



PRESS RELEASE

HIGH- LEVEL STRATEGIC DIALOGUE ON IORA's 25-YEARS: REFLECTION, REVIEW AND RENEWAL

The High-Level Strategic Dialogue on IORA's 25-Years - Reflection, Review & Renewal co-hosted by the Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA) Secretariat and South Africa is being held at the InterContinental Resort, Balaclava, Republic of Mauritius from 20 to 22 June 2023.

IORA is one of the world's largest regional groupings, it links 23 Member States to support regional cooperation in the Indian Ocean region.

The Dialogue provides a platform for IORA's 23 Member States, 10 Dialogue Partners, IORA Fisheries Support Unit, IORA Regional Centre for Science and Transfer of Technology, the Indian Ocean Rim Academic Group and the Indian Ocean Rim Business Forum representatives to reflect on IORA's achievements and future focus.

The dialogue is forward looking, with senior officials able to engage in frank strategic discussions to determine the future direction of the Association to enhance regional cooperation activities in key areas.

The strategic objectives of IORA are to promote trade and investment, enhance maritime safety and security, strengthening the blue economy and fisheries management, disaster risk management, facilitate academic, science and technology cooperation, promote tourism and cultural exchanges and women's economic empowerment.

A key interest to both Member States and Dialogue Partners is Indo-Pacific cooperation through IORA, the dialogue will discuss IORA's Outlook on Indo-Pacific which was adopted in 2022.

This contends that the 'interconnectedness of the Indian and Pacific Oceans is fundamental to understanding the Indo-Pacific region' and notes IORA's 'strong interest in ensuring peace, prosperity, economic cooperation, maritime safety and security, and stability for all the peoples of the Indo-Pacific region'.

Member States and Dialogue Partners will discuss concrete actions to take forward the regional cooperation in the Indo-Pacific through IORA.

Climate change will be a particular focus for discussion. Climate Change is a key issue in the Indian Ocean rim region and is of particular concern to IORA's Small Island Developing States and Least Developed Countries.

During the opening session of the High-Level Strategic Dialogue, H.E Salman Al Farisi, Secretary General of IORA, Professor Sooklal, Ambassador at Large: Asia, BRICS and South Africa's Focal Point: IORA, the current chair of IORA – Bangladesh and the representative of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Regional Integration and International Trade have delivered their remarks.

In his opening remarks Professor Sooklal, Ambassador at Large: Asia, BRICS and South Africa's Focal Point: IORA emphasized that "26-years ago, this is where the founding Member States of IORA convened to consolidate the vision towards the creation of 'the concept of an Indian Ocean Rim for socio-economic co-operation...' in the beautiful island of Mauritius. We are grateful to the Republic of Mauritius for allowing us to grace your outstanding paradise on earth once again to chart a way forward for this august meeting of IORA. The outcomes of this meeting will be a guide towards IORA's Golden Jubilee in 2047. A lot can happen in 25 years and thus we need to ensure that when we depart this beautiful island of Mauritius at the conclusion of the meeting, we do so knowing that the engagements will contribute to the longevity and prosperity of IORA."

The Secretary-General of IORA, H.E Salman Al Farisi added: *"At the end of the meeting, we will develop elements for the Zero draft for "IORA Vision 2030 and Beyond", which is built from the key takeaways of each session. I am certain that that our Dialogue will certainly be enriching and of great value. This Dialogue is very strategic to strengthen our efforts towards a better IORA which is more forward looking, effective, fits for its purpose, agile and adaptive. I would like to request all of you to take this opportunity to openly share your experiences, knowledge and ideas going forward."*