

# INDIAN OCEAN RIM ASSOCIATION

## 13<sup>th</sup> Bi-Annual Meeting of the IORA Committee of Senior Officials (CSO)

13-14 June 2023

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

**Sylhet, Bangladesh**

### **DECISION REPORT**

#### **INTRODUCTION**

The 13<sup>th</sup> Bi-Annual Meeting of the IORA Committee of Senior Officials (CSO) was hosted by the People’s Republic of Bangladesh in Sylhet, Bangladesh on 13-14 June 2023. The Meeting was chaired by H.E. Rear Admiral (Retd) Md. Khurshed Alam, Secretary, Maritime Affairs Unit, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People’s Republic of Bangladesh, and was attended by representatives of IORA Member States, namely Commonwealth of Australia, People’s Republic of Bangladesh, 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 Mauritius, 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. The Fisheries Support Unit (FSU) and the Regional Centre for Science and Technology Transfer (RCSTT) also attended the meeting.

#### **1. OPENING SESSION**

##### **1.1 Video Message by the Hon’ble Foreign Minister of Bangladesh H.E. Dr. A K Abdul Momen, MP, Foreign Minister, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, People’s Republic of Bangladesh**

*Outcome:* The CSO noted the Video Message delivered by H.E. Dr AK Abdul Momen, MP, Foreign Minister, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, People’s Republic of Bangladesh.

##### **1.2 Welcome Address and Opening Remarks by Chair (Bangladesh)**

*Outcome:* The CSO noted the Chairperson’s Welcome Address and Opening Remarks by H.E. Rear Admiral (Retd) Md. Khurshed Alam, Acting Foreign Secretary and Secretary of Maritime Affairs Unit, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Bangladesh, Chair of IORA.

##### **1.3 Remarks by the Vice-Chair (Sri Lanka)**

*Outcome:* The CSO noted the remarks delivered by IORA Vice Chair H.E. Mr Sudharshan Seneviratne, High Commissioner of Sri Lanka in Bangladesh and IORA Vice-Chair, Sri Lanka.

#### 1.4 Remarks by the Past-Chair (UAE)

*Outcome:* The CSO noted the remarks delivered by Mr Ahmed Al Badawi, Acting Deputy Director of Economic and Trade Affairs Department, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Internal Cooperation, United Arab Emirates.

#### 1.5 Presentation by Local Administration (Bangladesh)

*Outcome:* The CSO noted the presentation by the District Administration of Sylhet, Bangladesh.

#### 1.6 Outline of Arrangements and Adoption of the Agenda (Chair)

*Outcome:* The CSO adopted the agenda of the 13<sup>th</sup> Bi-Annual CSO Meeting with the amendment from Mauritius on agenda item 16 *Any Other Business* on the candidature of Mauritius to the following United Nations bodies:

- a. Executive Board of the United Nations Economic, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) for the period 2023-2027.
- b. Executive Council of United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) for period of 2023-2027.
- c. Chairmanship of the UNWTO Regional Commission for Africa (CAF) for the period 2023-2025.

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

*Outcome:* The CSO noted the report of H.E. Dr Salman Al Farisi, Secretary-General of IORA and requested that the report be circulated to all Member States for their information.

## 2. INSTITUTIONAL ARRANGEMENTS AND BROADENING ENGAGEMENT - *Coordinating Country: Sri Lanka*

### 2.1 Update: Preparations for the High-Level Strategic Dialogue, 20-22 June 2023, Mauritius and Strategic Review Session focusing on IORA's African Member States and the IORA Indo-Pacific Outlook, 23-24 June 2023, Mauritius (South Africa/ Secretariat)

*Outcome:* The CSO noted the report from South Africa and the IORA Secretariat on the preparations for the High-Level Strategic Dialogue on 20-22 June 2023. The CSO noted the feedback received from Member States on the modalities of the meetings and issues to be discussed in the related sessions. The CSO underscored that all IORA Special Fund applications should be submitted and processed in a timely manner and in accordance with the existing procedure in IORA.

The CSO noted the report from South Africa on the preparations for the Strategic Review Session focusing on IORA's African Member States and the IORA Indo-Pacific Outlook on 23-24 June 2023. The CSO noted the inputs and comments received from Member States on the scope of participation, modalities, and objectives of the Session. South Africa clarified that all Member States are welcomed to participate in the Session.

## **2.2 Dialogue Partner's application (Secretariat)**

### **2.2.1 Report: Status of Application by the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia as Dialogue Partner**

*Outcome:* The CSO commended the efforts of the IORA Chair, Bangladesh, in this arrangement and thanked all Member States for the consensus reached to accept the KSA as the 11<sup>th</sup> Dialogue Partner of IORA. The IORA Secretariat informed that it was waiting for the KSA to convey the signed Letter of Acceptance.

### **2.2.2 Update: Status of the application of European Union as Dialogue Partner**

The CSO considered the feedback from Member States on the application of European Union as Dialogue Partner and noting that there were no objections, endorsed the EU application.

The CSO recommended that the EU application be approved intersessionally by the COM as per Paragraph 9.2 *IORA Mechanism for Intersessional Ministerial Decisions* of the IORA Rules of Procedure or otherwise noting that if the intersessional approval is given on this recommendation in time, the host of the 23<sup>rd</sup> meeting of the Council of Ministers (COM), Sri Lanka, can invite the European Union to join IORA as a Dialogue Partner in Colombo in October 2023. This would also enable the European Union to participate in IORA activities occurring in conjunction with the COM Meeting.

## **2.3 Implementation of the Regulations for implementation of Article 4 (b) (i) of the IORA Charter on status of Dialogue Partnership (Secretariat)**

### **2.3.1 Update: Coordinating countries for Dialogue Partners**

*Outcome:* The CSO requested the IORA Secretariat to continue engaging with Member States and Dialogue Partners and propose a way forward to ensure that they convey their interest to volunteer as a Coordinating Country for one of the three Dialogue Partners namely Egypt, Russia, and UK for finalisation at the annual CSO meeting in Sri Lanka.

### **2.3.2 Update: Consideration of Process for identification of coordinating countries for Dialogue Partners, second process**

*Outcome:* The CSO considered the proposal made on the next selection process for identification of coordinating countries for Dialogue Partners.

The CSO agreed that Member States should coordinate only one Dialogue Partner at a time. The IORA Secretariat was requested to provide the terms of reference to shed light on the specific roles of the coordinating countries.

### **2.3.3 Status of Programmes/Commitments made by Dialogue Partners**

*Outcome:* The CSO noted the status of Programmes/Commitments made by Dialogue Partners and stressed on the importance of programs/commitments by Dialogue Partners, especially those which have not undertaken any program/commitments in recent past.

### **2.3.4 Letters from the United Kingdom and the United States of America on their interpretation of the IORA Regulations for the Implementation of Article 4 (b) (I) of the IORA Charter on status of Dialogue Partnership**

*Outcome:* The CSO noted that the UK and USA provided their feedback on the revised IORA Regulations for the Implementation of Article 4 (b) (I) of the IORA Charter on status of Dialogue Partnership that was adopted at the 22<sup>nd</sup> Council of Ministers in Dhaka, Bangladesh on 24<sup>th</sup> November 2022.

The CSO considered the letters and requested India to engage with the UK and USA on the way forward.

### **2.4 Update: Follow-up on IORA's Outlook on the Indo-Pacific Region (India)**

*Outcome:* The CSO noted that the IORA Outlook on the Indo-Pacific (IOIP), that has been approved by the Council of Ministers (in November 2022), was given suitable publicity on IORA's website and the link for the same was shared with all Member States/Dialogue Partners for information.

The CSO also noted that the IORA Indo-Pacific Outlook was on the agenda of the *High-Level Strategic Dialogue on IORA's 25-Years - Reflection, Review & Renewal* for discussion.

### **2.5 Report: Third Meeting of the IORA Functional Body Chairs and the Coordinating Countries, 29 May 2023, Virtual (Secretariat)**

*Outcome:* The CSO noted the update from the IORA Secretariat and the IORA Chair on the Third Meeting of the IORA Functional Body Chairs and the Coordinating Countries that took place virtually on 29<sup>th</sup> May 2023. The Report will be circulated after the CSO meeting to Member States for feedback.

### **2.6 IORA Action Plan (2022-2027)**

#### **2.6.1 Identification of future Coordinating and Cluster Countries (2023-2025) (Secretariat)**

*Outcome:* The CSO considered nominations received on future Coordinating Countries and Cluster Groups for the period (2023-2025) and the Chair of the Functional Bodies which will be finalised and endorsed at the next CSO meeting in October in Colombo, Sri Lanka.

The CSO requested the IORA Secretariat to develop and submit the Concept Note on the modality of the Coordinating Country by the next Bi-Annual CSO.

#### **2.6.2 Update: Implementation of the IORA Action Plan (Secretariat)**

*Outcome:* The CSO endorsed the template for the implementation of the IORA Action Plan.

### **2.7 Update: Draft Terms of Reference (ToR): Format of the Meetings of CSO-COM (Secretariat)**

*Outcome:* The CSO considered the feedback received from Member States on the Terms of Reference (ToR) for the CSO and COM meeting and proposed that it be discussed at the High-Level Strategic Dialogue on 20-22 June 2023 scheduled to take place in Mauritius.

## **2.8 Consideration of proposed change of the format of CSO agenda (Secretariat)**

*Outcome:* The CSO proposed that the change of the format of the CSO agenda be discussed at the High-Level Strategic Dialogue on 20-22 June 2023 scheduled to take place in Mauritius.

## **2.9 Update: Consideration of the Draft Terms of Reference (ToR): Institutional Arrangements and Broadening Engagement (IABE) as a Functional Body (Secretariat)**

*Outcome:* The CSO noted that the activities under the work plan of the IABE were also reflected in the CSO agenda and proposed that it be discussed at the High-Level Strategic Dialogue on 20-22 June 2023 scheduled to take place in Mauritius.

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

### **2.10.1 Update: Proposed activities between IORA and the Centre for Science and Technology of the Non-Aligned and Other Developing Countries (NAM S&T Centre), India**

*Outcome:* The CSO noted the update from the IORA Secretariat on the proposed workshop.

### **2.10.2 Update: Collaboration with International Seabed Authority (ISA)**

*Outcome:* The CSO noted the update from the IORA Secretariat on the collaboration with International Seabed Authority (ISA).

### **2.10.3 Update: Food and Agricultural Organisation (FAO)**

*Outcome:* The CSO noted the update from the IORA Secretariat on the collaboration with the Food and Agricultural Organisation (FAO).

### **2.10.4 Update: Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission of UNESCO (IOC-UNESCO)**

*Outcome:* The CSO noted the update from the IORA Secretariat on the collaboration with the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission of UNESCO (IOC-UNESCO).

### **2.10.5 Update: Collaboration between IORA and International Renewable Energy Agency (IRENA)**

*Outcome:* The CSO noted the update from the IORA Secretariat on the collaboration between IORA and International Renewable Energy Agency (IRENA).

### **2.10.6 Update: International Solar Alliance (ISA)**

*Outcome:* The CSO noted that the extended MoU between IORA and the International Solar Alliance (ISA) would come to an end in August 2023. The CSO requested the IORA Secretariat to engage with the ISA on the implementation of potential activities.

### **2.10.7 Update: Collaboration between IORA and Indian Ocean Commission (IOC)**

*Outcome:* The CSO noted that the IORA Secretariat is engaging with IOC on the implementation of the MoU and that Member States would be updated in due course.

Mauritius informed the CSO that they have assumed chairmanship of the IOC in May 2023 for a period of one year. They highlighted that the implementation of the MOU between IORA and IOC represents one of Mauritius' priorities as Chair of the IOC. They proposed that collaboration between the two organisations be initiated in the field of Maritime Safety and Security. Mauritius invited IORA Member States to the Third Ministerial Conference on Maritime Security to be held during the first week of October 2023.

### **2.10.8 Update: Pacific Islands Forum (PIF)**

*Outcome:* The CSO noted that the Concept Note elaborating the benefits and added values accruing to IORA from such interaction with the PIF was circulated along with the draft MoU for the feedback by Member States.

The CSO requested the IORA Secretariat to proceed in sending the draft MoU approved by Member States to the PIF Secretariat for their onward transmission to the PIF Member States for their feedback and endorsed the MoU to be approved intersessionally by CSO and COM after reaching agreements by both parties.

### **2.10.9 Update: Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC)**

*Outcome:* The CSO noted the feedback provided by the Member States on the MoU between IORA and the Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC) and Thailand's request following which the IORA Secretariat prepared the Concept Note indicating the benefits of cooperation with BIMSTEC.

The CSO requested the IORA Secretariat to proceed in sending the draft MoU approved by Member States to the BIMSTEC Secretariat for their onward transmission to the BIMSTEC Member States for their feedback and to consider endorsing the MoU intersessionally after reaching agreements by both parties.

### **2.10.10 Update: Collaboration with Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN)**

*Outcome:* The CSO noted the positive progress made with regard to the engagement between IORA and ASEAN such as the virtual meeting that took place on 5<sup>th</sup> April 2023 between IORA Secretariat and ASEAN Secretariat to pursue and strengthen the cooperation between IORA and ASEAN.

The CSO noted that ASEAN would review the draft Concept Note on the Cooperation between ASEAN and IORA proposed by IORA Secretariat, including identifying 2-3 areas of cooperation of common interest on ASEAN Outlook on Indo Pacific and the IORA Outlook on Indo-Pacific.

The CSO looks forward to receiving further update from the IORA Secretariat on the engagement.

#### **2.10.11 Update: Collaboration with United Nations Economic Commission for Africa, Sub-Regional Office for Eastern Africa (UNECA SRO-EA)**

*Outcome:* The CSO noted the update from the IORA Secretariat on the collaboration with United Nations Economic Commission for Africa, Sub-Regional Office for Eastern Africa (UNECA SRO-EA).

#### **2.11 Update: Implementation of e-Office at the Secretariat (India/ Secretariat)**

*Outcome:* The CSO commended the progress made in the implementation of e-Office to strengthen the IORA Secretariat and requested the remaining Member States to provide the information to start using the Knowledge Management System (KMS).

#### **2.12 Update: Preparation of the Third IORA Familiarization Visit for Media Practitioners and Journalists from IORA Member States to Bangladesh (Bangladesh)**

*Outcome:* The CSO noted the postponement of the Third Familiarization Visit for Media Practitioners and Journalist to Bangladesh due to low number of nominations received from Member States.

The CSO proposed Sri Lanka, as the next IORA Chair, to consider hosting the visit.

#### **2.13 Update: Review mechanism of IORA Special Agencies (Iran/ Secretariat)**

*Outcome:* The CSO noted that the IORA Secretariat would liaise with Iran to schedule the meeting on the review mechanism of IORA Special Agencies and for onward transmission to Member States.

#### **2.14 Update: Calendar of Events 2023-2024 (Secretariat)**

*Outcome:* The CSO requested Member States to inform the IORA Secretariat on any events (virtual or in-person) they are planning to host. The Calendar of Events for 2024 will be drafted for endorsement at the next CSO and will be shared on the IORA website.

#### **2.15 New proposal: Guide to IORA practices and Protocol (Secretariat)**

*Outcome:* The CSO noted that the IORA Secretariat would prepare the Guide to IORA practices and Protocol and that it would be shared with Member States for their feedback.

#### **2.16 Consideration of the Secretariat's Annual Operation Plan (AOP) (Secretariat)**

*Outcome:* The CSO requested Member States to provide their feedback on the Secretariat's Annual Operation Plan (AOP) by end of July 2023.

The CSO noted the feedback from Member States on the importance of synergizing the Calendar of Events and the Secretariat's Annual Operation Plan.

### **3. UPDATE: CLIMATE CHANGE AS A CROSS CUTTING ISSUE OF IORA (Bangladesh)**

*Outcome:* The CSO proposed that it be discussed at the High-Level Strategic Dialogue on 20-22 June 2023.

## **4. IORA SPECIAL PROGRAMMES**

### **4.1 Update: Scholarship from Dhaka University (Bangladesh)**

*Outcome:* The CSO noted that details on the scholarship programme: Master Programme in Oceanography and Master Programme in Disaster Science and Climate Resilience at the Dhaka University, received from Bangladesh, were circulated to all the Member States on 10 May 2023.

The CSO thanked Bangladesh for the offer and requested Member States to convey the details on the scholarship programme to their relevant government agencies.

### **4.2 Update: Workshop on IORA Development Initiative (IDI) (UAE)**

*Outcome:* The CSO endorsed the Concept Note on the IORA Development Initiative and recommended the Concept Note on the IORA Development Initiative (IDI) to be approved intersessionally by COM and proposed that the funding mechanism be discussed at the High-Level Strategic Dialogue on 20-22 June 2023, Mauritius. The CSO also commended UAE for its leadership on the IDI.

### **4.3 Update: The Sheikh Zayed IORA Scholarship for Humanitarian Action and Development (UAE)**

*Outcome:* The CSO noted the delay to award the inaugural scholarships for the 2023-2024 academic year in the Master of Arts in Humanitarian Action and Development program at the Anwar Gargash Diplomatic Academy because of the fraudulent financial activities that took place in the IORA Secretariat in 2022.

The CSO appreciated UAE in pursuing the scholarship to be awarded for the 2024-2025 academic year, and to further note that a Financing Agreement will be signed between UAE and the IORA Secretariat. The Agreement will also include respective commitments and responsibilities on each side before seeking financial support from Member States or Dialogue Partners in respect to the Scholarship initiative.

### **4.4 Update: Second iteration of the IORA Nelson Mandela Internship Programme (NMIP) 2023 (Secretariat)**

*Outcome:* The CSO noted the update from the IORA Secretariat on the IORA Nelson Mandela Internship Programme and agreed that the second iteration of the IORA Nelson Mandela Internship Programme (NMIP) 2023 would only be held for a period of three months instead of four due to budgetary constraints.



#### **4.5 Update: Indian Ocean Champion (Secretariat)**

*Outcome:* The CSO endorsed the Terms of Reference of the IORA Champion Awards and recommended its adoption by COM in October 2023 in Colombo, Sri Lanka.

The CSO noted that the IORA Secretariat will pursue the initiative with the Member States, Dialogue Partners, and other external partners for the financial support after endorsement of the ToR by the CSO.

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

#### **5.1 Report: Third Meeting of the IORA Working Group on Maritime Safety and Security (WGMSS), 20 March 2023, Colombo (Sri Lanka)**

*Outcome:* The CSO noted the update from Sri Lanka on the Third Meeting of the IORA Working Group on Maritime Safety and Security (WGMSS).

#### **5.2 Report: Workshop on cooperation for maritime security, 21-23 March 2023 Colombo (Sri Lanka)**

*Outcome:* The CSO noted the update from Sri Lanka on the Workshop on Cooperation for Maritime Security and upcoming activities to be held in collaboration with Max Planck Foundation for International Peace and the Rule of Law (MPFPR) in 2023.

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

*Outcome:* The CSO agreed to the request from India to remove this item and item 8.2 from the agenda noting that the framework had already been adopted and is being implemented by the Working Group on Disaster Risk Management.

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

#### **6.1 Report: 21<sup>st</sup> Working Group on Trade and Investment (WGTI), 23 May 2023 (virtual) (Australia)**

*Outcome:* The CSO noted the report from Australia on the 21st Working Group on Trade and Investment (WGTI) that took place virtually on 23<sup>rd</sup> May 2023.

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

*Outcome:* The CSO noted the update from Australia. CSO agreed to the request from Australia to remove this item from the agenda as there are no longer formal arrangements between IORA and GTR.

#### **6.3 Update: 28th Meeting of the Indian Ocean Rim Business Forum (IORBF) (Bangladesh, IORBF Chair)**

*Outcome:* The CSO noted the report from Bangladesh, as the IORBF Chair, on the 28th Meeting of the Indian Ocean Rim Business Forum (IORBF) which took place virtually on 22<sup>nd</sup> May 2023.

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

**7.1 Update: Preparations for the third Core Group on Fisheries Management (CGFM) meeting (Indonesia)**

*Outcome:* The CSO noted the update from Indonesia on the second meeting of the Core Group on Fisheries Management (CGFM) and the preparations of the third meeting of the CGFM to be held in September 2023 back-to-back with the first workshop on the development of IORA Illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) Guideline.

**7.2 Report: Projects under IORA-AFD MOU (France/ Reunion)**

*Outcome:* The CSO noted the update from France on the implementation of projects carried out under the IORA-AFD MoU. The CSO commended France for supporting the activities of the Working Group on Blue Economy through the AFD-IORA MoU.

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

*Outcome:* The CSO noted the update from the FSU.

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

**8.1 Update: Preparations for the Second Meeting of the Working Group on Disaster Risk Management (WGDRM) (India)**

*Outcome:* The CSO noted the update from India on the Second Meeting of the Working Group on Disaster Risk Management (WGDRM).

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

*Outcome:* The CSO noted the request from India to remove this item from the report noting that the framework had already been adopted and is being implemented by the Working Group on Disaster Risk Management.

**8.3 Update: IORA Sustainable Health Initiative (Mauritius)**

*Outcome:* The CSO noted the update from Mauritius that they would keep the project on the IORA Sustainable Health Initiative Workshop in abeyance until a new source of funding is identified.

**8.4 Update: IORA Disaster Resilient Infrastructure (DRI) Workshop (Mauritius)**

*Outcome:* The CSO noted the update from Mauritius that they would keep the project on the IORA Disaster Resilient Infrastructure (DRI) Workshop in abeyance until a new source of funding is identified.

**8.5 Update: Proposed activities on the workplan under the MoU between Coalition for Disaster Resilient Infrastructure (CDRI) and IORA and Work-Plan under the MoU (Secretariat)**

*Outcome:* The CSO noted the update from the IORA Secretariat on the proposed activities in the workplan under the MoU between Coalition for Disaster Resilient Infrastructure (CDRI) and IORA.

The CSO noted the proposal for cooperation between IORA and the “Asian and Pacific Centre for the Development of Disaster Information Management” (APDIM).

**9. ACADEMIC, SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY COOPERATION – Coordinating Country: India**

**9.1 Update: Preparation for the Third Meeting of the Working Group on Science Technology and Innovation (WGSTI) (India)**

*Outcome:* The CSO noted the update from India on the preparations for the Third Meeting of the Working Group on Science Technology and Innovation (WGSTI).

**9.2 Update: IORA Centre of Excellence (ICE) for the IORA Member States (India)**

*Outcome:* The CSO noted the update from India on the latest development regarding the establishment of their IORA Centre of Excellence.

**9.3 Update: Preparation for the 28<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Indian Ocean Rim Academic Group (IORAG) (South Africa)**

*Outcome:* The CSO noted the update from South Africa on the preparation of the 28<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Indian Ocean Rim Academic Group (IORAG) to be held in Cape Town in September 2023.

**9.4 Update: Establishment of the Research Support Unit (RSU) and the position of Policy Advisor and Research Coordinator (PARC) (South Africa)**

*Outcome:* The CSO noted the update from South Africa on the RSU and the PARC.

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

*Outcome:* The CSO noted the update from the RCSTT regarding the status of implementation of its activities.

**9.6 Update: IORAG Research Study funded by GIZ on “COVID-19 and Climate Change: Prospects for a “Blue” Recovery in the Indian Ocean Region” (Secretariat)**

*Outcome:* The CSO noted the update from the IORA Secretariat on the IORAG Research Study funded by GIZ on “COVID-19 and Climate Change: Prospects for a “Blue” Recovery in the Indian Ocean Region”.

### **9.7 Update: 2023 subscription for the Journal of the Indian Ocean Region (JIOR) (Secretariat)**

*Outcome:* The CSO expressed its gratitude to Bangladesh for funding JIOR subscriptions to 12 Member States and the IORA Secretariat and agreed to keep this issue in abeyance until a sustainable source of funding has been identified.

### **10. TOURISM AND CULTURAL EXCHANGES (TCE) – Coordinating Country: Mauritius**

#### **10.1 Report: Workshop on Nature-based tourism: “Boosting Livelihoods across the Indian Ocean Rim through Nature-Based Tourism”, 3-5 May 2023 (Mauritius)**

*Outcome:* The CSO noted the report from Mauritius on the Workshop on Nature-Based Tourism and Lessons Learned from COVID-19 from 03 to 05 May 2023 at Maritim Resort & Spa, BalACLava in Mauritius.

#### **10.2 Report: Fourth meeting of the Core Group on Tourism (CGT), 5 May 2023, In person (Mauritius)**

*Outcome:* The CSO noted the report from Mauritius on the Fourth meeting of the Core Group on Tourism (CGT) held on 05 May 2023 at Maritim Resort & Spa, BalACLava in Mauritius.

#### **10.3 Update: Establishment of a website and a resource centre on tourism (France/Reunion)**

*Outcome:* The CSO noted the update from France/Reunion on the establishment of the Tourism Resource Centre (TRC).

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

#### **11.1 Update: Preparations for the Third Working Group on Blue Economy (WGBE) (South Africa)**

*Outcome:* The CSO noted the update from South Africa on the progress of the implementation of the Work plan of the Working Group on Blue Economy (WGBE) and that the Third WGBE meeting would be held virtually on 10-12 July 2023.

#### **11.2 Update: Implementation on the Strategic Framework of Action on Marine Debris in the Indian Ocean (Indonesia)**

*Outcome:* The CSO noted the update from Indonesia on the implementation of the Strategic Framework of Action on Marine Debris in the Indian Ocean.

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

*Outcome:* The CSO noted the update from Sri Lanka that the Fourth IORA Ministerial Blue Economy Conference (BEC-IV) will be held virtually on 11 August 2023. The meeting details and agenda will be circulated to all Member States in due course.

## **11.4 IORA Blue Carbon Hub (Australia)**

### **11.4.1 Activities by the IORA Blue Carbon Hub**

*Outcome:* The CSO acknowledged receipt of the concept note from Australia regarding the extension of the grant agreement/funding for the IORA Blue Carbon Hub for the period 2023 – 2026 and expressed its gratitude that Australia has continued to fund this valuable resource. The CSO noted that the Hub will be hosting a Blue Carbon Think Tank Meeting on Nature-Based Solutions for Coastal Adaptation on 12-14 September 2023 in Bali, Indonesia.

### **11.4.2 Update: Preparations for webinar on final report of the ‘Earth Observation for an Indian Ocean Blue Economy - Consultation Workshop’, Virtual**

*Outcome:* The CSO noted the update from Australia and sought views from Member States on whether there was interest in attending a final webinar event to discuss the outcomes of the report of the ‘Earth Observation for an Indian Ocean Blue Economy - Consultation Workshop’.

### **11.4.3 Update: Third round of IORA Blue Carbon Hub Early Career Visiting Scientist programme**

*Outcome:* The CSO noted the update from Australia on the third round of IORA Blue Carbon Hub Early Career Visiting Scientist programme.

## **11.5 Report: Ninth Indian Ocean Dialogue (IOD), 22-23 May 2023, Zanzibar (Tanzania)**

*Outcome:* The CSO noted the update from Tanzania on the Ninth Indian Ocean Dialogue (IOD) held on 22-23 May 2023 in Zanzibar and endorsed the Zanzibar consensus.

## **11.6 Report: Third phase of Workshop Series on the effect of Climate Change on the Indian Ocean Marine Environment for IORA Countries, Special Fund, 20-22 February 2023, Tehran (RCSTT)**

*Outcome:* The CSO noted the update from the RCSTT on the Third phase of Workshop Series on the effect of Climate Change on the Indian Ocean Marine Environment for IORA Countries held on 20-22 February 2023 in Tehran, Iran.

## **12. WOMEN’S ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT (WGWEE) -Coordinating Country: Islamic Republic of Iran**

### **12.1 Report: Seventh Working Group on Women's Economic Empowerment (WGWEE), 22-23 May 2023, Tehran (Iran)**

*Outcome:* The CSO noted the report from Iran on the Seventh meeting of the Working Group on Women's Economic Empowerment (WGWEE), held on 22-23 May 2023 in Tehran, Iran.

### **12.2 Report and Update: WEE Chairs Webinar Series hosted virtually by Iran (Iran)**

*Outcome:* The CSO noted the report from Iran on the series of webinar it hosted virtually namely:

- Women empowerment in flood forecasting early warning on 15<sup>th</sup> November 2022
- Women empowerment in Crisis Management on 20<sup>th</sup> September 2022

- c. Webinar on Artificial Intelligence Applications in Broadcast & Media, 14<sup>th</sup> March 2023 and
- d. Webinar on the role of radio in helping people in critical situations, 14<sup>th</sup> March 2023
- e. Women and the Jewellery Industry on 22<sup>nd</sup> May 2023 (in-person)
- f. Challenges and opportunities for moving from the national markets to the international ones on 22<sup>nd</sup> May 2023 (in-person)
- g. Designing the international entrepreneurship development model in innovative business and technology on 22<sup>nd</sup> May 2023 (in-person)
- h. Enhancing entrepreneurs' skills and expertise; a process-based approach on 22<sup>nd</sup> May 2023 (in-person)

### **13. FINANCE & ADMINISTRATION**

#### **13.1 Report: Sub-Committee on Finance (SCF), 1 June 2023 (Chair of SCF, Bangladesh and Secretariat)**

*Outcome:* The CSO noted that the report of the meeting of the Sub-Committee on Finance held virtually on 1<sup>st</sup> June 2023 was yet to be circulated to all Member States.

#### **13.2 Report: Fraudulent Financial Activities at the IORA Secretariat and measures taken by the IORA Secretariat (Secretariat)**

*Outcome:* While acknowledging the ongoing efforts to reform and strengthen the financial management of the Secretariat, the CSO requested the Secretariat to continue its effort and to undertake the following actions:

- a. Provide regular updates to Member States on the investigation process.
- b. Provide an update on the implementation status of BDO's recommendations to all Member States.
- c. Consider hiring a professional consultant/agency to work towards implementing a systemic system to ensure a proper accountability and transparency process.
- d. Hire professional and qualified accountant.
- e. Continue progressing the recovery of the affected funds as advised by the legal advisors.
- f. Design and implement an auditing framework that includes the provision of regular financial updates to Member States.
- g. Request for a copy of BDO's advice sent to the troika following the SCF meeting to be circulated to all Member States.
- h. Increase transparency by having the Secretariat provide monthly financial statements to Member States.

#### **13.3 Update: Concept Note on Review of the Membership of the Sub-Committee on Finance (SCF) of the Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA) (Mauritius)**

*Outcome:* The CSO noted the update provided by Mauritius on the Concept Note on the Membership of the SCF. Member States were requested to provide inputs on the Concept Note by 10 July 2023.

#### **13.4 Update: Rotational Audit of IORA Secretariat (Tanzania/ Secretariat)**

*Outcome:* The CSO noted the recommendations of the SCF on the cost of Rotational Audit. The CSO requested the Member States to provide inputs on the Concept Note by 29 June 2023. The CSO also requested Tanzania to provide the Terms of Reference on the principles and guidance on the audit.

### **13.5 Consideration of revising the Annual membership contribution (South Africa)**

*Outcome:* The CSO requested the Secretariat to continue engaging with Member States to discuss this issue. It was noted that the proposal to increase the membership cost should be backed with some justification to underscore the need. The CSO noted that South Africa will provide a concept note for consideration of Member States in due course.

## **14. IORA SPECIAL FUND**

### **14.1 Special Fund projects (approved)**

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

*Outcome:* The CSO noted the update from India on the IORA-India Cruise Tourism Conference “Spotlight on the Indian Ocean”.

#### **14.1.2 Update: Pilot Project entitled “Building Capacity of young environmental leaders across the Indian Ocean Rim to promote sustainable fisheries management”, Special Fund (Madagascar)**

*Outcome:* The CSO noted the update from Madagascar on the Pilot Project entitled “Building Capacity of young environmental leaders across the Indian Ocean Rim to promote sustainable fisheries management”.

#### **14.1.3 Report: Training workshop on “Research and sustainable management of Blue Carbon Ecosystems in the Indian Ocean”, ISDP, Special Fund, 27 November – 2 December 2022, Toliara, (Madagascar)**

*Outcome:* The CSO noted the report from Madagascar on the Training workshop on “Research and sustainable management of Blue Carbon Ecosystems in the Indian Ocean” held on 27 November to 2 December 2022.

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

*Outcome:* The CSO noted the update from Mauritius that they are in the process of organising a symposium to present the main findings of the comparative study and to launch the IORA Centre of Excellence for dispute resolution. The CSO agreed to Mauritius’ request for the project timeline to be extended by four months till end of October 2023 to allow the Project Core Group to effectively organise the Symposium and Mediation Training. It was highlighted that the extension will not incur any additional costs and will remain within the budget allocated by the Special Fund.

#### **14.1.5 Update: Progress on 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”, Special Fund (Seychelles)**

*Outcome:* The CSO noted the update from Seychelles on the progress 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”.

**14.1.6 Report: Training Workshop on Best Practices in Sea cucumber seed production and Seaweed tubular farming (through two demonstration projects in Mozambique and Zanzibar, Tanzania), ISDP, Special Fund, 7-11 November 2022, Zanzibar (Tanzania)**

*Outcome:* The CSO noted the update from Tanzania on the accountability report and the audited financial statement.

**14.1.7 Update: Training study tour on health management, disease diagnosis and treatment of cultured species in IORA Region for aquaculture sustainable development, Special Fund (FSU)**

*Outcome:* The CSO noted the update that the training study tour on health management, disease diagnosis and treatment of cultured species in IORA Region for aquaculture sustainable development will be held in October 2023 in Oman.

**14.2 Consideration of Proposals for future funding under Special Fund**

**14.2.1 Update: Proposal under IORA Sustainable Development Programme (ISDP) (Secretariat)**

*Outcome:* The CSO noted the update that the IORA Secretariat had not yet received any proposals under the IORA Sustainable Development Programme (ISDP).

**14.2.2 Update: Development of the IORA IUU Fishing Guideline (Indonesia/France)**

*Outcome:* The CSO noted the update from Indonesia that the first workshop on the development of IORA Illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) Guideline will be held back-to-back with the third meeting of the CGFM to be held in September 2023. The CSO noted that Indonesia will apply for special fund in this regard in due course.

The CSO noted that France/Reunion will be hosting the second workshop in La Reunion.

**14.2.3 Sustainable Whale watching network (France/Reunion)**

*Outcome:* The CSO noted the update from France/Reunion on their proposed list of activities.

**14.2.4 Project A3.1 Workshop to raise awareness of coastal and marine protection and conservation issues and its importance to the Blue Economy, Special Fund (Malaysia)**

*Outcome:* The CSO noted the update from Malaysia on the Workshop to raise awareness of coastal and marine protection and conservation issues and its importance to the Blue Economy to be held in September 2023.

The CSO noted that the Applicant requested an amount of USD 32,500 for the project to be funded from the IORA Special Fund.



**14.2.5 Update: Research and Capacity Building Project in the African Diaspora on Cultural Heritage for Coastal Tourism and Climate Action in the Indian Ocean Region, Special Fund (South Africa)**

*Outcome:* The CSO noted the update from South Africa that the Research and Capacity Building Project in the African Diaspora on Cultural Heritage for Coastal Tourism and Climate Action in the Indian Ocean Region has been approved intersessionally.

**14.3 Administrative Arrangements of the Special Fund**

**14.3.1 Update: Review of the Administrative Arrangements of the Special Fund at paragraph 8.12 (f) (Chair, Bangladesh)**

*Outcome:* The CSO endorsed the amendments made at Paragraph 8.12 (f) of the Administrative Arrangements of the Special Fund and recommended its adoption at the COM.

**14.3.2 New Proposal: Review of the streamlining process for application for Special Fund and Administrative Arrangements of the Special Fund (Secretariat)**

*Outcome:* The CSO endorsed the Secretariat's proposal to Review of the streamlining process for application for Special Fund and Administrative Arrangements of the Special Fund.

**15. PREPARATIONS FOR THE 23<sup>rd</sup> COUNCIL OF MINISTERS' MEETING, AND RELATED MEETINGS AND CONSIDERATION OF THE THEME UNDER SRI LANKA CHAIRSHIP (Incoming Chair, Sri Lanka)**

*Outcome:* The CSO noted that Sri Lanka will be hosting the 25<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting of the IORA Committee of Senior Officials (CSO) on 9-10 October 2023 and 23<sup>rd</sup> meeting of the Council of Ministers (COM) on 11 October 2023 at Bandaranaike Memorial International Conference Hall (BMICH) in Colombo, Sri Lanka under the theme "Strengthening Regional Architecture: Reinforcing Indian Ocean Identity".

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

**16.1 Consideration by IORA Chair on the Invitation by Indonesia to attend the 18<sup>th</sup> East Asia Summit (Secretariat)**

*Outcome:* The CSO noted the Chairman's Statement of the 42<sup>nd</sup> ASEAN Summit and thanked Indonesia for the invitation extended to the Chair of IORA as the Guest of the Chair at the 18<sup>th</sup> East Asia Summit.

**16.2 Candidature of Mauritius to the UNESCO and UNWTO (Mauritius)**

*Outcome:* The CSO noted Mauritius' candidature to the following United Nations bodies:

- a. Executive Board of the United Nations Economic, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) for the period 2023-2027.
- b. Executive Council of United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) for period of 2023-2027.
- c. Chairmanship of the UNWTO Regional Commission for Africa (CAF) for the period 2023-2025.

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

*Outcome:* The CSO noted the concluding remarks of the IORA Secretary-General, the IORA Past Chair, the IORA Vice Chair, and the IORA Chair.

The CSO requested the IORA Secretariat to share the draft decision report by 19 June 2023 with all registered delegates, for inputs by 26 June 2023, noting that no response constitutes agreement. The final decision report approved by the Chair will be shared with all IORA Member States for further implementation.

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