



The 18th Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA) Meeting of the Council of Ministers (COM) was held at the Southern Sun Elangeni and Maharani Hotel in Durban, South Africa on 2 November 2018 under the theme selected by South Africa for the period of its Chairmanship: *“IORA: Uniting the Peoples of Africa, Asia, Australasia and the Middle East through enhanced cooperation for Peace, Stability And Sustainable Development”*.

The Meeting was chaired by Honourable Minister Lindiwe Sisulu, Foreign Minister of International Relations and Cooperation of the Republic of South Africa, and Chair of the Association. At the outset the gathering observed a moment of silence in respect of the recent tragedies of tsunami and Lion Air JT610 airplane crash in Indonesia.

In her opening remarks, the Minister affirmed that: “The geostrategic importance and profile of the



Indian Ocean Region is growing rapidly, with an unprecedented focus and attention on the potential contribution that the Region can and should be making towards global security, economic growth, and sustainable development” as reflected in the theme. The Honourable Minister acknowledged the importance of IORA becoming a beacon of hope for multilateralism and regional cooperation in the world.

Dr Nomvuyo N. Nokwe, the Secretary-General of IORA, hailed the progress being made in the implementation of the IORA Action Plan 2017-2021 and expressed her satisfaction to IORA Member

States in their commitment in taking the process forward. She referred to the contribution of the past chairs of IORA: India, Australia and Indonesia which have played particularly important roles in strengthening IORA’s architecture in recent years.



This year’s meeting made special mention of the anniversaries of three legendary personalities, as 2018 is the birth centenary of the late South African President Nelson Mandela, the visionary founder of IORA; the birth centenary of Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan, Founder of the United Arab Emirates; and the great Mahatma Gandhi, Father of the Indian Nation.

Honouring the central role that late President Nelson Mandela played in the establishment of the Association, IORA reinforced his legacy through a Special Declaration and the launch of a special initiative entitled the “IORA Nelson Mandela ‘Be the Legacy’ internship programme” for the IORA Secretariat, as a commitment to empowering and capacitating the youth of the Indian Ocean region. H.R.H. Princess ZN Mandela-Dlamini, South African High Commissioner to the Republic of Mauritius and the daughter of Nelson Mandela, graced the occasion as a special guest of honour to launch this programme.

The meeting was enriched by country statements from the 21 Member States and 7 Dialogue Partners. IORA Ministers also acknowledged the contribution of Dialogue Partners and adopted the *Declaration on Guidelines for Enhancing Interaction with Dialogue Partners in IORA*. Finally, the *eThekweni Communique* was produced as the final outcome document of the 18th COM.

Other notable achievements included the signing of the IORA Charter by the Sultanate of Oman, signing of the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) for Promotion of Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) by Mozambique, and the MOU on Search and Rescue by Mozambique and Somalia.

Underlining the fact that IORA is attracting more interest from within and outside our region, the COM saw the admission of Maldives as the 22<sup>nd</sup> member of the Association while Turkey and the Republic of Korea were admitted as the 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> Dialogue Partners in IORA. With this, the total membership of IORA has risen to 22 and the number of Dialogue Partners has increased to nine.

The Minister’s’ meeting was preceded by the 20th Committee of Senior Officials’ Meeting (CSO) which met on 30 October to 1 November 2018. The CSO considered a number of strategic documents and received reports on the implementation of the IORA priority areas and cross-cutting focus areas under the Action Plan for 2017-2021.



The COM was attended by Honourable Foreign Ministers and senior representatives from all IORA Member States, namely; Australia, Bangladesh, India, Indonesia, Iran, Kenya, Madagascar, Malaysia, Mauritius, Mozambique, Oman, Seychelles, Singapore, Somalia, South Africa, Sri Lanka, Tanzania, Thailand, United Arab Emirates and Yemen. All seven Dialogue Partners, that is, China, Egypt, France, Germany, Japan, United Kingdom and the United States of America also attended the meeting, along with the IORA Specialised Agencies, the Regional Centre for Science and Technology Transfer (RCSTT) and the Fisheries Support Unit (FSU) and the Chair in Indian Ocean Studies (CIOS).

South Africa is to hand over Chairmanship of IORA to UAE next year and Bangladesh will assume the Vice-Chairmanship of IORA, as approved in this meeting.