



IORA UPDATE

The region covered by the Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA) is unique due to the diversity of its Member States, with Unique Selling Points (USP) that is proudly promoted separately in various international fairs. IORA countries have emerged as major tourism destinations, suggesting that there is a need for Member States to mobilise their natural and cultural resources so as to harness their enormous tourism potential and capture opportunities in emerging markets which range from backpackers, business travelers to luxury holiday seekers. As reported by the United Nations World Tourism Organisation (UNWTO), the tourism industry has contributed 9% to the global Gross Domestic Product (GDP) in 2014 and is becoming a key driver of socio-economic progress for many developing and least developed countries. As one of the largest labour intensive industries, the tourism industry requires a substantial amount of human capital to carry out its activities.

The Second IORA Meeting of Experts on Tourism will be held in the Margins of INDABA 2015 on 09 May 2015 and would be hosted by the Department of Tourism of South Africa in collaboration with the Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA), in Durban, South Africa. The Experts' meeting is a follow-up to the First IORA Ministerial Tourism Meeting that was held from 20 to 21 November 2015 and would bring together Tourism Experts from IORA Member States, as well as its Dialogue Partners. The aim of the 2nd IORA Tourism Experts Meeting would be to analyse the action-oriented measures that have been adopted following the recommendation of the past Ministerial Meeting that was preceded by the first Tourism Experts Meeting that took place in Seychelles in November 2014, in view of preparing an action plan for the way forward, including the establishment of a Tourism Core Group in the IOR region. In addition, the meeting would provide an ideal opportunity for tourism experts in the Indian Ocean Region to discuss the second phase of the IORA Tourism Feasibility Study completed by Grant Thornton as commissioned by the Sultanate of Oman.

The meeting would comprise of working sessions based on the past recommendations and would provide an overview on the Second Phase of the Feasibility study on Tourism in the IORA region. The different sessions would include: Establishment of an IORA Tourism Core Group; IORA Travel and Tourism Fairs; Presentation of the Second Programmes; Establishing an IORA Sustainable Tourism Accreditation Programme; Improving Air Connectivity between the IORA Member States; and Development of Cruise Tourism in the IOR region. The Honorable Ms. Tokozile Xasa, Deputy Minister of Tourism, Department of Tourism, Republic of South Africa, the Deputy Director-General, Ms. Aneme Malan, International Tourism Management, Department of Tourism, Republic of South Africa and Mr. Firdaus Dahlan, Director, Secretariat of the Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA) would do the opening statements for the meeting.

As one of the region's fastest growing industries, travel and tourism is ranked high on the list of development priorities of most of IORA Member States. The region possesses huge tourism potential and opportunities due to its rich and diverse natural and cultural resources which need to be optimized in order to accelerate trade, improve competitiveness and strengthen economic cooperation across the rim countries. Furthermore, the IORA is also of the opinion that this meeting would promote tourism development, as well as strengthening intraregional tourism in the IOR region.

08 May 2015