Secretariat should respond to Member States by 28 August 2021.

The CSO noted South Africa’s suggestion that the IBSA Fund modalities be reviewed as a contribution to the ongoing process of establishing the IHDF.

**16.2 Update: IORA Nelson Mandela Internship Programme (NMIP) (Secretariat)**

*Outcome:* The CSO noted the update by the IORA Secretariat on the IORA Nelson Mandela Internship Programme, including that the program had been delayed due to COVID-related travel restrictions.

The CSO requested the Secretariat to closely monitor the situation and advise Member States as soon as possible when circumstances allow the program to proceed.

The CSO noted that the application process will need to be reintroduced, with preferential consideration being given to those individual candidates already approved in March 2021, should they still be available.

**16.3 Update: IORA “Connecting the Youth of the Indian Ocean Region” Writing Competition (Secretariat)**

*Outcome:* The CSO welcomed the launch of the IORA “Connecting the Youth of the Indian Ocean Region” Writing Competition at the occasion of IORA Day 2021. The CSO requested the Secretariat to circulate the modalities for the writing competition by 30 June 2021.

**16.4 Update: Indian Ocean Champion Concept (Secretariat)**

*Outcome:* The CSO noted the update by the IORA Secretariat on the preparation of the Terms of Reference/Technical Arrangements for the Indian Ocean Champion Concept. The CSO requested the Secretariat to circulate the arrangements in due course.

**17. NEW PROPOSALS BY MEMBER STATES (if any) (Chair)**

*Outcome:*  The IORA Sustainable Health Initiative was tabled by Mauritius as a new proposal.

**18. PREPARATIONS FOR THE 21ST IORA MEETING OF THE COUNCIL OF MINISTERS (COM) AND RELATED MEETINGS (Bangladesh)**

*Outcome:* The CSO noted that Bangladesh was planning to host the next CSO on 15-16 November 2021 and the next COM on 17 November 2021.

The CSO noted that in-person attendance in Dhaka was currently under consideration subject to the COVID-related travel restrictions in the region. Alternatively, a hybrid or virtual meeting will be considered.

**19. ANY OTHER BUSINESS (AOB) (Chair)**

*Outcome:*The CSO requested that CSO meeting connection information and background documents be shared well in advance of future meetings, to enable comprehensive Member State consideration and preparation.

The CSO expressed its appreciation for the leadership of the CSO Chair, HE Abdulnasser Alshaali, and the Government of the UAE for its leadership of IORA during the UAE’s tenure as IORA Chair and the Vice-Chair also commended South Africa as Troika Member and Past IORA Chair for its constructive support to the Chair and Vice-Chair.

The CSO expressed its appreciation for the work of Mr Marc Livsey and Mr Nooh Alhammadi for their contributions to IORA during their tenures as seconded Directors from Australia and the UAE respectively.

**20. ADOPTION OF THE DECISION REPORT AND CLOSING REMARKS (Chair)**

*Outcome:* The CSO requested the Secretariat to circulate the Draft Decision Report as at 16 June 2021 to all Member States, with 24 hours to provide inputs. The CSO requested the Secretariat to subsequently circulate the final Decision Report.

The CSO noted the closing remarks by the Chair.

##### IOR/23CSO-Annual/2021/DOC2.2 – Second IORA Action Plan

**Second Action Plan –Draft ‘Two’**

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| **PRIORITY AREA** | **Overarching Strategic Goals**  | **Short-term (0-2 years)** | **Medium-term (2-4 years)** | **Long-term (4-6 years)** |
| **Maritime safety and security(MSS)** | Promoting Maritime Safety and Security (MSS) in the Indian Ocean Region (IOR) through effective coordination between Member States and relevant international organisations for sharing of expertise and resources, strengthening regional cooperation to address Trans Boundary challenges, and ensure freedom of navigation in accordance with International Law, including UNCLOS, while ensuring collaboration across IORA Working Groups on common areas of interest. | * Capacity building programmes, sharing of information and best practices.
* Developing the MSS capabilities of Member States.
* Enhancing cooperation ~~on~~ through MoUs with other relevant international organisations (IOM, IONS, DCoC, ASEAN, UNODC, ReCAAP, BIMSTEC, etc) and ocean governance instruments (SAR, PSC, etc).
* Studying potential threats with regard to movement of high risk containerized cargo shipments in IOR.
* Encouraging remaining member states to sign PSC and SAR MoUs.
 | * Strengthening MSS research and identifying potential threats and challenges.
* Establishing a cooperation in SAR activities between IORA and IMO through technical and maritime cooperating centres of the Member State.
 | * Developing mechanisms to enhance cooperation, to build capacity and a common understanding.
* Developing guidelines on an integrated IORA Maritime policy, covering all aspects of maritime safety and security.
* Information sharing on Early Warning Systems (EWS) through the transfer of technologies.
* Establishing a cooperation on Airborne platform for surveillance in the IOR on MSS.
* Pursuing International cooperation for post-disaster recovery.
* Improving the capability of IORA member states to deal with disasters, disaster relief and supporting actions in maritime crisis.
* Establishing/Developing Maritime Information Fusion Centres.
* Enhance Chemical, Biological, Radiological l &l Nuclear Explosive materials (CBRN-E) preparedness of IORA Member States.
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| **PRIORITY AREA** | **Overarching Strategic Goals**  | **Short-term (0-2 years)** | **Medium-term (2-4 years)** | **Long-term (4-6 years)** |
| **TRADE AND INVESTMENT FACILITATION (TIF)** | Improving the production capacity, competitiveness, and value addition of products through inclusive public-private partnership which will contribute in enhancing intra-IORA flow of goods, services, investment to further develop and grow the region’s economies sustainably. Facilitating the movement of businesspersons, increasing connectivity (institutional, physical, and people-to-people and endeavour to achieve enhanced ease of doing business ranking of IORA members, which will result in enhanced business facilitation. Strengthening regional cooperation for promotion of SMEs.  | * Establish a directory of business operators in the IORA region with a view to facilitate networking amongst those willing to engage in regional value chains.
* Organize business familiarisation visit/seminar programmes in different countries to share knowledge and skills amongst Members of the region.
* Conduct awareness campaigns on digital and e-commerce for SMEs in IORA to boost online trade.
* Signed by all Member States the IORA MOU on SMEs.
 | * Policy formulation to reduce trade barrier.
* Develop a strategy for the facilitation of movement of persons and businesspersons.
* Organise B2B meetings/shows to promote SMEs entrepreneurship in the IORA region.
* Implementation of areas under the IORA SME MOU.
 | * Implement the policy and increase the volume of the intra-IORA trade flow.
* Increase the movement of people and businessperson within the IORA Member States
* Implementation of activities under the remaining areas in the IORA SME MOU.
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| **PRIORITY AREA** | **Overarching Strategic Goals**  | **Short-term (0-2 years)** | **Medium-term (2-4 years)** | **Long-term (4-6 years)** |
| **FISHERIES MANAGEMENT (FM)** | Enhancing protection, conservation and sustainable management of fisheries resources in the Indian Ocean region. | * Implementing integrated and ecosystem-based approaches and environmentally sustainable practices in the management of fisheries resources.
* Enhancing science-based management and conservation of marine living resources, and enhancing regional and international mechanism to combat IUU fishing.
 | Improving fisheries and aquaculture productivity in fisheries sector through technical assistance and capacity building across the value chain. | Facilitating fish trade and market-oriented intensification along the fisheries value chain. |

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| **PRIORITY AREA** | **Overarching Strategic Goals**  | **Short-term (0-2 years)** | **Medium-term (2-4 years)** | **Long-term (4-6 years)** |
| **DISASTER RISK MANAGEMENT (DRM)** | Strengthening regional disaster preparedness, community resilience, and disaster risk management in accordance with the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction. | * Promote cooperation among DRM stakeholders, including to share data, technology, and information to reduce disaster impacts and inform anticipatory action.
* Share DRM lessons identified through the Sendai Framework mid-term review processes.
* Undertake capacity building activities including addressing gender equality and social inclusion in disaster risk reduction actions.
 | Explore organising regional experts’ exchange programmes and exposure visits, including in relation to the International Conference on Disaster Resilient Infrastructure. | * Improve early warning and evaluation systems for disaster mitigation.
* Prepare guidelines on HADR for IORA Member States.
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| **PRIORITY AREA** | **Overarching Strategic Goals**  | **Short-term (0-2 years)** | **Medium-term (2-4 years)** | **Long-term (4-6 years)** |
| **ACADEMIC, SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY COOPERATION (ASTC)** | 1. Increase scientific knowledge, develop research capacity, and transfer technologies, among research and development institutions and academics.
 | * Identification of priority areas of collaboration.
* Align the work programme of the IORA-Regional Centre for Science & Technology (RCSTT) with the work plan of the Working Group on Science Technology and Innovation and vice versa (WGSTI).
* Develop mechanisms for capacity building and sharing of knowledge and expertise among Member States.
* Establish a common understanding among IORA on academic and scientific matters through practical consultation and coordination among member states on Science, Technology, and Innovation (STI).
 | * Increasing opportunities for accessible scholarships and capacity-building to further human development, with a particular focus on the challenges of Least Developed Countries (LDCs) and Small Island Developing States (SIDS).
* Exchange of experiences and expertise among Member States with the aim of promoting the creation of centres of excellence.
 | * Promoting sharing and collaboration in technology and innovation and in the implementation of e-Government and other Information, Communication, and Technology (ICT) solutions in the region.
* Foster developmental research in STI and enrich capacities of IORA Member States on STI.
* Creation of centres of excellence and scientific networks.
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| 1. Advancing collaboration among universities and higher education and scientific institutions of Member States in the field of academics, science, and education.
 | * Identification of priority areas of collaboration.
* Establish mechanisms for collaboration.
 | * Joint programmes: Establishing collaborative programmes, joint academic research projects, exchange of information and publications.
* Academic Scholarship Programmes: Establishing scholarship programmes for postgraduate and research studies, subject to Member States’ individual capacities.
* Collaborative research: Identifying mutual priority areas of co-operation in the fields of academic and scientific research; and Setting up Joint Call for Proposals on identified priority areas for collaborative STI projects between Member States.
* Exchange programmes: Organising exchange programmes for students, researchers, and technical experts.
* Development of an early-career Professionals (E-CP) network within IORA.
* Conferences and seminars: Organizing regional scientific seminars to be attended by representatives from the field of academic and scientific research.
 | * Develop joint research programs and sharing research facilities.
* Exchange programmes: Organising exchange programmes for students, researchers, and technical experts.
* Conferences and seminars: Organizing regional scientific seminars to be attended by representatives from the field of academic and scientific research.
* Establish an IORA University Network.
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| **PRIORITY AREA** | **Overarching Strategic Goals**  | **Short-term (0-2 years)** | **Medium-term (2-4 years)** | **Long-term (4-6 years)** |
| **TOURISM AND CULTURAL EXCHANGES (TCE)** | Increasing people-to-people interaction to promote regional economic growth through Tourism. | * Conduct feasibility study/ies to explore the potential of cruise tourism.
* Cooperate and share experiences for the sustainable development of tourism.
* Encourage the sustainable development of community-based tourism and eco-tourism.
 | * Augment regional connectivity by encouraging direct flights and shipping services including cruises by encouraging investment in requisite infrastructure.
* Creation of IORA platforms (digital or otherwise) for sharing of data and best practices in Tourism.
 | * Explore MOUs on Tourism with Member States.
* Establish an IORA Tourism Resource Centre and Website.
* Explore potential MOUs on regional connectivity and cruise tourism with Member States of IORA.
 |
| Post-COVID-19 recovery - Rethink tourism for the future and to rebuild tourism post-COVID-19.  | * Support governments and industry preparedness and response capacity, especially with regard to sanitary standards and measures.
* Promote use of international standards for vaccination certification to facilitate travel.
 | * Cooperate to leverage digitalisation in tourism in order to improve efficiency and customer experience.
 | * Cooperate on delivering on transformative and regenerative travel through education and training for the industry.
 |
| Promoting cultural heritage and harnessing the economic potential of this heritage, including World Heritage properties and sites. | * Review the status of the Core Group for Culture and assess its revivability.
 | * Explore MOUs on cultural heritage with Member States of IORA.
 | * Identify and assess the value of natural and cultural heritage conservation to cruise tourism.
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| **PRIORITY AREA** | **Overarching Strategic Goals**  | **Short-term (0-2 years)** | **Medium-term (2-4 years)** | **Long-term (4-6 years)** |
| **BLUE ECONOMY (BE)** | Developing a sustainable Blue Economy as a key source of inclusive economic growth, job creation and education. | * Developing and harnessing opportunities of the oceans for socio-economic development, whilst safeguarding the ocean’s health and ensuring sustainable development and management of its resources.
* Promote capacity building and research in resource mapping and sustainable utilisation/management of marine resources.
 | Appropriate policy frameworks, effective leadership, and innovative technologies to generate blue growth and to manage risks to the marine ecosystem and associated biodiversity. | Creating an enabling environment for private investments and sustainable financing for Blue Economy initiatives to secure sustainable, economic, and inclusive growth. |

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| **PRIORITY AREA** | **Overarching Strategic Goals**  | **Short-term (0-2 years)** | **Medium-term (2-4 years)** | **Long-term (4-6 years)** |
| **WOMEN’S ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT (WEE)** | Promoting gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls, ensure women’s rights, access, and opportunities for participation and leadership in the economy and to eliminate violence and discrimination against women and girls in all its forms as the prosperity of the region will only be realised fully by investing in the empowerment of women and girls. | * Adopt a “IORA Gender Equality Pledge” that sets targets for female/male participation in IORA and is reported on at least annually.
* Establish a network of women entrepreneurs in the region, supported by an online platform and a events and training programs focussed on overcoming WEE barriers, strengthening income generating activities, improving women’s digital and financial literacy and offering avenues of support, including women affected by violence.
* Review and amend the WEE work plan to align with the short, medium and long term objectives outlined herewith; overarching objectives of IORA’s other priority areas; and addressing the challenges posed by COVID-19.
 | * Arrange regular regional events for private and public sector participants to address barriers to women’s economic empowerment, drawing on the UN Women’s 2020 and 2021 reports and featuring success stories across the region.
* Develop a matrix of stakeholders that could assist with advancing WEE in the region.
 | * IORA’s WGWEE delivers at least one to two initiatives, projects or activity annually targeting a network of women in the region aimed at addressing the barriers to women’s economic advancement as set out in the Jakarta Concord and Balaclava Declaration on Women’s Economic Empowerment and Gender Equality as a Pre-Requisite for Sustainable Development. These barriers include discriminatory laws and practices (particular on sexual assault), job segregation, gender-based violence, unequal access to and control over resources inadequate representation in decision-making and inadequate social safety nets.
* Improvements in women’s digital and financial literacy, referencing UN Women’s Economic Empowerment in the Indian Ocean Rim: Progress and Challenges report as a baseline.
* Increase in the number of private sector entities to sign, support and implement the Women’s Empowerment Principles (WEPs).
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| **PRIORITY AREA** | **Overarching Strategic Goals**  | **Short-term (0-2 years)** | **Medium-term (2-4 years)** | **Long-term (4-6 years)** |
| **INSTITUTIONAL ARRANGEMENTS AND BROADENING ENGAGEMENT (IABE)** | 1. Strengthening the IORA Secretariat, its institutions and specialised agencies by providing adequate resources to build capacity to support Member States, to deepen cooperation with the Dialogue Partners, non-government stakeholders and to enhance people-to-people interaction especially among the youth for mutual understanding, trust and development in the Indian Ocean region. Expanding collaboration with countries outside the region and relevant regional and international organizations based on mutual interest to increase the profile of IORA at international fora.
2. Determine the Role of Primary Bodies (CSO, COM)
 | * Institutionalise the annual Meeting of the IORA Working/ Core Groups Chairs/ Priority/Cross-cutting Areas Coordinating Countries as an annual mechanism for engagement.
* Explore the establishment of the IABE as a Functional Body.
* Annual engagement with Dialogue Partners on the margins of the CSO and COM.
* Preparation ToRs for the Committee of Senior Officials (CSO) and Council of Ministers (COM).
* Preparation of ToR of the IORA Champion Awards.
* Implementation of the Streamlining Decision-making processes.
* Finalisation of the Special Fund Arrangements.
* Celebration of IORA Day.
* Finalisation of the Membership criteria.
 | * Annual Coordination Meetings between the IORA Working/ Core Group Chairs, Coordinating Countries for the respective Cluster Groups.
* Engagement between the Member States (TROIKA and Cluster Group) regarding the needs and requirements of the Secretariat.
* Establishment of the IABE as a Functional Body.
* Implement and continue the IORA Champion Awards and continue the media familiarisation visits to Member States.
* Celebration of IORA Day
 | * To strengthen its relations and engagement with other International Organizations in the Indo-Pacific region, such as: ASEAN, APEC, African Union (AU), Pacific Islands Forum (PIF), Indian Ocean Commission (IOC), the European Union (EU) and the Commonwealth and explore mutual Observership arrangements especially with the UN and its relevant agencies.
* Explore the establishment of the IORA Development Fund and to execute projects that would endeavour to narrow the gap between the advanced economies and least developed countries (LDCs) of IORA, ensuring that development across the Indian Ocean Rim is inclusive and sustainable.
* Celebration of IORA Day.
 |

##### IOR/23CSO-Annual/2021/DOC2.3 – Future Coordinating and Cluster Countries

**IORA ACTION PLAN: FUTURE COORDINATING COUNTRIES AND CLUSTER GROUPS FOR SECOND IORA ACTION PLAN**

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| **Srn.** | **PRIORITY AREA** | **Action Plan (2017-2021)** | **Second IORA Action Plan**  |
| **1.** | **Maritime safety and security (MSS)** | **Coordinator:** Sri Lanka | **Coordinator: Sri Lanka** |
| **Cluster Group**: Australia✓, Bangladesh, India✓, Indonesia✓, Iran, Kenya✓, Madagascar, Mauritius✓, South Africa✓, Tanzania and UAE | **Cluster Group**: Australia, Bangladesh, India, Indonesia, Iran, Kenya, Madagascar, Mauritius, South Africa, Tanzania and UAE |
| **2.** | **TRADE AND INVESTMENT FACILITATION (TIF)** | **Coordinator:** Mauritius | **Coordinator: Australia** |
| **Cluster Group**: Australia✓, India✓, Iran, Malaysia✓, Singapore, South Africa and Tanzania | **Cluster Group**: India, Iran, Kenya, Malaysia, Mauritius, South Africa and Tanzania |
| **3.** | **FISHERIES MANAGEMENT (FM)** | **Coordinator:** Indonesia | **Coordinator: Indonesia** |
| **Cluster Group**: Bangladesh, India✓, Iran, Kenya✓, Madagascar✓, Mauritius✓, Oman, Sri Lanka✓, Tanzania, Thailand, and FSU | **Cluster Group**: Australia, Bangladesh, India, Iran, Kenya, Madagascar, Mauritius, Oman, Seychelles, Sri Lanka, Tanzania, Thailand, and FSU |
| **4.** | **DISASTER RISK MANAGEMENT (DRM)** | **Coordinator:** India | **Coordinator: India** |
| **Cluster Group**: Indonesia✓, Madagascar✓, Mauritius✓, Mozambique and Sri Lanka✓ | **Cluster Group**: Indonesia, Madagascar, Mauritius, Mozambique, South Africa and Sri Lanka |
| **5.** | **ACADEMIC, SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY COOPERATION (ASTC)****IORAG** **WGSTI** | **Coordinator:** India | **Coordinator: India** |
| **Cluster Group**: Mauritius✓, Indonesia✓, UAE and South Africa✓, RCSTT | **Cluster Group**: Indonesia, Madagascar, Iran, Mauritius, South Africa, UAE, RCSTT |
| **6.** | **TOURISM AND CULTURAL EXCHANGES (TCE)** | **Coordinator:** UAE | **Coordinator: TBA** |
| **Cluster Group**: Iran, Maldives, Mauritius✓, Mozambique, Oman, Sri Lanka✓, South Africa✓ and Tanzania | **Cluster Group**: Iran, Maldives, Mauritius, Mozambique, Oman, Seychelles, South Africa, Sri Lanka and Tanzania |
| **7.** | **BLUE ECONOMY (BE)** | **Coordinator:** South Africa | **Coordinator: South Africa** |
| **Cluster Group**: Australia✓, Bangladesh, Comoros, India✓, Indonesia✓, Iran, Kenya✓, Madagascar✓, Mauritius✓, Mozambique, Seychelles✓, Sri Lanka✓, Tanzania, Thailand, UAE | **Cluster Group**: Australia, Bangladesh, Comoros, France/Reunion, India, Indonesia, Iran, Kenya, Madagascar, Mauritius, Mozambique, Seychelles, Sri Lanka, Tanzania, Thailand, UAE |
| **8.** | **WOMEN’S ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT (WEE)** | **Coordinator:** Australia | **Coordinator: Iran** |
| **Cluster Group**: India✓, Indonesia✓, Mauritius✓, South Africa✓, Thailand, UAE | **Cluster Group**: India, Indonesia, Iran, Kenya, Mauritius, Seychelles, South Africa, Thailand, UAE |
| **9.** | **INSTITUTIONAL ARRANGEMENTS AND BROADENING ENGAGEMENT (IABE)** | **Coordinator:** South Africa | **Coordinator: Sri Lanka** |
| **Cluster Group**: Troika+✓, Australia✓, India✓, Mauritius✓ | **Cluster Group**: Troika+, Australia, India, Mauritius, South Africa |
| **10.** | **Proposed New or Expanded Priority Areas****(e.g. Health, climate change/ocean plastics)** | None | **Coordinator (Climate Change):** |
|  |  |  | **Cluster Group**: South Africa (Climate Change), Kenya (Areas to be mentioned) |

##### IOR/23CSO-Annual/2021/DOC2.4 – IORAG ToR

*Endorsed by the 26th meeting of the IORAG for onward transmission to the CSO for its recommendation to COM for approval*

**DRAFT MODALITIES & TERMS OF REFERENCE (ToR)**

of the

**INDIAN OCEAN RIM ACADEMIC GROUP (IORAG)**

1. **Background**

The first Institutional Mechanism created during the establishment of the Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA) in 1997 was the Indian Ocean Rim Academic Group (IORAG). This was in acknowledgment of the importance of academia in achieving the objectives of IORA as a Regional Organization.

The meetings of the IORAG traditionally were held back-to-back with the meetings of the primary Institutional Mechanisms of IORA, namely the Council of Ministers (COM) and the Committee of Senior Officials (CSO). The IORAG followed the Rules of Procedure of the CSO and COM whereby the Chair of IORA would be responsible for the hosting and chairing of the meetings of the IORAG, as well as to oversee the implementation of the outcomes of the IORAG in consultation with the CSO.

In recent years, there has been an effort to reinvigorate the Academic Group by fostering a more dynamic link between policy and projects in the work programmes of the WGTI, IORAG and IORBF. In order to sharpen the focus of the IORAG, it has been suggested that the following measures be considered:

1. Develop a stronger Indian Ocean Research environment with the IORAG serving as an academic “think tank” for the Association;
2. Foster a culture of Indian Ocean regional identity;
3. Focus on matters of common interest;
4. Conduct research aimed at enabling better regional policy outcomes;
5. Develop a stronger regional policy framework;
6. Help set the direction and strategic purpose for IORA’s academic cooperation policy agenda; and
7. Enhance collective regional awareness.

To give effect to this, at the 23rd IORAG meeting held in Durban, South Africa in 2017, South Africa proposed the institutional reform of the IORAG, building on the initiative started during the Chairship of Australia, to provide a more active role in the functioning of IORA. The Committee of Senior Officials (CSO) and Council of Ministers (COM) approved this recommendation, and South Africa drafted a proposal for the reform, and the Terms of Reference (ToR) for the establishment of a Reform Sub-committee.

The proposal outlined a number of items to be addressed, which would contribute to the goals of the IORA Action Plans.

At the 18th meeting of the IORA Council of Ministers held in South Africa on 2 November 2018, a revised IORA Charter was adopted which required all IORA’s Functional Bodies such as the IORAG to be constituted formally through Modalities and Terms of Reference (TOR) as recommended by the CSO and approved by the COM.

1. **Vision of the IORAG**

To promote the strengthening of academic cooperation through enhanced dialogue, research, exchange and networking across all the IORA priority and cross cutting areas.

1. **Purpose and Objectives of the IORAG**

The purpose of the IORAG is to advance IORA’s efforts in a direction that contributes to but are not limited to the goals of the IORA Action Plans.

The role set out for the IORAG is both advisory and catalytic, with the following principal objectives:

1. Promote intellectual dialogue amongst the participating Member States;
2. Serve as a vehicle for the development and dissemination of the Indian Ocean Rim Concept and of relevant research undertaken in or about the Indian Ocean;
3. Serve the region and support IORA’s Institutional Mechanisms, particularly its Primary Bodies (Council of Ministers, Committee of Senior Officials, and the Secretariat) and Functional Bodies (Working Groups, Sub-Working Groups, Sectoral/Cluster/Core Groups, and Dialogue Forums) through concerted, coordinated and rigorous research in the priority and cross cutting areas of the Association;
4. Provide an evaluation and advisory role for all academic related activities of the Association, including assessment of proposed IORA Academic Centres of Excellence based on the Key Performance Indicators, as approved by the CSO;
5. Coordinate and evaluate all academic research generated and conducted through IORA and its Institutional Mechanisms;
6. Serve as a vehicle for the development and dissemination of the research-based policy-making and decision-making support; Publish research papers/ academic conference proceedings in IORA Journals and on the IORA Website;
7. Promote national and regional academic networks and co-operation in the development and exchange of human resources, particularly through closer linkages among training institutions, universities and other specialised institutions of the Member States;
8. Strengthen regional political analysis and scientific research collaboration;
9. Facilitate the dissemination of knowledge and innovation to drive economic growth and environmental sustainability, including through the creative economy and the ‘blue’ economy;
10. Catalyse discussions within IORA on issues of regional importance through organizing ‘Indian Ocean Dialogue’ (annually/biennially); and
11. Develop a network of Think Tanks across the IORA Member States.
12. **Structure and Operation of the IORAG**
13. **Composition**
14. Member States will nominate their academic representative/s to all activities of the IORAG through their respective National Focal Point. The IORA Secretariat will regularly circulate the contact details of academic representatives among the representatives and National Focal Points.
15. Specialised Agencies, other observers, experts, eminent persons and special invitees could be invited by the IORAG Chair in consultation with Member States, to attend meetings to provide diverse viewpoints and share expert knowledge.
16. The IORA Policy Advisor and Research Coordinator (PARC) will form a part of IORAG and will attend all its meetings. PARC will act as a link between IORAG and the research needs of IORA Member States.
17. **Coordinator/Host**
18. Selection of the Chair for IORAG will be on a consensus basis depending on the interest expressed by Member States. This will be endorsed by the Committee of Senior Officials (CSO) for approval by the Council of Ministers (COM).
19. Whereas the designated Country to Chair the IORAG will continue to hold the position for two (2) years, other Member States may volunteer to host any of the IORAG meetings. The Chair of the IORAG will serve as meeting Chair with the Host Country as Co-Chair.
20. Where more than one (1) Member State offers to host the IORAG meetings, the decision will be based on consensus.
21. **Agendas and Reporting**
22. The IORAG Chair and the IORA Chair will consult on the meeting agenda and activities and circulate to Member States through the IORA Secretariat preferably eight (8) weeks or more in advance. All Member States of the IORAG can propose agenda items through the IORA Secretariat at least six (6) weeks before each scheduled meeting of the IORAG and associated activities as relevant.
23. The IORA Chair will review the agenda before the Secretariat circulates the meeting documents to all Member States at least four (4) weeks prior to the scheduled meeting.
24. The IORAG Chair and the IORA Secretariat will prepare an outcome report of the meeting and its recommendations and circulate via email within four (4) weeks of the conclusion of the meeting.
25. **Meeting Procedures**
26. IORA rules of procedure will apply to the functioning of the IORAG.
27. The IORAG will hold at least one meeting annually. It is recommended that this be held at least three weeks before a CSO meeting to enable its outcomes report to be circulated to all Member States in time for the Council of Ministers (COM) meeting. IORAG may formally engage with and attend the meetings of other Functional Bodies, if invited. IORAG may also recommend to CSO to hold IORA Academic Conferences. Any commitments given by academics/ non govt. members at IORAG meetings must be endorsed by the National Focal Points in consultation with respective national ministries.
28. Logistical arrangements for each meeting will be the responsibility of the Member State hosting the meeting. The IORA Secretariat may assist the host country with the arrangements as required.
29. The IORAG should be guided by the IORA Action Plan and the Work Plans of the various Functional Bodies.
30. The IORAG is encouraged to set realistic objectives and strategic implementation through a work plan or narrowed sectoral priorities to achieve better focus and outcomes.
31. A report shall be presented to the annual CSO meeting by its Chair in consultation with the IORA Chair. The report should include among others a set of actionable recommendations for the future and communicate on achievements.
32. Dialogue Partners will be encouraged to participate actively in the meetings as well as on specific projects and activities. Following IORA practices, Dialogue Partners can participate in the discussions of meetings, but not in the decision-making processes.
33. **Funding arrangements**
34. All financial implications for administrative and logistical arrangements of IORAG meetings will be borne by the Host of the IORAG with contributions from the IORA Special Fund where applicable, subject to its rules and procedures.
35. Voluntary commitments and contributions by Member States, Dialogue Partners and Development Agencies and other Partners are also welcome and encouraged.
36. **Language**

The working language of all IORAG meetings will be English.

1. **Hospitality**
2. Accommodation and transportation for delegates especially from the LDC countries and Secretariat officials attending the meeting may be offered at the discretion of the host country.
3. Full hospitality will be extended to two officials from the IORA Secretariat whenever the services of the Secretariat are required.
4. **Research**
5. The selection of research projects undertaken in accordance with clause 3c may follow a top-down approach (research requests nominated to IORAG by other IORA structures and mechanisms), or a bottom-up approach (IORAG identifies a project). Proposed projects supported by both top-down and bottom-up approaches would receive priority.
6. At project conclusion, the following materials are to be produced: a full report, a shorter policy brief for circulation to other IORA structures and mechanisms, and an academic article published in an Indian Ocean Rim journal (publication in the Journal of the Indian Ocean Region or Journal of the Indian Ocean Rim Studies should be promoted), in addition to relevant training materials.
7. **Responsibilities of the IORA Secretariat**
8. Providing administrative, logistical support including guidance on IORAG meetings as and when required by the Chair of the IORAG.
9. Maintaining archives and files of the Meetings.
10. Preparing agendas and reports of the IORAG in the prescribed formats.
11. Creating and maintaining a database of contact information of representatives designated by the National Focal Points.
12. Facilitating information sharing between participants, including circulating agendas and outcome reports to Member States and Dialogue Partners.
13. Inter-sessional communication through a dedicated email group coordinated by the IORA Secretariat.
14. Coordinating and sustaining the implementation of the decisions of the Working Group by seeking and sharing regular progress reports.
15. Other activities as proposed by the IORAG and as agreed by Member States for the Secretariat to assist with the implementation of work plan activities and meeting the objectives of the IORAG.
16. **Amendment, Modification or Variation**

The Modalities and TOR may be amended, varied, or modified in writing after consultation and agreement by the IORA Chair and Member States.

##### IOR/23CSO-Annual/2021/DOC2.5 – IORAG Work Plan

Draft as endorsed by the 26th IORAG meeting on 6 October 2021 for onward transmission to the CSO

**Proposed Work Plan for the Indian Ocean Rim Association Academic Group**

**2021/2022**

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| **A.** | **STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE ONE: Strengthening the IORAG** |
| **S.****No.** | **Objective** | **Actions** | **Implementing Organisation /Country** | **Time Frame** | **Resource Mobilisation** | **Remarks/Status** |
|  | Updated IORAG Focal Point list  | All MS to provide a Focal Point for the IORAG | All MS | Before next IORAG meeting | Secretariat | Secretariat may send an NV to all MS and collate the info received |
|  | Adopt IORAG ToR | Finalize and submit ToR to the CSO and COM for approval | All MS | Before next CSO on 15-16 November 2021 | IORAG Host | Next IORAG meeting may finalize the ToR |
|  | Collate information on MS IORAG Structures | IORAG Focal Points to provide information on their IORAG chapters.  | All MS | TBD | Secretariat | Secretariat may send an NV to all MS and collate and disseminate the info received |

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| **B.** | **STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE TWO: Establish the IORAG as the Think Tank of IORA** |
| **S.****No.** | **Objective** | **Actions** | **Implementing Organisation /Country** | **Time Frame** | **Resource Mobilisation** | **Remarks/Status** |
|  | Identify research and policy needs of IORA | Each Working Group/ Functional Body to provide inputs pertaining to their area of work.IORAG to identify gaps in IORA capabilities based on CSO and COM outcomes and commission research on the same. Annual IORAG meetings would identify some of the most pressing research areas to focus on | Member States may volunteer to lead on this.  | TBD | Chairs of Working Groups and National IORAG focal points | All MS may identify which research topics they may wish to focus on to support Functional Body work plans (including through existing research and current projects); preferably through research partnerships and to apply for IORA Special Fund support, where needed. |
|  | Collate and disseminate research work conducted within IORA/ on issues of interest to IORA | National IORAG focal points to provide online links/electronic copies to the IORA Secretariat on any publications (research papers/policy briefs) that are specific to IORA policy needs to be published on IORA’s website | All MS | Ongoing, with an annual report | National IORAG focal point | The research work being published on IORA Website should either have already been nationally/ internationally published in reputed publications and may carry endorsement of their national governments. The IT Advisor provided by India to Secretariat may coordinate the technical aspect of the work while the substantive part may be done by responsible subject Director in the Secretariat.  |

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| **C.** | **STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE THREE: Capacity Building in IORA priority areas and cross-cutting areas** |
| **S.****No.** | **Objective** | **Actions** | **Implementing Organisation /Country** | **Time Frame** | **Resource Mobilisation** | **Remarks/Status** |
|  | Develop Early-Career Professionals(E-CP) network within IORA | MS to encourage identifying and inviting E-CP to national IORAG network | South Africa | N/A | Volunteer | MS could also consider inviting E-CP to IORAG meeting  |
|  | Capacity building in IORA priority areas through collaboration with international organizations | IORAG MS to take advantage of activities arranged through IORA MoUs with external organizations /associations (e.g.International Solar Alliance) | All MS | Ongoing | - | - |
|  | Collate current MS academic mobility programmes in the region | MS to provide current list of university programmesand regional academic mobility programmes | TBD | December 2021 | Secretariat to collate | MS to nominate organizations to lead the process. |
|  | Establish an IORA University Network | MS to contribute to an IORA network of Universities | Australia/All MS | Ongoing | Volunteer | MS to nominate appropriate universities and suggest/propose models for such a network to be included in a Concept Note. |

##### IOR/23CSO-Annual/2021/DOC2.7 – Gender balance

*Concept Note (draft)*

**Improving gender balance in IORA**

1. **Background Information**

Women’s Economic Empowerment is a cross-cutting issue and of high priority for the Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA), evidenced in the *Jakarta Concord* adopted on 7 March 2017, *Mahé Consensus on Gender Equality and Women's Economic Empowerment* adopted on 24‑25 August 2015*, Declaration on Gender Equality and Women's Economic Empowerment* adopted on 27 October 2016*,* and *Balaclava Declaration on Women's Economic Empowerment* and *Gender Equality as a Pre-Requisite for Sustainable Development* adopted on 4-5 September 2019.

At the Fourth Meeting of the Working Group on Women’s Economic Empowerment (WGWEE) held virtually on 22 July 2021, the WGWEE noted that the Committee of Senior Officials (CSO) had intersessionally endorsed the *Gender Balance Review of IORA January 2019 – August 2020* report and its recommendations, effective from 5 February 2021. Recommendation one of the report is: “Member States consider making a public commitment at Ministerial level such as an ‘IORA gender equality pledge’ to set targets for female/male participation in IORA events.” Recommendation two is to include a target for female/male speaking and Head of Delegation roles in the pledge. To that end, the WGWEE requested Australia as Coordinating Country for Women’s Economic Empowerment to “develop a Concept Note for the consideration of the CSO on next steps to improve women’s participation in IORA, including draft text for the proposed ministerial ‘IORA Gender Equality Pledge’”[[1]](#footnote-1).

1. **Proposal**

It is proposed that the CSO considers this Concept Note and the zero draft of ‘IORA Gender Equality Pledge’ (Annex A) at their next meeting on 15-16 November 2021, and agrees to recommend the Council of Ministers (COM) on 17 November 2021 endorses its further development, with a view to Ministers endorsing the final version intersessionally for publication on International Women's Day 2022 (8 March 2022).

Releasing a public pledge at the ministerial level will demonstrate IORA’s continued commitment to women’s economic empowerment through improving women’s participation in IORA. It will promote more women to participate in the IORA, which will enhance IORA’s decision making and capacity to deliver on the objectives in the IORA Charter. By securing more women’s participation, IORA can set an example for the private sector and national, regional and global organisations, addressing a key barrier identified in the reports published as part of *The IORA‑UN Women Women’s Economic Empowerment Project,*[[2]](#footnote-2)as well as create role models for younger female government officers.

The 40:40:20 ratio is gaining wider support and adoption globally as an effective goal for organisations seeking to increase women’s full, equal and meaningful participation and leadership. It offers flexibility to meet the ratio while accommodating natural movement in and out of organisations. In practice, it provides a minimum 40 percent female and 40 percent male split, with a 20 percent buffer for flexibility.

1. **Objectives and outputs**

The objectives of the pledge are to:

* publicly demonstrate IORA’s ongoing commitment to women’s economic empowerment
* increase women’s meaningful participation and leadership in IORA to enhance IORA’s decision making and capacity to deliver on the objectives in the IORA Charter

The pledge will commit IORA to:

* public targets for a female/male ratio of participation in IORA
* public reporting on IORA’s female/male ratio against the targets

The specific output will be the publication of the pledge on International Women's Day 2022
(8 March 2022) on IORA’s website and social media (with the hashtag
#IORAGenderEqualityPledge). Each Member State will be invited to promote the pledge as appropriate, such as publication on the relevant Minister’s and/or Department’s website and social media, tagging IORA’s account and with the hashtag.

1. **Drafting timeline**

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| Step | Item | Deadline | Action |
| 1 | Draft Concept Note on IORA Gender Equality Pledge circulated to Member States for comments | 15 October 2021 | Secretariat |
| 2 | Comments on Concept Note on IORA Gender Equality Pledge due | 1 November 2021 | Member States |
| 3 | Concept Note revised in light of comments | 1-5 November 2021 | Australia |
| 4 | Final Concept Note to be circulated to Member States | 9 November 2021 | Secretariat  |
| 5 | CSO to consider and agree to recommend the COM endorses the pledge be further developed, with the view to Ministers endorsing the final version intersessionally for publication on International Women's Day 2022 (8 March 2022). | 15-16 November 2021 | CSO |
| 6 | COM to consider and endorse CSO’s recommendation.  | 17 November 2021 | COM |
| 7 | Invitation to first session to negotiate pledge language circulated  | 29 November 2021 | Secretariat  |
| 8 | First session to negotiate pledge language  | 8 December 2021 | Australia host/ Member States attend |
| 9 | Pledge language revised in light offirst session | 9-10 December 2021 | Australia |
| 10 | Revised pledge circulated to Member States for comment | 10 December 2021 | Secretariat  |
| 11 | Comments on revised pledge due | 17 January 2022 | Member States |
| 12 | Pledge language revised in light of comments | 17-21 January 2022 | Australia |
| 13 | Second session to finalise pledge language (if necessary) | 27 January 2022 | Australia host/ Member States attend |
| 14 | CSO to consider and endorse the pledge intersessionally and agree to recommend the COM endorse the pledge intersessionally and publish it on International Women's Day 2022 (8 March 2022), noting that no response constitutes agreement | 31 January – 14 February 2022 | CSO |
| 15 | COM to consider and endorse the pledge and publish it on International Women's Day 2022 (8 March 2022) intersessionally, noting that no response constitutes agreement | 15 February – 6 March 2022 | COM |
| 16 | Pledge published | 8 March 2022 | Secretariat  |

**Further information**

For further information, please contact:

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Annex A –zero draft IORA Gender Equality Pledge

Indian Ocean Rim Association Gender Equality Pledge

International Women's Day 2022

8 March 2022

We, the Ministers of the Member States of the Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA): Commonwealth of Australia, People's Republic of Bangladesh, Union of Comoros, French Republic on account of Reunion (henceforth France/Reunion), Republic of India, Republic of Indonesia, Islamic Republic of Iran, Republic of Kenya, Republic of Madagascar, Malaysia, Republic of Maldives, Republic of Mauritius, Republic of Mozambique, Sultanate of Oman, Republic of Seychelles, Republic of Singapore, Federal Republic of Somalia , Republic of South Africa, Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka, United Republic of Tanzania, Kingdom of Thailand, United Arab Emirates and Republic of Yemen on the occasion of the International Women's Day 2022:

**Restate** the shared commitment to Goal 5 of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development: achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls;

**Recognise** that women’s full, equal and meaningful participation in decision-making is crucial to achieve the first objective in the IORA Charter: to promote the sustained growth and balanced development of the region and of the Member States, and to create common ground for regional economic co-operation;

**Reaffirm** past IORA statements on women’s economic empowerment, including *Mahé Consensus on Gender Equality and Women's Economic Empowerment* adopted on 24-25 August 2015, *Declaration on Gender Equality and Women's Economic Empowerment* adopted on 27 October 2016, and *Balaclava Declaration on Women's Economic Empowerment and Gender Equality as a Pre-Requisite for Sustainable Development* adopted on 4-5 September 2019;

**Reaffirm** the women’s economic empowerment elements in the *Jakarta Concord* adopted at the IORA Leaders' Summit on 7 March 2017;

**Recognise** women’s economic empowerment is a cross-cutting issue of IORA;

**Welcome** the continued cooperation in IORA’s Working Group on Women’s Economic Empowerment;

**Pledge to:**

1. achieve an annual average of 40:40:20 female/male attendance in IORA meetings, activities and events as soon as possible but by no later than 2030;
2. achieve an annual average of 40:40:20 female/male speaking or Head of Delegation in IORA meetings, activities and events as soon as possible but by no later than 2030;
3. achieve a 40:40:20 female/male in the management positions at the IORA Secretariat as soon as possible but by no later than 2030;
4. an annual public report against pledges 1-3 from 2022; and
5. provide the necessary support to achieve pledges 1-4.

##### IOR/23CSO-Annual/2021/DOC2.8- Streamlining

**DRAFT CONCEPT NOTE**

**Streamlining the IORA Decision-Making Process**

**INTRODUCTION**

The Indian Ocean Rim Association’s (IORA) Committee of Senior Officials (CSO) recommended at its 9th Bi-annual Meeting held in Durban, South Africa, on 19-20 June 2019, that consideration be given to the streamlining of its decision-making procedures. The proposal was considered based on the situation that the current process is quite slow and was further compounded by the establishment of five Working Groups and Core Groups in addition to the existing three Working Groups, in line with the IORA Action Plan (2017-2021). As IORA will be focusing on its next five year period (2021 – 2025) vision and objectives, it is timely that IORA considers its future positioning and how it could contribute towards this objective by ensuring greater efficiency and focus. The CSO therefore decided that; “… *South Africa to circulate a Concept Note well in advance of the next CSO”* on the streamlining of the decision-making processes through its existing and new sub-structures.

This recommendation by the CSO was largely based on the outcomes of the 1st Strategic Planning Workshop between the IORA TROIKA (*South Africa as IORA Chair, the UAE as vice-Chair and Indonesia as past Chair, supported by the Senior Officials from Australia, India, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka and Mauritius*) and the IORA Secretariat that was held in Mauritius on 17-18 March 2018 and where this issue received attention.

**OBJECTIVE**

For IORA to improve efficiencies and to remain relevant in a fast-changing world, the recommendation was that the decision-making process could be streamlined by the CSO to accord the sub-structures (Working Groups, Core Groups, etc.) more decision-making authority, particularly in the implementation of the IORA Action Plan (2017-2021) regarding activities that have been incorporated in the respective Work Plans of the mentioned sub-structures.

The new envisaged process should give effect to the IORA Chair’s intention to decentralise the activities and authority away from the CSO to the Working/Core Groups (and by implication to the Coordinating Country and the Cluster system) through a holistic approach in order to strengthen implementation of the IORA Action Plan (2017-2021), improving on the delivery of their respective mandates, while at the same time ensuring that the CSO maintains overall authority/decision making power over the broader high level issues.

**SITUATIONAL ANALYSIS**

**PAST/CURRENT**

Since 1997, IORA, besides the Primary Bodies which include the Committee of Senior Officials (CSO) and Council of Ministers (COM), had four Working Groups (WGs) namely; the Indian Ocean Rim Academic Group (IORAG), Indian Ocean Rim Business Forum (IORBF), the Working Group on Trade and Investment (WGTI) and the Working Group on Heads of Missions (WGHM – the WGHM has been terminated in 2017). In 2013 a new track 1.5 platform was created known as the Indian Ocean Dialogue (IOD) and recently in 2018, new structures have been established with the creation of the following Working Groups (WGs): the Working Group on Women’s Economic Empowerment (WGWEE), Working Group on Maritime Safety and Security (WGMSS), Working Group on the Blue Economy (WGBE), Core Group on Tourism (CGT) and the Core Group on Disaster Risk Management (CGDRM). These WG have been labelled as Functional Bodies as mentioned in the IORA Charter. While some of the above-mentioned Functional Bodies have already devised their own Terms of Reference (TOR) and work plans (WP), others are under process.

**Note:***The IORA Action Plan (2017-2021) made provision for the existing and newly established Functional Bodies to operate on the basis of Terms of Reference (TOR) and Work Plans approved by the CSO/COM.*

The current priority and cross-cutting areas and processes are based on the following:

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **PRIORITY AREA** | **COORDINATING COUNTRY** | **CLUSTER GROUP\*****\*Updated following the CSO meeting on 5-6 November 2019, Abu Dhabi, UAE** |
| Maritime Safety and Security | Sri Lanka | Australia, Bangladesh, India, Indonesia, Iran, Kenya, Madagascar, Mauritius, South Africa, Tanzania and UAE |
| Trade and Investment Facilitation | Mauritius | Australia, India, Iran, Malaysia, Singapore, South Africa and Tanzania |
| Fisheries Management | Indonesia | Bangladesh, Iran, Kenya, Madagascar, Mauritius, Oman, Tanzania, Thailand, Seychelles and FSU |
| Disaster Risk Management | India | Indonesia, Mauritius, Mozambique and Sri Lanka |
| Academic, Science and Technology Cooperation | India | Indonesia, Mauritius, South Africa, UAE and RCSTT |
| Tourism and Cultural Exchanges | UAE (supported by South Africa) | Iran, Mauritius, Mozambique, Oman, Sri Lanka, South Africa and Tanzania |
| The Blue Economy | South Africa | Australia, Bangladesh, Comoros, India, Indonesia, Iran, Kenya, Madagascar, Mauritius, Mozambique, Seychelles, Sri Lanka, Tanzania, Thailand and UAE |
| Women’s Economic Empowerment | Australia (supported by Mauritius) | India, Indonesia, Mauritius, South Africa, Thailand and UAE |
| *Institutional Arrangements and Broadening Engagement / Strengthening of the IORA Secretariat* | *South Africa* | Troika+, India and Mauritius |

The apex decision-making institutional mechanism of the Association is the Council of (Foreign) Ministers (COM) that meets annually normally during the October/November timeframe. The COM is hosted and chaired by the incumbent IORA Chair. The COM is preceded by the CSO where recommendations are made which are submitted to the COM for approval. The CSO has two annual meetings, the bi-annual Meeting in May/June/July and the CSO meeting prior to the COM in October/November. The CSO is hosted and Chaired by the IORA Chair. The COM and CSO is responsible for all decisions of IORA. All other Functional Bodies, Dialogue Partners, Observers, Specialised Agencies, Centres of Excellence, etc. can only make recommendations for consideration and approval by the CSO/COM.

**REPORTING**

All Meetings and events of the Functional Bodies have outcomes reports that are presented to the CSO and incorporated, after discussions and recommended for approval, in the report presented by the CSO Chair to the COM for approval. This process, especially project approvals, takes a long time and has become sluggish and complicated.

**Outputs and Deliverables from Functional Bodies**

In general, the main outputs and deliverables of Functional Bodies are:

1. Report of events which include workshops, conferences, symposiums, capacity building through exchange of information, best practices, research, studies, assessment of the needs and capabilities of IORA Member States in agreed areas, and pilot projects based on the respective Work Plans;
2. Preparations of guidelines, manuals, formulation of frameworks/mechanisms on a specific area within the priority areas;
3. Recommendation to the CSO for cooperation with multilateral organisations, agencies, Dialogue Partners and other partners through MOUs, Work Plans, etc.;
4. Recommendations to the CSO for the establishment of Centres of Excellence (to be assessed by the IORAG for a recommendation to the CSO);
5. Establishment of ad-hoc/sub committees;
6. Newsletters and journals;
7. Strategic issues to be submitted to the CSO for consideration and approval;
8. IORA-funded projects to be considered for approval by the CSO within the rules and procedures of the IORA Special Fund;

**Note:** *The Chairs of the WG/CGs will attend the CSO with the purpose to report on their progress. This in fact does not entail a physical presence in the CSO, as the respective Chairs could also report virtually. In addition, the full reports received from the Chairs of the WG/CG will be attached to the CSO Report for ease of reference and which is the current practice of the CSO.*

**DECISION-MAKING**

Currently the decision-making processes are centrally controlled by the CSO which takes a long time based on the situation that not all issues can be effectively resolved in a single discussion. All proposals and recommendations by the Member States are required to address the priority areas of the Association. The proposals and recommendations, which are submitted through the sub-structures, are processed through the IORA Secretariat and submitted to the IORA Chair for assessment. The IORA Chair assess the proposals/recommendations and gives approval to the Secretariat to circulate to the Member States, as part of the principle of IORA being a membership driven inclusive organisation. All Member States are given an opportunity to give inputs and comments within a predetermine timeframe (where non-responsiveness, after the deadline has expired is perceived as an approval).

Moreover, the CSO agenda, which is crafted as per the IORA Action Plan (2-17-2021), has become very lengthy and includes issues that have been discussed and finalised in the Functional Bodies. The following constitute the priority areas of IORA that are managed by the Functional Bodies and Specialised Agencies (the latter indicated in brackets):

1. Maritime Safety and Security (WGMSS)
2. Trade and Investment Facilitation (WGTI and the IORBF)
3. Fisheries Management (FSU - Specialised Agency of IORA, Core Group is under process)
4. Disaster Risk Management (CGDRM)
5. Academic, Science and Technology Cooperation (IORAG and RCSTT – Specialised Agency of IORA)
6. Tourism and Cultural Exchanges (CGT)
7. The Blue Economy (WGBE)
8. Women’s Economic Empowerment (WGWEE)
9. Indian Ocean Dialogue (1.5 track – Government officials and Academics)

Considering the above, it has become clear that there is a need to review the current decision-making process and to consider how and to what extent the Functional Bodies could be empowered to take decisions on issues of implementation whereby the current process would be streamlined in line with the recommendation made by the CSO.

**PROPOSAL**

Considering the process that all projects, project proposals which request funding from IORA Special Fund and programmes of IORA are managed through the Coordinating Country and the Functional Bodies in consultation with the Clusters, based on the principle of “ownership” of the priority areas, the decision-making process of the Association should also be managed by the relevant functional bodies. It is important to note that the Specialised Agencies of IORA remain subject to the relevant Working Group or Core Group and will have to channel their applications to the relevant Working Group or Core Group to be considered.

The fact that the functional bodies will be taking over the function, does not marginalise the apex institutional mechanisms (COM/CSO) as all issues are reported to the COM through the CSO, managed by the Chair with the support of the IORA TROIKA (when required) and the Secretariat and all Member States through the Association’s process based on inclusiveness and consensus.

In practical terms, the following decision-making process is recommended:

1. Project / programme/event proposal / proposal for Special Fund allocation be submitted to the Coordinating Country of the relevant Action Plan Priority for consultation with the relevant Functional Body and cluster countries;
2. Upon approval and/or no objection from the cluster countries, the Coordinating Country submits to Secretariat;
3. Secretariat will assess administrative and substantial requirement of the proposal for circulation to Member States. It is also proposed that the Secretariat’s assessment criteria be improved
4. Member States’ comments/inputs to be submitted to the Secretariat before deadline date;
5. Further to Member States’ inputs, the Secretariat circulates amended proposals to all Member States for views before submission to the Chair for final approval;
6. Secretariat amends proposal based on Member States inputs and submits to the IORA Chair for final approval and to be implemented by the relevant Functional Body;
7. Functional Body implements and reports to be submitted to the CSO;
8. Chair of each Functional Body to report to the CSO which will include the said reports of the functional bodies as annexure to the overall CSO Report to be submitted to the COM for approval. (Note: *Specific issues will only receive attention in the CSO should there be a requirement, such as where Special Fund support is required - Special Fund Rules and Procedures to apply, as well as any other matters/issues that the Functional Bodies recommend for discussion by the CSO*).
9. Monitoring and evaluation of approved projects/programme will be conducted by IORA Chair with the assistance from the IORA Troika and the Secretariat. The final report of monitoring and evaluation will be prepared for the CSO meeting

**Note:**

* *Important and controversial issues will remain the responsibility of the CSO;*
* *The proposed procedure will only become operational once the WG or CG is fully operational with an approved TOR and Work Plan;*
* *The WG/CG that are operational will commence to apply the new streamlined process. However, the WG/CG that are not yet fully operational may be encouraged to expedite the finalisation of their respective TOR and Work Plans;*
* *Considering that the functional bodies are being tasked with additional responsibilities, including decision-making powers, it is imperative that all Working Groups work in close collaboration to avoid duplication and effectively manage cross-cutting issues;*
* *The decision-making powers will not be extended to the Specialised Agencies of IORA and will apply exclusively to the Functional Bodies;*
* *The Chairs of the WG/CG will be able to make presentations to the COM when it is required and recommended by the CSO; and,*
* *The Functional Body would also have the authority to consider the allocation funds from the Special Fund. This would, however, remain subject to the overall authority of the COM and CSO to consider and decide on the allocation of funds from the Special Fund depending on the amount in question.*

**CONCLUSION**

It is the objective of the proposed streamlining to create space for the CSO in particular and for the COM in general to have more time for discussing strategic issues that affects the Association and for political decisions, rather to be bogged down with administrative procedures and processes that can be managed effectively by the Functional Bodies, therefore, effectively enhancing the principle of ownership and for taking responsibility. The Chair, with the support of the IORA TROIKA (when required) and the Secretariat, ensures the required compliance.

In order to ensure the success of the proposed changes, it is also important to further implement additional changes to the CSO and COM processes with the view to ensure delivery in further administrative efficiencies and improvements in IORA’s effectiveness. These include earlier circulation of draft agendas and communiques for the COM by the Secretariat. Further emphasis during COM meetings should be to ensure that these meeting’s format is adapted towards ensuring greater ministerial interaction and discussion. It is further proposed that the COM communique should be brief compared to past practise and should be tightly focused on the main challenges and opportunities that the Indian Ocean region is facing and what IORA is doing to address them. It will also be important for updates to be included in the annual Report of the IORA Secretary-General and that documentation is circulated well in advance to enable Member States to submit timeous inputs and comments to the Secretariat.

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##### IOR/23CSO-Annual/2021/DOC2.9- COM Agenda

**21st Meeting of the IORA Council of Ministers (COM)**

**17 November 2021**

**At 12:00 to 18:00 BST time (GMT+6)**

***Theme: “******Harnessing the opportunities of the Indian Ocean sustainably for inclusive development”***

**(For Member States)**

**Platform: Hybrid (in-person in Dhaka and Zoom)**

**Draft Agenda**

**SESSION I** *(Member States and Dialogue Partners*)

**1. OPENING SESSION**

1.1 Welcome Address and Report from the Outgoing Chair (UAE)

*Handing over of the Chair, Vice Chair, and Past Chair*

1.2 Welcoming and opening Remarks by Incoming Chair (Bangladesh)

1.3 Remarks by Incoming Vice-Chair (Sri Lanka)

1.4 Outline of Arrangements and Adoption of the Agenda (Chair, Bangladesh)

1.5 Opening Remarks by the Acting Secretary-General (Secretariat, IORA)

**SESSION II** *(Open to Member States and Dialogue Partners)*

**2. GENERAL DEBATE**

2.1 Welcoming and opening Remarks by Incoming Chair (Chair, Bangladesh)

2.2 Country Statements by Member States (2 minutes, timed)

2.3 Country Statements by Dialogue Partners (2 minutes, timed)

**3. STRATEGIC DIALOGUE**

3.1 Topic: Impact of Covid-19 and perspectives of economic recovery in the Indian Ocean Region (Member States and Dialogue Partners)

3.2 Closing remarks (Chair, Bangladesh)

**SESSION III***(Closed session - Member States only)*

**4. REPORT TO THE COUNCIL OF MINISTERS BY THE CHAIR OF THE COMMITTEE OF SENIOR OFFICIALS (CSO Chair, Bangladesh)**

**5. APPOINTMENT OF THE NEW IORA SECRETARY-GENERAL**

5.1 Consideration of the report and recommendation of the CSO for the new IORA Secretary-General (CSO Chair)

**6. SECOND IORA ACTION PLAN (2022-2027)**

6.1 Consideration of recommendation of the CSO for the Second IORA Action Plan (Chair, Bangladesh)

6.2 Consideration of recommendation of the CSO for the future Coordinating and Cluster Countries (Chair, Bangladesh)

**7. INDO-PACIFIC REGION**

7.1 Consideration of recommendation of the CSO for IORA’s Vision on the Indo-Pacific Region (Chair, Bangladesh)

**8. INSTITUTIONAL RECOMMENDATIONS (Chair, Bangladesh)**

8.1 Guidelines for strategic management and criteria for Dialogue Partners

8.2 Application by the Russian Federation as Dialogue Partner

8.3 Application by the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia as Dialogue Partner

8.4 IORA Guidelines for Human Assistance and Disaster Relief (HADR)

8.5 Establishment of the Working Group on Disaster Risk Management (WGDRM)

8.6 Establishment of the Research Support Unit (RSU) and the position of Policy Advisor and Research Coordinator (PARC)

8.7 Creation of tourism platforms (digital or otherwise) for sharing of best practices

8.8 Streamlining decision-making processes through sub-structures

8.9 Revised IORA Staff Regulations

8.10 Revised IORA Financial Regulations

8.11 Administrative Arrangements of the Special Fund

8.12 IORA Secretariat budget for 2022

**9. CONSIDERATION OF OUTCOME DOCUMENT (Chair, Bangladesh)**

9.1 Dhaka Communiqué

**10. ANY OTHER BUSINESS (Chair, Bangladesh)**

**11. ADOPTION OF COM REPORT (Chair, Bangladesh)**

**SESSION IV***(Closed session - Member States only)*

**12. CLOSING REMARKS (Chair, Bangladesh)**

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1. Refer to the Fourth Meeting of the Working Group on Women’s Economic Empowerment Decision Report. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. ‘[Women’s economic empowerment in fisheries in the blue economy of the Indian Ocean Rim: A baseline report](https://www.iora.int/en/events-media-news/news-updates-folder/un-women-iora-report-launched-women-s-economic-empowerment-in-fisheries)’ and ‘[Women’s Economic Empowerment in the Indian Ocean Rim: Progress and Challenges](https://www.iora.int/en/events-media-news/news-updates-folder/un-women-iora-report-launched-women-s-economic-empowerment-in-the-indian-ocean-rim-progress-and-challenges)’ [↑](#footnote-ref-2)