IORA Summit Meeting: Invigorating Indian Ocean Regionalism?

Dr. Amit Kumar *

The Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA), formally known as Indian Ocean Rim- Association for Regional Cooperation (IOR-ARC), held the first-ever summit meeting of leaders in Jakarta on March 07, 2017 in Jakarta, Indonesia. The theme of the Summit was “Strengthening Maritime Cooperation for a Peaceful, Stable, and Prosperous Indian Ocean”. The Summit was organised on the occasion of 20th anniversary of the Association, attended by leaders of 21 IORA member states and its seven dialogue partners as well as other special invitees.

Shri M. Hamid Ansari, Vice President of India, represented India at the Summit. Mr. Joko Widodo, President of Indonesia, Mr. Jacob Zuma, President of South Africa, Mr. Maithripala Sirisena, President of Sri Lanka, Mr. Abdrahbu Mansour Hadi, President of Yemen, and Mr. Mohammad Javad Zarif, Foreign Minister of Iran were among other key participants.

During the Summit, an IORA visionary document the Jakarta Concord- "Promoting Regional Cooperation for a Peaceful, Stable and Prosperous Indian Ocean” (see annexure A) - was signed. The Leader's Summit was preceded by the Council of Ministers (COM) meeting and the Senior Officials Meeting (SOM) on 06 March and 05 March 2017 respectively, during which the IORA Action Plan for next five years (2017-2021) (see annexure B) and the Declaration on Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism were adopted. The Concord supported by IORA Action Plan, is considered as an attempt to augment the cooperation among IORA member states for a peaceful, stable and prosperous Indian Ocean region.

The emerging need for cooperation on sustainable use of ocean resources, growing significance and linkages between Indian and Pacific Oceans, and shifting priorities of countries having border of two oceans - Indian Ocean and Pacific Oceans or Atlantic Ocean- are compelling IORA member states to insert political thrust to invigorate the 20 years old Association. IORA,
since its commencement in 1997 was lacking proper follow up programmes to implement commitments and decisions taken by COM meetings- an apex body of IORA. However, it gathered some momentum during the chairmanship of India in 2011-13 which further continued under the chairmanships of Australia (2013-2015) and Indonesia (2015-2017). But, these sporadic successes were not adequate to invigorate the Association. Now, the Summit, with the renewed commitments, has generated the hope to strengthen IORA.

**The Jakarta Concord supported by IORA Action Plan: Focus on Deliverables**

The Jakarta Concord is a vision document to provide the roadmap for future cooperation among the member states and dialogue partners for a peaceful, stable and prosperous Indian Ocean region. Besides preserving IORA’s six priorities areas, the Concord comprises guidelines for ‘cross cutting issues and priority objectives’ such as development of the Blue Economy, empowering women in the economy, promoting gender equality, strengthening institutions, good governance and broadening its external engagement.²

The six priority areas are: Maritime Safety and Security; Trade and Investment Facilitation; Fisheries Management; Disaster Risk Reduction; Academic and S&T Cooperation; and Tourism Promotion and Cultural Exchanges. IORA identified these six core priority areas during the 11th Council of Ministers meeting held on 15 November 2011 in Bengaluru, India, with the aim to create common ground for regional economic cooperation and promote sustainable development.

The Concord is well supported by the IORA Action Plan which is set to embark with short term, medium term and long term plans. Underlining the importance of IORA Action Plan, Indonesian Foreign Minister Retno Marsudi said, “The Action Plan was a significant milestone in IORA’s journey, and it was the first action plan since the establishment of the association 20 years ago.”³

**Six Priority Areas**

a) **Maritime Safety and Security**

The Jakarta Concord outlines IORA commitments to promote **Maritime Safety and Security in the region by**⁴:

- enhancing cooperation in preventing and managing accidents and incidents at sea and promoting effective coordination between IORA member states’ aeronautical and maritime search and rescue services;
- encouraging the sharing of expertise and resources to reduce substandard shipping and manage risks to the safety of vessels and the marine environments of the Indian Ocean region;
- strengthening regional cooperation to address trans-boundary challenges, including piracy, armed robberies at sea, terrorism, trafficking in persons, people smuggling, irregular movement of persons, illicit drugs trafficking, illicit trafficking in wildlife, crimes in the fisheries sector, and environmental crimes; and
• ensuring that countries in the region can exercise freedom of navigation and over flight in accordance with international law, including UNCLOS, as constitution for the Oceans.

**IORA action plan to realise the commitments**

**Short Term Plan:**

- Establish an IORA Working Group on Maritime Safety and Security
- Enhance cooperation with the United Nations Offices and Agencies to support the IORA Working Group in addressing common safety and security challenges
- Encourage Member States to sign the IORA MOU on Search and Rescue
- Explore the establishment of the Maritime Institute of Malaysia as an IORA Centre of Excellence for Maritime Safety and Security

**Mid Term Plan:**

- Implement training and capacity building programs
- Implement IORA MOU on Search and Rescue
- Explore further proposals for establishing IORA Centres of Excellence for Maritime Safety and Security.

**Long Term Plan:**

- Explore a regional surveillance network of existing Member States institutions including sharing of data and exchange of information on maritime transportation systems.

**Comments:**

- The Action plan reflects IORA priorities to reinitiate the agenda of maritime safety and security with some unfinished and new proposals that seem to be deliverable in an explicit time framework.
- The Jakarta Concord, well supported by IORA Action Plan, is primarily aimed to complete the unfinished agendas committed in past COM meetings. For example, the idea of establishing IORA Centres of Excellence had come up in the Tehran Communiqué (2008) and Sana’a Communiqué (2010). Perth Communiqué released on 1 November 2013, encourages member states to broaden and deepen efforts to maintain freedom of navigation/high seas consistent with the UN Convention on the Law of the Seas (UNCLOS).6
- However, the Concord and the Action plan have missed some key proposals of the past. Neither the Concord nor the Action Plan has any reference of cooperation with Indian Ocean Naval Symposium (IONS) and extra regional navies to promote peace and security in the region.7
b) Trade and Investment Facilitation:

The Jakarta Concord outlines IORA commitments to enhance *Trade and Investment* in the region by:

- encouraging greater intra-IORA flow of goods, services, investment, and technology as a stimulus to further develop and grow our economies sustainably;
- exploring ways to improve the production capacity, competitiveness, and value addition of products from the region;
- promoting public-private partnership in infrastructure development;
- strengthening the involvement of the private sector, in particular SMEs, through regular dialogues and interactions between Governments and businesses, including women-owned businesses;
- continuing regulatory reforms to encourage competitiveness and innovation and promote ease of doing business;
- improving connectivity (institutional, physical, and people-to-people) in the Indian Ocean region, including facilitating the movement of businesspersons;
- recognising the importance to regional economic growth and skills development of producing value added goods and increasing participation in global value chains;
- promoting shipping, ports, transport and logistics alliances within the region and with other regions in the world; and
- encouraging the development of standards suitable to IORA Member States, taking into account international and national standards

**IORA action plan to realise the commitments**

**Short Term Plan:**

- Organise capacity building and technical support on regional trade and investment with a focus on the facilitation and reducing of barriers to trade including through closer collaboration with the Working Group on Trade and Investment (WGTI)
- Strengthen regional cooperation for promotion of SMEs
- Establish an IORA online platform (entitled 'IORA Trade Repository') to provide information on tariffs and rules of origin to assist and improve trade and business facilitation
- Establish IORA Guide for Investment to help promote investment

**Medium Term Plan:**

- Revitalise Indian Ocean Rim Business Forum (IORBF) as a platform to share information on trade and investment and strengthen linkages between WGTI, IORA Chambers of Commerce and private sector
• Explore the possibilities of promotion and cooperation in the field of financial services among Member States

Long Term Plan:

• Explore the feasibility of an IORA Business Travel Card (IBTC) to enhance economic integration amongst IORA Member States

Comments:

• The Concord encourages IORA member states to develop better connectivity (institutional, physical, and people-to-people) in the Indian Ocean region. But, IORA Action Plan has not revealed any idea or plan to strengthen the physical connectivity. Inadequate infrastructure in the region is hampering regional growth, particularly, restricting intra and inter regional trade, and the development of the Blue Economy.

c) Fisheries Management

The Jakarta Concord outlines IORA commitments to promote Sustainable and Responsible Fisheries Management and Development by:

• enhancing science-based management and conservation of marine living resources, including through supporting and strengthening the work of Regional Fisheries Management Organisations (RFMOs), and enhancing regional and international mechanism to combat IUU fishing;
• promoting environmentally sustainable practices in aquaculture, marine capture fisheries, and post-harvest technology.
• increasing technical assistance and capacity building in fostering and strengthening protection and preservation of the coastal and marine environment; and
• supporting measures to increase the capacity of small-scale fishers in line with sustainable fisheries practices so as to promote and facilitate trade in fish and fisheries products as well as the access of this products in global markets in order to improve their livelihoods.

IORA action plan to realise the commitments

Short Term Plan:

• Revitalise the FSU through implementation of the FSU Action Plan
• Sign an MOU with FAO and IOTC to develop regional fisheries management and information sharing

Medium Term Plan:

• Implement joint capacity building projects with FAO and relevant organisations including aquaculture to address food security
Long Term Plan:
- Explore an IORA Mechanism to combat illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing

d) Disaster Risk Reduction

The Jakarta Concord outlines IORA commitments to enhance *Disaster Risk Management in the region* by:\(^3\):

- acknowledging the vulnerability of coastal and Small Island Developing States due to climate change and ocean acidification and working together to implement the provisions of the Paris Agreement on climate change;
- strengthening regional disaster preparedness, community resilience, and disaster risk management in accordance with the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction\(^4\);
- improving geodetic data-sharing, methods and infrastructure and further developing integrated early warning systems in the region for forecasting and communicating disaster-related risks and hazards; and
- Enhancing cooperation with stakeholders in addressing issues related to disaster and climate change through capacity building including sharing of information, experiences and best practices to improve community resilience to minimize disruption of economic activities.

**IORA action plan to realise the commitments\(^5\)**

Short Term Plan:

- Enhance cooperation with the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission (IOC-UNESCO) and other multilateral organisations and agencies

Medium Term Plan:

- Explore creation of an IORA Centre of Excellence for Disaster Risk Management for sharing information, expertise and best practice. Implement training and capacity building programs

Long Term Plan:

- Develop resiliency through early warning systems, regional exercises, and training for coordinated disaster risk reduction

**Comments:**

- Beside capacity building and knowledge sharing IORA needs to establish IORA disaster management and training centres.
- There is no fresh commitment to establish cooperation to deal with problems of oil spills and marine pollutions ( Bengaluru Communique, 2011).
e) Academic, Science and Technology Cooperation

The Jakarta Concord outlines IORA commitments to strengthen Academic, Science and Technology Cooperation by16:

- increase scientific knowledge, develop research capacity and transfer marine technology, among research and development institutions and academics;
- increasing opportunities for accessible and affordable 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);
- 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; and
- strengthening the IORA-Regional Centre for Science & Technology Transfer (IORA-RCSTT) and the Fisheries Support Unit (FSU) to better perform their mandate

IORA action plan to realise the commitments17

Short Term Plan:

- Strengthen the Indian Ocean Rim Academic Group (IORAG)
- Strengthen Regional Centre for Science and Technology Transfer (RCSTT)
- Institutionalise the Indian Ocean Dialogue as an annual mechanism for multi-sector and 1.5 track engagement
- Create a data base of higher educational institutes recognized by IORA Member States

Medium Term Plan:

- Strengthen cooperation with universities in the Indian Ocean, including the University Mobility in the Indian Ocean Region (UMIOR)
- Support RCSTT to promote science and technology
- Strengthen the Indian Ocean Rim Academic Group (IORAG) through the sharing of information and knowledge Implement training and capacity building programs
- Conduct a feasibility study of an Indian Ocean Technical and Vocational University in Bangladesh

Long Term Plan:

- Explore cooperation projects with the International Solar Alliance and IRENA

Comments:

- The implementation of e-Government, Communication, and Technology (ICT) solutions in the region are now priority for IORA. Poor digital infrastructures in majority of the
IORA countries is hampering intra regional and inter regional trade, as it preventing smooth access to regional and global market.

f) Tourism Promotion and Cultural Exchanges

The Concord outlines IORA commitments to foster *Tourism and Cultural Exchanges* by:

- increasing people-to-people interaction to promote regional economic growth;
- encouraging the sustainable development of community-based tourism and eco-tourism;
- promoting cultural heritage and harnessing the economic potential of this heritage, including World Heritage properties and sites;
- cooperating and sharing experiences for the sustainable development of tourism; and
- Augmenting regional connectivity by encouraging direct flights and shipping services including cruises by encouraging investment in requisite infrastructure.

IORA action plan to realise the commitments:

Short Term Plan:
- Establish a Core Group for Tourism
- Strengthen the Core Group for Culture

Medium Term Plan:
- Conduct feasibility studies to explore the potential of cruise tourism
- Establish an IORA Tourism Resource Centre and Website in the Sultanate of Oman

Long Term Plan:
- Develop joint capacity building projects in tourism including community-based tourism for poverty reduction, cultural heritage and eco-tourism

Cross Cutting Issues

The Jakarta Concord outlines IORA commitments to harness and develop cross cutting issues and priority objectives by:

- developing the opportunity of the oceans by promoting the Blue Economy as a key source of inclusive economic growth, job creation and education, based on the evidence-based sustainable management of marine resources;
- 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.
- enhancing cooperation in promoting the culture of democracy, good governance, combating corruption, promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms.

IORA action plan to realise the commitments

i) Blue Economy

Short Term Plan:

- Establish an IORA Working Group on the Blue Economy
- Implement the outcomes of the Blue Economy Core Group Workshops as well as Ministerial and High-level Expert Meetings

Medium Term Plan:

- Develop appropriate mechanisms of cooperation for sustainable development of blue economy sectors, including training and capacity building programs

Long Term Plan:

- Improve livelihoods of coastal communities through capacity building programs

ii) Promoting gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls

Short Term Plan:

- Establish an IORA Working Group on Women’s Economic Empowerment
- Establish a Women’s Business Forum in the Indian Ocean Rim Business Forum (IORBF)

Medium Term Plan:

- Establish cooperation with UN-Women and relevant organisations for capacity building and information exchange
- Champion initiatives to increase women’s economic empowerment such as the Women’s Empowerment Principles
- Implement training and capacity building programs

Long Term Plan:

- Organise activities and to strengthen women’s economic capacity and participation in business

IORA’s External Engagement

The Concord outlines IORA commitments to broadening and strengthening IORA’s External Engagement by:
enhancing and deepening cooperation with Dialogue Partners, including sharing of technical expertise and other resources for mutual benefit;
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;
expanding and deepening engagement with non-government stakeholders, including civil society, chambers of commerce, media and youth of the region in order to enhance people to people interaction for mutual understanding, trust and community-building in the region.
providing adequate resources to the IORA Secretariat; and
enhancing and strengthening the role of IORA specialized agencies.

The Action Plan

Short Term Plan:

- Strengthen the IORA Secretariat's capacity to support Member States and deepen regional cooperation
- Strengthen the administration and functioning of the IORA Special Fund (SF) to implement sustainable development programs
- Establish cooperation with other regional bodies such as the African Union (AU) and ASEAN

Medium Term Plan:

- Conduct public diplomacy and outreach programs
- Strengthen engagement with Dialogue Partners through concrete collaboration
- Hold Ministerial, High-level or Expert meetings as required to promote IORA’s priority and cross-cutting area

Long Term Plan:

- Deepen collaboration amongst academic, business, government, civil society as well as regional and multilateral bodies
- Explore the establishment of the IORA Development Fund

Comments:

- The Concord reaffirmed IORA commitment to broaden IORA’s external engagement by enhancing and deepening cooperation with Dialogue Partners.
- IORA Concord and Action Plan reflect IORA future commitment to look beyond the definitional aspects of the Blue Economy. There was repeated demand from some IORA member states to augment engagement with IORA dialogue partners.
Assimilation of Priorities

The Jakarta Concord which forms the basis of future cooperation for IORA member states, in fact, is an assimilation of various priorities raised by member states time to time. The analysis of the speeches of leaders of IORA countries at the Summit reflects important priorities of each member states. Key priorities of small Island States does not necessarily match the priorities of big states, expectation from African countries might be different from Australia and Southeast Asian countries. To underscore the key priorities of different member states, in the following paragraphs, the key points of the select speeches of leaders of IORA countries delivered at the Summit have been highlighted.

The speech of Vice President of India Mohammad Hamid Ansari reflects India’s priorities attached with the three key prerequisite for development in the region, maritime safety and security, freedom of navigation and over flight in maritime space in accordance with international laws, and zero tolerance for state sponsored terrorism.

Underlining the importance of safe and secure maritime environment, Vice President said, “The IORA Concord we sign today is a milestone document that underscores the criticality of maritime safety and security. India shares the vision for a peaceful region and the seas around us. We believe that our ocean must be protected from traditional and non-traditional threats, particularly piracy. All using these international waters must act with responsibility and restraint.”

The Vice President also highlighted the significance of institutionalising cooperative mechanism for maritime safety and security. He said, “Maritime safety and security can be reinforced by institutionalising cooperative mechanisms such as White Shipping Agreements and by setting up an Information Fusion Centre for strengthening Maritime Domain Awareness (MDA). My Government would be happy to host such a centre in India, with our in-house expertise supplemented by support from IORA member countries”.

Identifying terrorism as one of the major impediments for the development, he said, “today, terrorism has become the major impediment to development and threatens all pluralist and open societies. No cause justifies the indiscriminate killing of innocent civilians. IORA must show zero tolerance for State sponsored terrorism.” Vice President announced Government of India’s decision to explore an option for IORA centre of excellence in one of the coastal cities of India. Unveiling India’s cultural linkages with Indian Ocean countries, he declared ‘Project Mausam’ and recently launched ‘Kalinga- Indonesia dialogue’ as welcome initiatives to ‘rekindle’ India’s cultural linkages to Indian Ocean countries. Vice President proposed a network of IORA think tanks and announced Government of India’s intention to establish an ‘IORA Centre of Excellence’ in one of the coastal cities of India. Reiterating Government of India’s commitment towards the region, he said, “the Action plan adopted today is a vision of our shared priorities. India stands committed to working with other members to realize the region’s untapped potential and to ensure that the Indian Ocean becomes a zone of prosperity and harmony.”
In his speech, the **South African President Jacob Zuma** highlighted Ocean Economy development as one of the key priorities. He said, “the leaders of the Indian Ocean Rim Association have correctly adopted the Blue or Ocean Economy as a top priority for generating employment and ensuring sustainability in business and economic models.” In his concluding remarks at the Summit, President Zuma asserted that during South Africa’s tenure as a chair of IORA, the key focus will be on Ocean Economy. Highlighting the need for cooperation on development of Ocean Economy, President Zuma said, “there is a need for us to not only optimise and develop country Ocean Economy Strategies. We must also appreciate the need for Regional initiatives within our sub-Regions of the Indian Ocean Rim Association.” He asserted on the need for more cooperation among member states and dialogue partners to find innovative way to share knowledge and capacity building.

**Joko Widodo, President of the Republic of Indonesia** advocated the need to address national interests to establish cooperation at international level. He said, “Each nation should prioritise its nationalism. Asserting the need to establish international cooperation to address national interests, the president said nationalism would not survive without internationalism.” President further said that Empowering of women, technological cooperation, environmental problem are key issues that need urgent attention.

During her address in the IORA Leader’s Summit, **Prime Minister of Bangladesh, Sheikh Hasina** called for enhanced maritime cooperation, regional unity and sustainable use of ocean resources. She said ‘If blue economy were to guide our economics in future then we should use our seas to promote friendship and curb tension in the region, respect freedom of navigation and cooperate through the mechanism of IORA,’ she said. Like India, she also urged IORA leaders to work to ensure maritime safety and security and combat terrorism in the region.

**Sri Lankan President Maithripala Sirisena** in his speech urged leaders of IORA countries to work together to form “a stable legal order to confront with the issue of illicit drugs, in conformity with the principles of the freedom of navigation.” President Sirisena recommended IORA to initiate dialogue with SAARC and ASEAN. Recognising the importance of safe and secure maritime environment, he said, “it is in our interest to ensure the safety and security of the Indian Ocean and its lanes of communications, and establish by consent of the people involved, an agreement for a peaceful maritime security space, and strengthen Maritime Security cooperation for our mutual benefit.”

**The Vice President of Seychelles Vincent Meriton** "emphasised the need to promote actionable Sustainable Development programmes and regional partnerships on Blue Economy, Blue Carbon and marine pollution in the region." **Iranian Foreign Minister, Mohammad-Javad Zarif**, urged the need for special attention to maintain safety and security in the Indian Ocean region. He said, “it was important that IORA in its implementing frameworks gives special attention to improving the safety and security as well as to prevent maritime pollution.” Showing concern over growing violent extremism in the region, he said, “our region is also increasingly plagued by extremist violence and terrorism. We therefore fully support the initiative
of our Indonesian hosts to adopt a Declaration on Countering Violent Extremism Leading to Terrorism.”

Underlining the importance of peaceful, secure and stable Ocean, Australian Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull, said, "A secure, stable and connected Indian Ocean is crucial for Australia’s national security and prosperity". Looking beyond its precedence to promote technical and economic cooperation in IORA, Australia needs to sharpen its strategic objectives, PM further said.

The analysis of key speeches/addresses of leaders of IORA suggests that despite the differences of priorities, IORA member countries have been able to develop some converging views. Maritime safety & security has been common and core concern for IORA countries. The IORA member states also agreed to support each other and work together to combat the threat from terrorism and violent extremism.

The IORA Jakarta Concord and the IORA Action Plan which provide comprehensive and essential guidelines to pursue the future agenda, have been able to generate the needed political thrust to enhance the cooperation in the region. To sustain the momentum, the Association needs to work collectively to pursue the commitments of the Jakarta Concord. Most of the commitments and plans mentioned in the Concord and the Action Plan respectively are repetition of old unfinished agendas predominantly undelivered in the past. To convert commitments into reality, IORA needs to learn from past mistakes. The primary requisite to maintain the thrust built after the first ever Summit meeting will be a timely execution of the Action Plan.

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*Dr. Amit Kumar is Research Fellow with the Indian Council of World Affairs, New Delhi.
Disclaimer: Views expressed are of author and do not reflect the views of the Council.

End Notes

10 Ibid.
14 "The Sendai Framework is a 15-year, voluntary, non-binding agreement which recognizes that the State has the primary role to reduce disaster risk but that responsibility should be shared with other stakeholders including local government, the private sector and other stakeholders." “The Sendai Framework was adopted by UN Member States on 18 March 2015 at the Third UN World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction in Sendai City, Miyagi Prefecture, Japan.” See, Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction, http://www.unisdr.org/we/coordinate/sendai-framework.
26 Remarks by Vice President at the 1st IORA Leaders' Summit in Jakarta (March 07, 2017), http://mea.gov.in/outgoing-visit- detail.htm?id=28119/Remarks+by+Vice+President+at+the+1st+IORA+Leaders+Summit+in+Jakarta+March+07+2017, Accessed on March 10, 2017
27 Ibid.
28 Ibid.
29 Ibid.
37 Ibid.

14 | www.icwa.in


Annexure A

JAKARTA CONCORD

THE INDIAN OCEAN RIM ASSOCIATION: PROMOTING REGIONAL COOPERATION FOR A PEACEFUL, STABLE AND PROSPEROUS INDIAN OCEAN

1. We the Heads of State/Government, and other representatives, of the Member States of the Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA): the Commonwealth of Australia, the People’s Republic of Bangladesh, the Union of Comoros, the Republic of India, the Republic of Indonesia, the Islamic Republic of Iran, the Republic of Kenya, the Republic of Madagascar, Malaysia, the Republic of Mauritius, the Republic of Mozambique, the Sultanate of Oman, the Republic of Seychelles, the Republic of Singapore, the Federal Republic of Somalia, the Republic of South Africa, the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka, the United Republic of Tanzania, the Kingdom of Thailand, the United Arab Emirates and the Republic of Yemen on the occasion of the Leaders’ Summit held in commemoration of the 20th anniversary of the IORA held in Jakarta, Indonesia;

2. Recalling the fundamental principles and objectives of the IORA Charter;

3. Adhering to the rights and obligations under international law including those under the Charter of the United Nations and the 1982 UN Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS);

4. Recalling also the United Nations General Assembly Resolution 2832 (XXVI) on the “Declaration of the Indian Ocean as a Zone of Peace” to maintain peace and stability in the region and to establish the Zone of Peace;

5. Emphasising our commitment to the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development on strengthening our cooperation that no one will be left behind in the achievement of sustained growth and sustainable development in this strategically vital region;

6. Noting the historical and cultural bonds among our peoples and the diversity of the peoples in the region, which offer vast opportunities to enhance various areas of economic cooperation; 7. Respecting the principles of sovereign equality, territorial integrity, political independence, non-interference in internal affairs of other states, peaceful co-existence and mutual benefit guiding relations and interactions among IORA Member States;
8. Recognizing the achievements of the past 20 years of IORA and the opportunities we have to build on these and to address common challenges facing the Indian Ocean, for the welfare of our future generations;

9. Affirming our commitment to build a more peaceful, stable and prosperous Indian Ocean region through enhanced cooperation, including but not limited to the six priority areas: maritime safety and security; trade and investment facilitation; fisheries management; disaster risk management; academic, science and technology cooperation; tourism and cultural exchanges; and the cross-cutting issue of women’s empowerment;

10. Recognising the importance of moderation as an approach to counter all forms of extremism and promote dialogue, mutual respect, understanding, and social harmony, thereby contributing towards the achievement of sustainable and inclusive development, equitable growth, stability and prosperity in the Indian Ocean Region;

11. Convinced of the significance of the Blue Economy as a driver of inclusive and sustainable economic growth and development in the Indian Ocean region;

12. Acknowledging that the coastal areas and maritime waters of the Indian Ocean bind the region together and link it to other regions of the world, and that it is therefore essential to maintain maritime safety and security for peace, stability and sustainable economic growth and development in the region;

13. Reaffirming that gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls are central to realising inclusive and sustainable economic growth;

14. Recognising the importance of Dialogue Partners to advance the objectives of the Association; and

15. Underscoring the importance of regional synergies and cooperation to promote peace, stability and prosperity.

OBJECTIVES

16. We commit ourselves to:

a. Promoting Maritime Safety and Security in the region by:

   • enhancing cooperation in preventing and managing accidents and incidents at sea and promoting effective coordination between IORA member states’ aeronautical and maritime search and rescue services;
   • encouraging the sharing of expertise and resources to reduce substandard shipping and manage risks to the safety of vessels and the marine environments of the Indian Ocean region;
   • strengthening regional cooperation to address transboundary challenges, including piracy, armed robberies at sea, terrorism, trafficking in persons, people smuggling,
irregular movement of persons, illicit drugs trafficking, illicit trafficking in wildlife, crimes in the fisheries sector, and environmental crimes; and

- ensuring that countries in the region can exercise freedom of navigation and overflight in accordance with international law, including UNCLOS, as constitution for the Oceans.

b. Enhancing Trade and Investment cooperation in the region by:

- encouraging greater intra-IORA flow of goods, services, investment, and technology as a stimulus to further develop and grow our economies sustainably;
- exploring ways to improve the production capacity, competitiveness, and value addition of products from the region;
- promoting public-private partnership in infrastructure development;
- strengthening the involvement of the private sector, in particular SMEs, through regular dialogues and interactions between Governments and businesses, including women owned businesses;
- continuing regulatory reforms to encourage competitiveness and innovation and promote ease of doing business;
- improving connectivity (institutional, physical, and people-to-people) in the Indian Ocean region, including facilitating the movement of businesspersons;
- recognising the importance to regional economic growth and skills development of producing value added goods and increasing participation in global value chains;
- promoting shipping, ports, transport and logistic alliances within the region and with other regions in the world; and
- encouraging the development of standards suitable to IORA Member States, taking into account international and national standards.

c. Promoting sustainable and responsible fisheries management and development by:

- enhancing science-based management and conservation of marine living resources, including through supporting and strengthening the work of Regional Fisheries Management Organisations (RFMOs), and enhancing regional and international mechanism to combat IUU fishing;
- promoting environmentally sustainable practices in aquaculture, marine capture fisheries, and post-harvest technology.
- increasing technical assistance and capacity building in fostering and strengthening protection and preservation of the coastal and marine environment; and
- supporting measures to increase the capacity of small-scale fishers in line with sustainable fisheries practices so as to promote and facilitate trade in fish and fisheries products as well as the access of this products in global markets in order to improve their livelihoods.

d. Enhancing disaster risk management in the region by:
• acknowledging the vulnerability of coastal and Small Island Developing States due to climate change and ocean acidification and working together to implement the provisions of the Paris Agreement on climate change;
• strengthening regional disaster preparedness, community resilience, and disaster risk management in accordance with the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction;
• improving geodetic data-sharing, methods and infrastructure and further developing integrated early warning systems in the region for forecasting and communicating disaster-related risks and hazards; and
• Enhancing cooperation with stakeholders in addressing issues related to disaster and climate change through capacity building including sharing of information, experiences and best practices to improve community resilience to minimize disruption of economic activities.

e. Strengthening academic, science and technology cooperation by:

• increase scientific knowledge, develop research capacity and transfer marine technology, among research and development institutions and academics;
• increasing opportunities for accessible and affordable 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);
• 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; and
• strengthening the IORA-Regional Centre for Science & Technology Transfer (IORA-RCSTT) and the Fisheries Support Unit (FSU) to better perform their mandates.

f. Fostering tourism and cultural exchanges by:

• increasing people-to-people interaction to promote regional economic growth;
• encouraging the sustainable development of community-based tourism and eco-tourism;
• promoting cultural heritage and harnessing the economic potential of this heritage, including World Heritage properties and sites;
• cooperating and sharing experiences for the sustainable development of tourism; and
• augmenting regional connectivity by encouraging direct flights and shipping services including cruises by encouraging investment in requisite infrastructure.

g. Harnessing and developing cross cutting issues and priority objectives by:

• developing the opportunity of the oceans by promoting the Blue Economy as a key source of inclusive economic growth, job creation and education, based on the evidence-based sustainable management of marine resources;
• 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.

- enhancing cooperation in promoting the culture of democracy, good governance, combating corruption, promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms.

h. Broadening IORA’s external engagement by:

- enhancing and deepening cooperation with Dialogue Partners, including sharing of technical expertise and other resources for mutual benefit;
- 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; and
- expanding and deepening engagement with non-government stakeholders, including civil society, chambers of commerce, media and youth of the region in order to enhance people-to-people interaction for mutual understanding, trust and community-building in the region.

i. Strengthening IORA’s institutions by:

- providing adequate resources to the IORA Secretariat; and
- enhancing and strengthening the role of IORA specialized agencies.

We do hereby acknowledge:

17. The contribution of the Secretariat to managing, coordinating and implementing the policy decisions and work programmes of IORA.

18. The IORA Action Plan that was welcomed by the Council of Ministers Meeting in Jakarta, Indonesia in March 2017 which is in the spirit of the IORA Concord.

19. The Government of the Republic of Indonesia, as the current Chair of IORA, for the leadership and initiative to hold the First IORA Leaders’ Summit and the excellent hospitality and arrangements for the 20th Anniversary Celebrations.

(Source: [http://www.kemlu.go.id/Buku/JAKARTA%20CONCORD_FINAL_not%20signed.pdf](http://www.kemlu.go.id/Buku/JAKARTA%20CONCORD_FINAL_not%20signed.pdf))
## Annexure B

### IORA Action Plan 2017-2021

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Priority Area</th>
<th>Short-Term</th>
<th>Medium-Term</th>
<th>Long-Term</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Maritime Safety and Security - Promoting Maritime Safety and Security in the Region</strong></td>
<td>Establish an IORA Working Group on Maritime Safety and Security</td>
<td>Implement training and capacity building programs</td>
<td>Explore a regional surveillance network of existing Member States institutions including sharing of data and exchange of information on maritime transportation systems.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Enhance cooperation with the United Nations Offices and Agencies to support the IORA Working Group in addressing common safety and security challenges</td>
<td>Implement IORA MOU on Search and Rescue</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Encourage Member States to sign the IORA MOU on Search and Rescue</td>
<td>Explore further proposals for establishing IORA Centres of Excellence for Maritime Safety and Security</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Explore the establishment of the Maritime Institute of Malaysia as an IORA Centre of Excellence for Maritime Safety and Security</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Trade and Investment Facilitation - Enhancing trade and investment cooperation in the region</strong></td>
<td>Organise capacity building and technical support on regional trade and investment with a focus on the facilitation and reducing of barriers to trade including through closer collaboration with the Working Group on Trade and Investment (WGTI)</td>
<td>Revitalise Indian Ocean Rim Business Forum (IORBF) as a platform to share information on trade and investment and strengthen linkages between WGTI, IORA Chambers of Commerce and private sector</td>
<td>Explore the feasibility of an IORA Business Travel Card (IBTC) to enhance economic integration amongst IORA Member States</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Strengthen regional cooperation for promotion of SMEs</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Establish an IORA online platform (entitled</td>
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<tr>
<td>FISHERIES MANAGEMENT - Promoting sustainable and responsible fisheries management and development</td>
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<tr>
<td>Revitalise the FSU through implementation of the FSU Action Plan</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sign an MOU with FAO and IOTC to develop regional fisheries management and information sharing</td>
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<td>Establish IORA Guide for Investment to help promote investment</td>
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<tr>
<th>DISASTER RISK MANAGEMENT - to improve resilience and responses to disaster risk management</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Enhance cooperation with the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission (IOC-UNESCO) and other multilateral organisations and agencies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Explore creation of an IORA Centre of Excellence for Disaster Risk Management for sharing information, expertise and best practice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Implement training and capacity building programs</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ACADEMIC, SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY COOPERATION - Strengthening academic, science and technology cooperation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strengthen the Indian Ocean Rim Academic Group (IORAG)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strengthen Regional Centre for Science and Technology Transfer (RCSTT)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Institutionalise the Indian Ocean Dialogue as an annual mechanism for multi-sector and 1.5 track engagement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Create a data base of higher educational</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<p>| Implement joint capacity building projects with FAO and relevant organisations including aquaculture to address food security |
| Explore an IORA Mechanism to combat illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing |
| Develop resiliency through early warning systems, regional exercises, and training for coordinated disaster risk reduction |
| Strengthen cooperation with universities in the Indian Ocean, including the University Mobility in the Indian Ocean Region (UMIOR) |
| Support RCSTT to promote science and technology |
| Strengthen the Indian Ocean Rim Academic Group (IORAG) through the sharing of information and knowledge |
| Explore cooperation projects with the International Solar Alliance and IRENA |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tourism and Cultural Exchanges - Fostering tourism and cultural exchanges</th>
<th>Establish a Core Group for Tourism and Strengthen the Core Group for Culture</th>
<th>Implement feasibility studies to explore the potential of cruise tourism and Establish an IORA Tourism Resource Centre and Website in the Sultanate of Oman</th>
<th>Develop joint capacity building projects in tourism including community-based tourism for poverty reduction, cultural heritage and eco-tourism</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Blue Economy - Harnessing and developing the Blue Economy in the Region</td>
<td>Establish an IORA Working Group on the Blue Economy and Implement the outcomes of the Blue Economy Core Group Workshops as well as Ministerial and High-level Expert Meetings</td>
<td>Develop appropriate mechanisms of cooperation for sustainable development of blue economy sectors, including training and capacity building programs</td>
<td>Improve livelihoods of coastal communities through capacity building programs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women’s Economic Empowerment - Promoting gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls</td>
<td>Establish an IORA Working Group on Women’s Economic Empowerment and Establish a Women’s Business Forum in the Indian Ocean Rim Business Forum (IORB)</td>
<td>Establish cooperation with UN-Women and relevant organisations for capacity building and information exchange and Champion initiatives to increase women’s economic empowerment such as the Women’s Empowerment Principles</td>
<td>Organise activities and to strengthen women’s economic capacity and participation in business</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Institutional Arrangements</td>
<td>Strengthen the IORA Secretariat’s capacity to support Member States and Conduct public diplomacy and outreach programs</td>
<td></td>
<td>Deepen collaboration amongst academic, business, government, civil society as well</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In Memorandum of the 20th Anniversary of IORA
Documents for the Council of Ministers (COM) Meeting

ICRA Secretariat
Jakarta, Indonesia, 6 March 2017

Institute recognized by IORA Member States
Implement training and capacity building programs
Conduct a feasibility study of an Indian Ocean Technical and Vocational University in Bangladesh
| AND BROADENING ENGAGEMENT – Strengthening the IORA Secretariat and its collaboration with stakeholders | deepen regional cooperation  
Strengthen the administration and functioning of the IORA Special Fund (SF) to implement sustainable development programs  
Establish cooperation with other regional bodies such as the African Union (AU) and ASEAN | Strengthen engagement with Dialogue Partners through concrete collaboration  
Hold Ministerial, High-level or Expert meetings as required to promote IORA’s priority and cross-cutting areas | as regional and multilateral bodies  
Explore the establishment of the IORA Development Fund |