



IORA

July – September 2025

E-newsletter

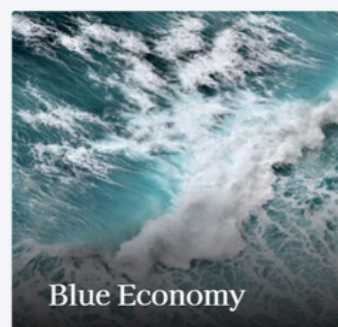
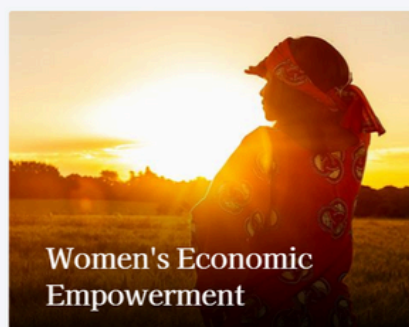


TABLE OF CONTENT

Executive Summary	_____	i
International Conference on Trade and Investment Facilitation 2025	_____	01
Broadening Engagement	_____	02
Maritime Safety and Security	_____	03
Trade and Investment Facilitations	_____	04
Fisheries Management & Blue Economy	_____	05
Academic, Science and Technology Cooperation	_____	07
Disaster Risk Management	_____	07
Secretary-General's meetings	_____	08
List of acronyms	_____	ii

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The third quarter of 2025 marked another period of engagement and progress for the Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA) across key priority areas including trade and investment, climate action, maritime safety and security, blue economy, and science and technology.

The period saw collaboration through Tripartite Meetings among IORA, Dialogue Partners, and relevant stakeholders, aimed at deepening cooperation and enhancing project implementation. The IORA Secretariat further welcomed the Australian Parliamentary Delegation led by Hon. Milton Dick MP, Speaker of the House of Representatives, reaffirming the enduring partnership between Australia and IORA in advancing regional cooperation, particularly in the Blue Economy, maritime safety, and sustainable development.

The Professional Short Course on Climate Change Adaptation and Mitigation and the Renewable Energy Transition Course, both organised in collaboration with The Australian National University and the Australian Government, enhanced the technical expertise of participants from across the region. Similarly, the Search and Rescue (SAR) Online Course, offered by Australia, expanded knowledge on aviation, land, and marine SAR operations among participants from 13 Member States.

The 4th Meeting of the Working Group on Science, Technology and Innovation (WGSTI) reaffirmed Member States' commitment to strengthening cooperation in innovation, while the Sub-Committee on Finance (SCF) emphasized the importance of financial sustainability for the Secretariat.

IORA's engagement with global initiatives was reinforced through participation in the Eighth Meeting of the Infrastructure for Resilient Island States (IRIS) Steering Committee under the extended MoU with the Coalition for Disaster Resilient Infrastructure (CDRI)

These efforts continue to strengthen IORA's role as a key platform for dialogue and collaboration in the Indian Ocean region.

International Conference on Trade and Investment Facilitation 2025

The International Conference on Trade and Investment Facilitation in the IORA Region was held from 25 to 26 September 2025 in Mauritius. The event brought together experts, policymakers, academics, and practitioners to discuss trends, challenges, and opportunities in regional trade and investment.



Minister of Tertiary Education, Science and Research, Dr The Hon. Kaviraj Sukon; IORA Secretary-General, H.E. Sanjiv Ranjan; Associate Prof. Dinesh Surroop, UoM Pro-Vice Chancellor; Mr Xiangchen Zhang, Deputy Director General World Trade Organization and other participants

The International Conference on Trade and Investment Facilitation 2025 under the theme “Trade and FDI Facilitation in the IORA Region” took place from 25 to 26 September 2025 in Mauritius. The event was organized by the Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA) in partnership with the University of Mauritius (UoM), the Centre of Excellence for International Trade and Investment, and the UoM World Trade Organization Chair Programme. The conference brought together academics, researchers, and officials from both the public and private sectors across IORA Member States, including Bangladesh, India, Kenya, Madagascar, Mauritius, Oman, Seychelles, and Tanzania, along with international partners.

The Opening Ceremony featured inspiring addresses by Associate Prof. Dinesh Surroop (UoM Pro-Vice Chancellor), H.E. Sanjiv Ranjan (Secretary-General of IORA), Mr Xiangchen Zhang (World Trade Organization), and Dr the Hon. Kaviraj Sharma Sukon (Minister of Tertiary Education, Science & Research). The Secretary-General of IORA called for greater focus on digital trade facilitation, emphasizing the need for paperless processes and common standards across the region. He highlighted the importance of strengthening regional value chains through investment in technology, infrastructure, and the Blue Economy. He also urged efforts to boost intra-regional investment by fostering trust and mobilizing sustainable capital.

Mr. Michael Gurner, Director for Trade and Investment Facilitation at the IORA Secretariat, contributed to a roundtable discussion on the theme “Trade and Investment Facilitation in IORA.” This roundtable discussion examined opportunities and challenges in enhancing trade and investment within the IORA region. Discussions noted that although IORA’s Action Plan (2022–2027) prioritizes capacity building, SME development, and improved business environments, progress has been constrained by structural and institutional limitations. The roundtable concluded that IORA had enormous untapped potential, given its strategic geography and economic weight, but success depended on translating dialogue into action.

Over two days, panel discussions explored topics such as intra-IORA trade, trade facilitation, trade and the environment, and related policy issues.

The conference reaffirmed IORA’s role as a platform for dialogue on trade and investment facilitation. Participants emphasized the need for practical follow-up actions to strengthen regional competitiveness, enhance inclusivity, and promote sustainable economic growth across the Indian Ocean region.

BROADENING ENGAGEMENT

IORA Secretariat welcomes Australian Parliamentary Delegation

The IORA Secretariat welcomed an Australian Parliamentary Delegation led by the Hon. Milton Dick MP, Speaker of the House of Representatives. H.E. Kate Chamley, Australian High Commissioner to Mauritius, accompanied the delegation.



Australian Parliamentary Delegation led by the Hon. Milton Dick MP Speaker of the House of Representatives; H.E. Kate Chamley, Australian High Commissioner to Mauritius; IORA Secretary-General, H.E. Sanjiv Ranjan

The IORA Secretary-General H.E. Sanjiv Ranjan briefed the delegation on the Association's activities and initiatives. Discussions focused on opportunities for further cooperation in maritime safety and security, disaster risk management, fisheries management, tourism and cultural exchanges, and the blue economy.

As a founding Member State of IORA, Australia has played a key role in advancing the Association's objectives, including during its Chairmanship from 2013 to 2015. The visit reaffirmed the strong partnership between Australia and IORA in promoting regional cooperation and sustainable development.

IORA strengthens engagement with Dialogue Partners through Tripartite Meetings

Since March 2025, the IORA Secretariat has been hosting tripartite meetings with IORA Member States and Dialogue Partners to further strengthen engagement and collaboration within the region. In line with IORA's institutional framework, each Dialogue Partner is assigned a Member State as its Coordinating Country for a two-year term, with the aim of facilitating active participation in IORA's initiatives and activities.

These meetings between the Coordinating Countries, their respective Dialogue Partners, and the IORA Secretariat have provided a valuable platform to review the organisation's key achievements, ongoing initiatives, and upcoming events, while identifying potential areas for future cooperation. For the period of June to September, four tripartite meetings were held, as provided below:

- Tripartite Meeting with Coordinating Country South Africa and Dialogue Partner Russia on 22 August 2025
- Tripartite Meeting with Coordinating Country Seychelles and Dialogue Partner European Union on 24 September 2025
- Tripartite Meeting with Coordinating Country Reunion Island/France and Dialogue Partner Germany on 26 September 2025
- Tripartite Meeting with Coordinating Country Indonesia and Dialogue Partner Italy on 30 September 2025



Tripartite Meetings held between Coordinating Countries, their respective Dialogue Partners, and the IORA Secretariat

First Meeting of the Ad-Hoc Committee on the Review of the Special Fund

The first meeting of the Ad-Hoc Committee on the Review of the Special Fund was held on 27 August 2025 under the Chairship of Bangladesh, with facilitation by the IORA Secretariat.

The Committee, comprising Bangladesh, India, Iran, Mauritius, South Africa, and Sri Lanka, is tasked with reviewing IORA's project funding mechanism. During the meeting, the Secretariat presented proposed revisions to the funding framework and invited members to provide their inputs for consideration.

The IORA Special Fund empowers Member States to apply for financial support for projects aligned with IORA's priority areas and the guiding principles outlined in the organisation's Charter. The Special Fund aims to achieve three key objectives: Economic Cooperation and Connectivity (fostering collaboration between government entities, businesses, and academic institutions), Knowledge Sharing and Capacity Building (encompassing projects related to academia, research, entrepreneurship, and intellectual pursuits) and Enhanced Implementation (includes providing support for implementing projects, programmes, and activities that contribute to achieving IORA's objectives as outlined in the Charter).

Sub-Committee on Finance Meeting held under Sri Lanka's Chairship

On 22 July 2025, the Sub-Committee on Finance (SCF) of the Committee of Senior Officials (CSO) of the Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA) met virtually under the Chairship of the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka. The Sub-Committee on Finance contributes to the transparency and accountability in the management of funds of the organization.

Representatives from IORA Member States and the IORA Secretariat participated in the meeting. Discussions focused on financial matters and measures to strengthen the institutional capacity of the Secretariat. Member States emphasized the need to enhance the Secretariat's financial resources to enable it to effectively fulfill its mandate under the IORA Charter.



Sub-Committee on Finance held virtually on 22 July 2025

Generally, the committee meets twice a year to take cognizance the expenses report and review the budget for the coming year. During the holding of this meeting, supported by the Director of Corporate Services of the Secretariat, Member States assess the organization's audited financial statements and ensure that the organization finances are in line with international standards.

MARITIME SAFETY AND SECURITY

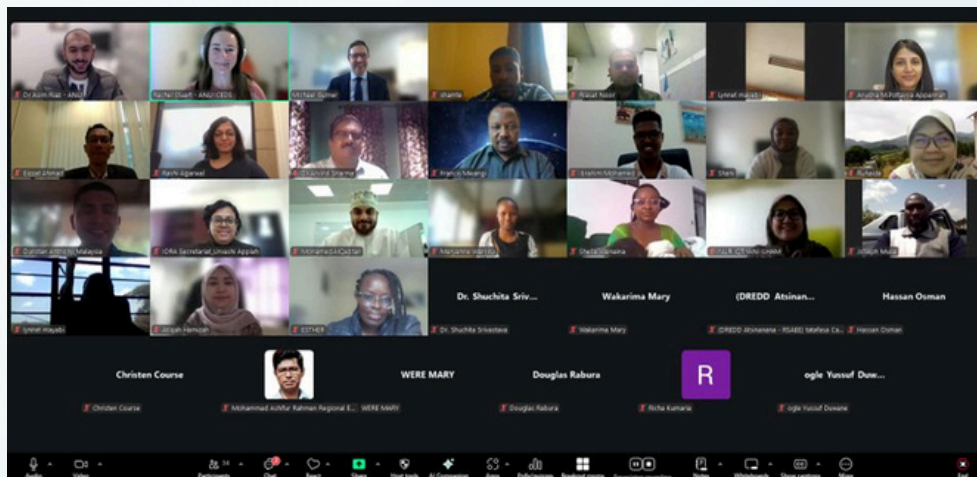
Online Course on Introduction to Search and Rescue

Under the Maritime Safety and Security portfolio, a 12-week online and self-paced course on Introduction to Search and Rescue is being conducted from 7 July to September 2025. The course, offered by Australia, covers aviation, land, and marine search and rescue, as well as international search and rescue agreements, conventions, and the roles and responsibilities of relevant personnel. A total of 43 participants from 13 IORA Member States: Australia, Bangladesh, Iran, Malaysia, Maldives, Mauritius, Oman, Seychelles, Somalia, South Africa, Sri Lanka, Tanzania, and Thailand are taking part in the program.

TRADE & INVESTMENT FACILITATIONS

Short Course on Renewable Energy Transition Engages IORA Member States

The short course on Renewable Energy Transition in the Indian Ocean Region, held from 1 July to 8 August 2025, drew strong participation from IORA Member States, including Bangladesh, India, Kenya, Madagascar, Malaysia, Mauritius, Oman, Seychelles, Somalia, and Tanzania.



Participants of the short course on Renewable Energy Transition in the Indian Ocean Region

The program aimed to deepen participants' understanding of the energy transition and its role in sustainable development. Participants gained insights into how technology, policy, and social factors can support the integration of renewable energy and promote economy-wide decarbonization through electrification.

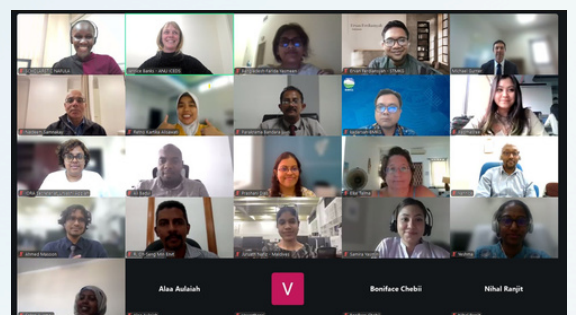
The course was organized jointly by the Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA), the Institute for Climate, Energy and Disaster Solutions of The Australian National University, and the Australian Government Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade. The collaboration supports informed decision-making on climate change and renewable energy across the Indian Ocean region.

Professional Short Course on Climate Change Adaptation and Mitigation

The Professional Short Course on Climate Change Adaptation and Mitigation in the Indian Ocean Region is being held from 16 September to 23 October 2025 for representatives of IORA Member States. Eleven Member States: Bangladesh, India, Indonesia, Kenya, Malaysia, Mauritius, Seychelles, Somalia, Sri Lanka, Tanzania, and Yemen are participating in the program.

The course aims to strengthen participants' understanding of climate change adaptation and mitigation. It also builds capacity for evidence-based policy design and reform, enhances analytical and interpretation skills, and examines socio-economic impacts and policy measures to address climate change.

The program is organized by the Institute for Climate, Energy and Disaster Solutions of The Australian National University, in partnership with the Australian Government Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade. The initiative supports informed decision-making on climate change across the Indian Ocean region.



Participants of the Professional Short Course on Climate Change Adaptation and Mitigation in the Indian Ocean Region

FISHERIES MANAGEMENT AND BLUE ECONOMY

IORA Blue Carbon Hub Think Tank Symposium on “Towards effective restoration for sustainable management of coastal ecosystems and enhanced livelihoods”

The Sixth IORA Blue Carbon Hub Think Tank Symposium was held in Negombo from 9–11 September 2025, Sri Lanka. It brought together experts from 14 Member States and 12 Dialogue Partners.



Participants of the Sixth IORA Blue Carbon Hub Think Tank Symposium

The event focused on protecting and restoring mangroves, seagrasses, and tidal marshes. These ecosystems store carbon, protect coastlines, and support livelihoods. Highlights included expert training, policy discussions, and a field visit to the Anawilundawa RAMSAR (Convention on Wetlands) Sanctuary. Participants stressed the urgent need for community-led restoration and financing solutions. They also called for a regional blue carbon action plan, stronger cooperation, and capacity-building. The goal is to ensure both environmental and economic resilience across the Indian Ocean.

Webinar on Ocean Accounts in the Indian Ocean Region: Progress and potential to support the development of the blue economy

On 4 September 2025, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Foreign Employment & Tourism of the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka hosted the webinar on Ocean Accounting. The event was organized in collaboration with the Global Ocean Accounts Partnership (GOAP) Secretariat and the IORA Secretariat. The Webinar gathered 220 registrants and 80 participants from 23 countries on the same platform to share their experiences and learn more about ocean accounting. Delegates from seven IORA Member States shared how they are using Ocean Accounts to guide national planning.

Examples included Indonesia's 2045 roadmap, Kenya's use of ocean accounts in marine spatial planning and the Maldives' pioneering social accounts.



Women in Blue Set Sail: Oceanographic training cruise empowers women scientists

The WOMBlue oceanographic training cruise, part of the global initiative Women in Blue: Training Opportunities in Ocean Science, set sail from Civitavecchia on Friday, 1 August 2025. Aboard the research vessel Gaia Blu, owned by the National Research Council (CNR) of Italy, seven women scientists are taking part in a transformative week of at-sea training in marine geology and oceanography.



Participants of Women in Blue: Training Opportunities in Ocean Science,

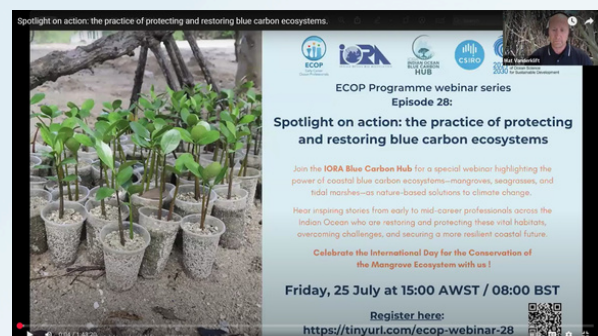
The initiative, led by the CNR Institute of Marine Sciences (CNR-ISMAR), offers practical, on-the-job learning for early-career women researchers, particularly those from scientifically and technologically less developed countries. Among the selected participants is a representative of the Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA), underscoring the project's commitment to regional inclusivity and international collaboration.

Under the supervision of senior scientists from CNR-ISMAR, participants are learning advanced techniques for acquiring and processing marine geophysical data, analyzing physical properties of the water column, and conducting environmental DNA (eDNA) sampling from both the seabed and water column. These activities support research on geological processes in the northern Tyrrhenian Sea, with a focus on how these influence biodiversity on underwater features like seamounts.

Spotlight on Action: Protecting and Restoring Blue Carbon Ecosystems

The IORA Blue Carbon Hub hosted a webinar titled “Spotlight on Action: The Practice of Protecting and Restoring Blue Carbon Ecosystems,” showcasing real-world examples of efforts to safeguard mangroves, seagrasses, and tidal marshes across the Indian Ocean region 25 July 2025.

Organised in observance of the International Day for the Conservation of the Mangrove Ecosystem and the UN Decade of Restoration and Ocean Science, the session highlighted how these vital coastal ecosystems serve as powerful carbon sinks and nature-based solutions to climate change. Participants heard success stories and best practices from early to mid-career ocean professionals, emphasizing the importance of turning knowledge into action to build sustainable ocean futures.



Did You Know?

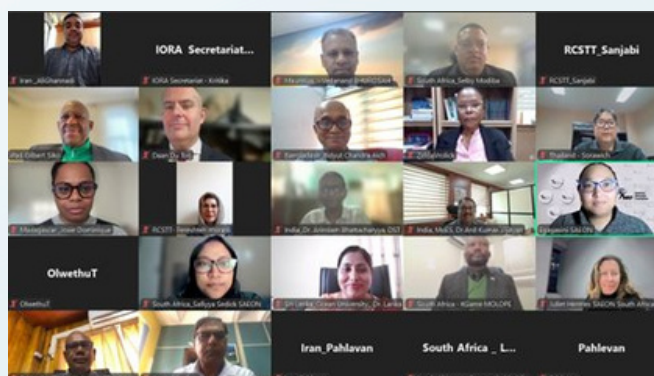
Mangroves, seagrasses, and tidal marshes can store up to five times more carbon than tropical forests, making them some of the most powerful natural allies in the fight against climate change.

ACADEMIC, SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY COOPERATION

Fourth Meeting of the IORA Working Group on Science, Technology and Innovation

The Fourth Meeting of the Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA) Working Group on Science, Technology and Innovation (WGSTI) was held virtually on 6 August 2025 under the Chairship of the Department of Science, Technology and Innovation (DSTI) of the Republic of South Africa.

The meeting served as an important platform for IORA Member States to reaffirm their commitment to revitalizing the WGSTI and to strengthen regional cooperation in science, technology, and innovation across the Indian Ocean region.



Participants of the Fourth Meeting of the Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA) Working Group on Science, Technology and Innovation (WGSTI)

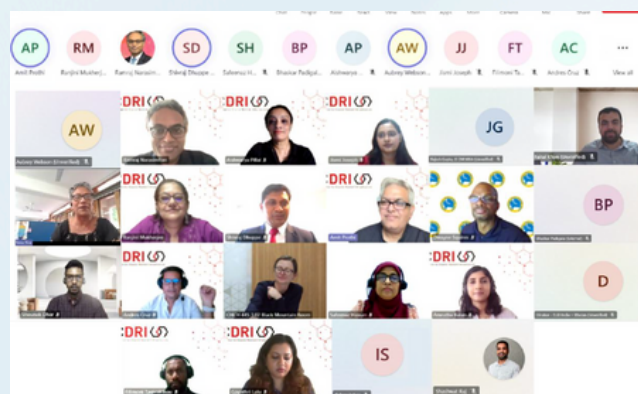
DISASTER RISK MANAGEMENT

IORA Participates in the Eighth IRIS Steering Committee Meeting

Following the extension of the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between the Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA) and the Coalition for Disaster Resilient Infrastructure (CDRI) on 21 April 2025, the IORA Secretariat participated in the Eighth Meeting of the Infrastructure for Resilient Island States (IRIS) Steering Committee, held virtually on 10 September 2025.

The IRIS Steering Committee is a flagship initiative of CDRI that provides technical support to strengthen the disaster and climate resilience of infrastructure systems in Small Island Developing States (SIDS).

During the meeting, members discussed the proposed design and content of the third IRIS funding window, scheduled for launch later this year.



Participants of the Eighth Meeting of the Infrastructure for Resilient Island States (IRIS) Steering Committee



France strengthens engagement with IORA

The Secretary-General of the Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA), H.E. Mr. Sanjiv Ranjan, received a courtesy visit from H.E. Mr. Frédéric Bontems, Ambassador of the French Republic to Mauritius, and Mr. Laurent Amar, the newly appointed National Focal Point of IORA for France.

During the meeting, discussions focused on the key role of the National Focal Point in enhancing coordination between IORA and France, as well as on upcoming IORA initiatives. The visit reaffirmed France's commitment to deepening its engagement within the Association and strengthening regional cooperation across the Indian Ocean.



Australia reaffirms Climate Cooperation with IORA

H.E. Mr. Sanjiv Ranjan, Secretary-General of the Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA), received a courtesy visit from Mr. Daniel Featherston, Australia's Climate Diplomacy Counsellor at the Australian High Commission in Nairobi.

Mr. Featherston, who represents Australia's climate and environmental interests across the African continent, held discussions with the Secretary-General on the climate challenges facing IORA Member States. The meeting underscored the importance of collective action and cooperation, particularly under the newly adopted IORA Climate Change Strategic Agenda, to build resilience and advance sustainable development in the region.

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ACRONYMS

- ANU – Australian National University
- CDRI – Coalition for Disaster Resilient Infrastructure
- CSO – Committee of Senior Officials
- DFAT – Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (Australia)
- DSTI – Department of Science, Technology and Innovation (Republic of South Africa)
- FDI – Foreign Direct Investment
- IORA – Indian Ocean Rim Association
- IRIS – Infrastructure for Resilient Island States
- ITD – International Trade Division
- LDCs – Least Developed Countries
- MoU – Memorandum of Understanding
- MSS – Maritime Safety and Security
- PPP – Public-Private Partnership
- S&T – Science and Technology
- SAR- Search and Rescue
- SCF – Sub-Committee on Finance
- SDGs – Sustainable Development Goals
- SIDS – Small Island Developing States
- SMEs – Small and Medium-sized Enterprises
- STEM – Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics
- UN – United Nations
- WEPs – Women’s Empowerment Principles
- WGSTI – Working Group on Science, Technology and Innovation
- WTO – World Trade Organization