



**IORA Workshop on Financial Inclusion for Women Entrepreneurs  
10-11 December 2018  
Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates**

**Press Release**

Today dedicated experts, officials and business people from Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA) countries met to drive forward the financial inclusion of women across the region.

This critical issue was the focus of the IORA Workshop on Financial Inclusion for Women Entrepreneurs, hosted by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of the United Arab Emirates in collaboration with IORA on 10-11 December 2018 in Abu Dhabi.

IORA's Secretary-General, Dr Nomvuyo Nokwe, said "as more women access finance to grow and lead businesses, the impact of female leadership is being felt across the Indian Ocean. If women can't achieve their economic potential, then communities across our region will suffer. That's why women's empowerment is such a high priority for IORA."

At the workshop, delegates discussed the challenges facing women entrepreneurs in accessing finance across the region, such as limited access to collateral and land tenure restrictions. Lessons were exchanged from across the region, in particular from initiatives underway within the UAE, a regional leader on women's financial inclusion and incoming Chair of IORA for 2019-21.

Delegates discussed how opportunities to promote financial inclusion, such as digitising payments and improving financial literacy, can be promoted within IORA. These opportunities will be taken forward by IORA's Working Group on Women's Economic Empowerment, the vehicle within IORA to drive regional cooperation on these issues.

The workshop was attended by representatives from 20 Member States, namely, Australia, Bangladesh, Comoros, India, Indonesia, Iran, Kenya, Malaysia, Maldives, Mauritius, Mozambique, Oman, Seychelles, Somalia, South Africa, Sri Lanka, Tanzania, Thailand, UAE, and Yemen. Delegates benefitted from the expertise of the Indian Ocean Rim Business Forum, UN Women, the Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC) in South Africa and the US State Department.

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***IORA Secretariat  
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