**The Workshop Series on "the Effects of Climate Change on the Indian Ocean Marine Environment"**

**(The Second Phase)**

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**CONCEPT NOTE**

**(Virtual) Workshop on**

**“The Urgency of Climate Change and its Consideration as a Topic in IORA”**

# 8 November, 2021, 11:00–14:30 (Mauritius time UTC +4)

1. **Problem Statement**

Climate change is happening at an alarming pace: temperatures are rising, drought and wildfires are starting to occur more frequently, rainfall patterns are shifting, glaciers and snow are melting and the global mean sea level is rising. Statistical interpretations by scholars show that climate change is likely to have a greater impact on the Indian Ocean region than in other areas because of its geography, population density, large low-lying areas, and many coastal cities. Impacts include sea-level rise, ocean acidification, changing meteorological patterns i.e. increase in severity and frequency of extreme weather events, leading to freshwater concerns and resulting in human migration.

In responding to these challenges, nations in the region have adopted varying strategies, depending on their geography, population density, capacity to respond, proximity to the sea, and respective levels of existing and predicated environmental degradation. While a good number of the world’s top twenty GHG emitters are located in the Indian Ocean region (Australia, India, Indonesia, Iran, Malaysia, Saudi Arabia, South Africa, and Thailand), those who are the least responsible (developing countries and small islands in the region) are in particular the most vulnerable to climate change as they rely heavily on natural systems, and/ or are threatened by the rising ocean level.

That calls for building a collective and resolute determination for a regional policy response. IORA has, from the outset, prided itself on its political, cultural, and economic diversity and its clear sensitivity to regional justice, however, it does not appear to move towards the policy framework of the regional response to mitigate this spatial and intergenerational injustice.

# Workshop Design

Committed by the principle of responsible science, the IORA RCSTT welcomed the request of the 22nd Meeting of the Committee of Senior Officials (CSO), held on 15-16 December 2020 to work with the Working Group on the Blue Economy (WGBE) and started to align its annual program with the agenda of this working group. In the Second Meeting of the WGBE, held on 12 April 2021, the proposal of holding a series of webinars on the effects of climate change on the marine environment of the Indian Ocean was submitted and noted.

On the 10th of May 2021, the first phase of the above series was completed as “the Effects of Climate Changes on the Indian Ocean Marine Environment". It was an informational workshop, designed and conducted by the scientists to share their scientific knowledge about the climate change and marine environment.

Cognizant that dealing with such a complex issue does need more than data and information, the RCSTT sought the second workshop to contain the dialogue between policy makers and scientists from different sub-regions, developing an evidence-based policy framework. The RCSTT presented the preliminary idea to the GIZ and through several intense brain storming sessions, the present structure of the workshop was co-created.

It is proposed to conduct this workshop in two distinct parts of two hours each, with a half hour break in between. These parts are structured as follows:

1. Part one should present some scientific evidence at the sub-regional levels (e.g. South Asia, and the coastal states of Southern and Eastern Africa) on the relevance and urgency of addressing the issue through collective action in the region, including some space for a Q&A session. Additional keynote addresses during this part would present some postulations on potential solutions to be discussed.
2. Part two would then open two breakout rooms for a more in-depth discussion, with a (short) presentation of the results of these discussions in a plenary session during the last half hour:
   1. The first breakout room would be only for members of the Working Group of Blue Economy (WGBE) and other official representatives from Member States. They will discuss the issues to be addressed under climate change and how to include these in the existing Work Plan of the WGBE. They will also discuss the question on how to address the issue of climate change in IORA in general in the future. The aim would be to develop some suggestions / recommendations to be tabled at the forthcoming CSO/COM meeting.
   2. The second breakout room would be for the general public, i.e. academia, Government participants from other ministries and agencies, representatives of Dialogue Partners, NGOs, as well as from civil society. They would discuss the questions: “Which are the climate change topics to be addressed by IORA as a regional organisation?” and “Through which ways can and should IORA address these topics?”

# Objectives and Outcomes

The overall objective of the workshop is to develop a common understanding of the urgency of climate change in the region and to define the role of IORA as a regional organisation in addressing this issue. It is understood that such a workshop will not be able to solve this objective by itself. However, as realistic outcomes of the workshop, the following deliverables can be expected:

1-     Some tangible recommendations on how IORA could or should deal with the topic of climate change in the future. These would be discussed and elaborated in a form that can be presented at the forthcoming IORA CSO and COM meetings in mid-November 2021.

2-    A list of climate change-related topics which should be taken up by IORA in the future, including suggestions on how these topics should be addressed, discussed and documented for further consideration.

3-   Recommendations for further elaboration of aspects/topics of climate change to be considered and reflected in the Work Plan of the IORA-WGBE..

# Implementation

The workshop is proposed to be held as a virtual event, on 8 November, 2021, 11:00 – 14:30 (Mauritius time, UTC +4). While the WGBE and RCSTT will lead the discussions, they will be assisted by an external moderator and technical backstopping for the visualisation and documentation.

RCSTT will be responsible for the organisation and conceptual design of the workshop, with assistance from the WGBE.