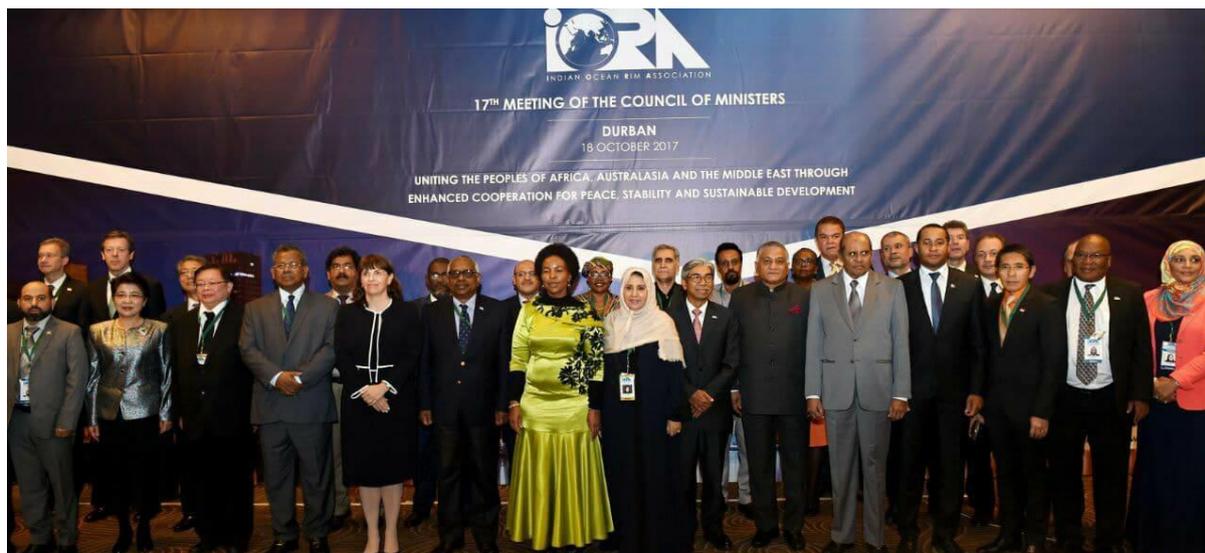


October 18, 2017



The Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA) 17th Meeting of the Council of Ministers (COM) was held at the Southern Sun Elangeni and Maharani hotel in Durban, South Africa on 18 October 2017. The Meeting was chaired by Hon. Ms Maite Nkoana-Mashabane, Foreign Minister of International Relations and Cooperation of the Republic of South Africa, and the new Chair of the Association.

In her opening remarks, the Minister affirmed that: *“South Africa is a responsible member of the international community as we seek to advance peace and security globally, including in the Indian Ocean Region. For this reason, we have adopted the following as the theme of our chairship: “Uniting the Peoples of Africa, Asia, Australasia and the Middle East through Enhanced Co-operation for Peace, Stability and Sustainable Development...I look forward to working with you all, including our Dialogue Partner countries, in contributing towards steering the Association to greater heights, focused on ensuring a better life for all its peoples... IORA is the sum of us all, and it will only succeed with our combined commitment”.*

The Honorable Minister also emphasized the importance of the Jakarta Concord and the IORA Action Plan for 2017 – 2021 which was adopted at the Leaders’ Summit held in Indonesia last March. Countries made generous contributions to implement the Action Plan, including Australia, India and South Africa. Dialogue Partners also expressed their willingness to support IORA, noting significant support from Germany to strengthen expertise in climate change and disaster risk management.

Another key achievement was the signature of the Memorandum of Understanding for Promotion of Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) by India, Mauritius, Seychelles, Singapore, Somalia, South Africa and Yemen. This is the first economic MOU signed within IORA and creates a framework and platform for capacity building, development of regional value chains and sharing of best practices to drive employment creation and poverty alleviation.

Member States came together to highlight aspects of IORA’s priority and cross-cutting areas, and shared updates on upcoming initiatives including Ministerial Conferences on Renewable Energy (New Delhi, 8-9



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December 2017) and on Women's Economic Empowerment (Mauritius, 26-27 February 2018), as well as the launch of the Journal of the Indian Ocean Rim Studies.

Member States extensively praised the leadership and vision of Indonesia, the Outgoing Chair (2015-17), who elevated the Association through a Leaders Summit. Sincere appreciation was also expressed to Ambassador K.V. Bhagirath (India) who completes his second terms as Secretary General and oversaw substantial growth and change. Member States welcomed the appointment of Dr Nomvuyo Nokwe (South Africa) as the Incoming Secretary General, who will commence in early 2018.

Ambassador Bhagirath stated *"it has been my pleasure to be a part of this important Association, whose stature and effectiveness has grown with the growing recognition that the Indian Ocean is significant for global peace and prosperity, and efforts for Member States to realise their full potential. I wish the new Secretary General, Dr Nokwe, every success in her tenure."*

The COM was attended by Honorable Foreign Ministers and senior representatives from all IORA Member States, namely; Australia, Bangladesh, Comoros, India, Indonesia, Iran, Kenya, Madagascar, Malaysia, Mauritius, Mozambique, Oman, Seychelles, Singapore, Somalia, South Africa, Sri Lanka, Tanzania, Thailand, United Arab Emirates and Yemen. China, Egypt, France, Germany, Japan, United Kingdom and the United States also attended the meeting as Dialogue Partners along with key stakeholders. Leading representatives from the academic and business communities around the Indian Ocean also contributed to the promotion of regional cooperation and collaboration.

