



Durban Communiqué: The 17th Meeting of the Council of Ministers of the Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA), Durban, South Africa, 18 October 2017

1. We, the Ministers and Heads of Delegation of the Member States of the Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA), Australia, Bangladesh, Comoros, India, Indonesia, Iran, Kenya, Madagascar, Malaysia, Mauritius, Mozambique, Oman, Seychelles, Singapore, Somalia, South Africa, Sri Lanka, Tanzania, Thailand, United Arab Emirates and Yemen met in Durban, South Africa for the 17th Meeting of the Council of Ministers (COM) on 18 October 2017. The Meeting was held in a collaborative spirit and shared responsibility in responding to common efforts to unleash the region's potential for a more peaceful, stable and prosperous Indian Ocean region.
2. We represent one of the most diverse and geo-strategically important regions of the world, with a heterogeneous mix of developed, developing, Least Developed Countries and Small Island Developing States.
3. We commend Indonesia's sterling efforts during its Chair of IORA (2015 – 2017), including the hosting of the first IORA Leaders' Summit to commemorate IORA's twentieth (20th) anniversary on 7 March 2017. The Summit's adoption and signing of the Jakarta Concord and the IORA Action Plan 2017-2021 elevated the Association's profile and stature to a significantly higher level, and charts the way forward for the Association into the next decade as it strives for greater peace, stability and development through enhanced cooperation.
4. We welcome South Africa as the new IORA Chair, and the United Arab Emirates as Vice Chair, of the Association for the period 2017-2019. We note with appreciation that South Africa has adopted "IORA: Uniting the peoples of Africa, Asia, Australasia and the Middle East through enhanced cooperation for peace, stability and sustainable development" as the theme for its Chair. We assure South Africa of our full support and cooperation to ensure the success of IORA during its tenure as Chair.
5. Recognising the importance of deepening regional cooperation and intensifying economic integration, particularly through the promotion of, and support for, small and medium enterprises, we welcome the opening for signature of the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) for Promotion of Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs).
6. We support the deliberations held during the 19th IORA Committee of Senior Officials, the 17th IORA Working Group on Trade and Investment, the 23rd Indian Ocean Rim Business Forum and the 23rd Indian Ocean Rim Academic Group Meeting, and welcome the concrete recommendations that came out of these deliberations.
7. We reaffirm our commitment to gender equality and women's economic empowerment, which is a cross-cutting issue and further welcome the increased number of projects and programmes focused on women's economic empowerment, which support the gender mainstreaming approach adopted in the IORA Action Plan 2017-2021. We support the creation of the Working Group on Women's Economic Empowerment, as set out in the IORA Action Plan 2017 - 2021.
8. We underlined the importance of addressing security challenges in the region. Therefore, we support the establishment of the Working Group on Maritime Safety and Security.

9. We support the establishment of the Working Group on the Blue Economy as a means to strengthening the Blue Economy as a common source of growth and development, innovation and job creation. We task the Working Group to develop a Master Plan on the Blue Economy to identify and prioritise concrete projects and tangible areas of cooperation, to promote the Blue Economy as a driver for socio-economic development.

10. We appreciate the convening of the Second IORA Ministerial Blue Economy Conference (BEC-II) that was held in Jakarta, Indonesia from 8-10 May, which signalled the firm commitment of Member States to mobilise and identify funds for executing projects towards the Blue Economy and its related sectors and to translate our commitments into action on the ground.

11. We note the increase in IORA activities under the Special Fund and call on all Member States and Dialogue Partners to make contributions to the Special Fund. We encourage Member States to utilise the Special Fund for effective implementation of programmes in priority areas of IORA that lead to people-centered development in the region.

12. We fully support the renewed interaction with Dialogue Partners and encourage them to broaden and deepen their engagement with IORA Member States for our mutual development and benefit. To this end, it is noteworthy that our Dialogue Partners are committed to assisting IORA to create a stable and prosperous Indian Ocean region as underlined in the Jakarta Concord.

13. We also encourage further engagement with the UN and its specialized agencies.

14. We appreciate the convening of the Fourth Indian Ocean Dialogue (IOD) that was held in Abu Dhabi from 9-10 October 2017, and the institutionalization of the Dialogue as an IORA mechanism.

15. We express appreciation for the continued implementation of the IORA Sustainable Development Programme (ISDP) in fostering economic development for LDCs and take note of the events hosted to develop capacities and skills.

16. We deplore the continued terrorist attacks across the world, and condemn terrorism in all its forms and manifestations committed by whomever, wherever and for whatever purposes. We reaffirm our solidarity and resolve in the fight against terrorism.

17. We take note that the term of the incumbent Secretary General, Ambassador K.V. Bhagirath, will come to an end at the end of the year, and take this opportunity to thank and congratulate Ambassador Bhagirath for his outstanding and dedicated leadership of the IORA Secretariat over the last 6 years.

18. We congratulate Ambassador Dr Nomvuyo Nokwe on her appointment as the new IORA Secretary General, and look forward to working with the Secretary General designate to take IORA to even greater heights.

19. We thank the IORA Secretariat for the outstanding work and diligent efforts in helping us to advance IORA's aims and activities, as well as IORA Specialized Agencies, namely the Regional Centre for Science and Technology Transfer (RCSTT) and the Fisheries Support Unit (FSU), for their tireless efforts in supporting IORA meetings and programmes.

20. We remain committed to supporting the Secretariat in the execution of its tasks and we also extend our appreciation to the Member States that have seconded officials to the Secretariat and furthermore appeal to Member States to continue to build capacity within the Secretariat.

21. We extend our appreciation to the Government of the Republic of South Africa for hosting the 17th Council of Ministers Meeting and related meetings, and for the excellent arrangements and hospitality extended to us in Durban.

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