



Australian Government  
Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade

## Indian Ocean Rim Association

### MODERNISING TRADE IN THE INDIAN OCEAN RIM - CONFERENCE

Capital Pearls Hotel, Durban, South Africa  
17-18 June 2019

#### CONCEPT NOTE

*Including four elements:*

- 1. The Modernising Trade in the Indian Ocean Rim Conference, for all attendees*
- 2. The Working Group on Trade and Investment (WGTI) meeting, for WGTI delegates only*
- 3. The Working Group on Women's Economic Empowerment (WGWEE) meeting, for WGWEE delegates only*
- 4. The Indian Ocean Rim Business Forum (IORBF) meeting, for IORBF delegates only.*

*Side event:*

*International Chamber of Commerce (ICC) 100<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Regional Event*

*Associated workshop:*

*UN Women Research Validation Workshop on Women's Economic Empowerment*

#### Summary

This conference will explore emerging opportunities for boosting trade and investment in the Indian Ocean Rim region, and accompanying synergies with IORA's agenda for the economic empowerment of women. Day 1 will deliver an update on trends and initiatives in the modernisation of global and regional trade and investment and women's economic empowerment, and also present a range of ideas on how these trends can be replicated within IORA. Day 2 of the conference will convene official delegates to IORA's private sector arm, the Indian Ocean Rim Business Forum (IORBF), as well as the IORA working groups on Trade and Investment and Women's Economic Empowerment. These three groups will consider how to promote business, trade and women's empowerment within an IORA context and advance their respective work plans.

Additional events will held by the International Chamber of Commerce (ICC) and UN Women. The ICC will host a 100<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Regional Event to deepen the ICC's engagement in the Indian Ocean Rim region and highlight the ICC's thought leadership through two panels on global inequality and climate change. UN Women will host a Research Validation Workshop focussed on two draft pieces of research on women's economic empowerment in the Indian Ocean Rim region. This workshop is aimed at members of the IORA Working Group on Women's Economic Empowerment and the Technical Advisory Committee for the UN Women project (attendance to the workshop is by invitation only and participants will be expected to read the research in advance).

The conference is aligned with the commitment of IORA Member States to implement the Jakarta Concord and IORA Action Plan 2017-2021, as adopted at the 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Commemoration

Celebrations in Jakarta (March 2017), the Balaclava Ministerial Declaration on Women's Economic Empowerment – A Prerequisite for Sustainable Development of 2018, the Joint Declaration on the IORA Business Community to Build Partnerships for a Sustainable and Equitable Economic Growth of 2017 and the IORA Economic Declaration of 2014.

## **Background Information**

The fourth industrial revolution (or Industry 4.0) refers to increasing automation, platform economies and data exchange in manufacturing technologies that facilitate new business models and value-producing opportunities. Fostering inclusive growth is particularly pertinent for small and medium-size enterprises (SMEs), which form the backbone of many regional economies and represent over 90% of firms and over 70% of employment in most countries, but which may be disconnected from new technologies. The Joint Declaration on the IORA Business Community to Build Partnerships for a Sustainable and Equitable Economic Growth of March 2017 recognised the importance of public-private dialogue in strengthening the collaboration and partnerships necessary to increase trade and investment for the benefit of businesses and communities across the Indian Ocean.

Likewise, despite having less access to technology, women around the world use digital platforms to their advantage by accessing markets, lowering costs of entry and exit, simplifying buying and selling, overcoming procedural obstacles and encouraging innovative and entrepreneurial activities.

The IORA *Balaclava Ministerial Declaration on Women's Economic Empowerment and Gender Equality as a Prerequisite for Sustainable Development* (2018) identified intensifying information and communication technology as a major paradigm shift that requires further attention by IORA Member States and Dialogue Partners. The Declaration states that IORA Member States will: *“adopt concrete measures and innovative policies that aim to promote women's and girls' participation and skills development in Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics, including Information and Communication Technologies in the light of the looming fourth industrial revolution by creating an enabling environment as well as providing incentives to women and girls innovators; including the setting up of appropriate and relevant mentorship programmes and initiatives for the young girls to enable them to harness their full potential.”*

## **Aims and Objectives of the Conference**

This two-day conference aims to advance the IORA trade and investment facilitation and women's economic empowerment agendas by:

- identifying opportunities within and challenges of the Indian Ocean Rim's future economy with a focus on the fourth industrial revolution, trade modernisation and digitisation;
- engaging the private sector via regional chambers of commerce and alongside government officials to consider policy, regulatory and initiatives that will foster regional prosperity;
- creating a mutually supportive environment for capacity building within, and across, the IORA Member States and Dialogue Partners with a focus on women's economic empowerment and practical trade facilitation tools; and
- leveraging synergies by co-convening the Indian Ocean Rim Business Forum (IORBF) alongside the core IORA bodies for promoting trade and investment (Working Group on Trade and Investment (WGTI) and Working Group on Women's Economic Empowerment (WGWE)) on Day 2.

## **Format of the Conference**

Day 1 of the conference is directed at government and private sector representatives from IORA Member States and Dialogue Partners, such as:

- officials from government departments of trade and industry and gender ministries
- local, national and international Chambers of Commerce;
- trade and investment promotion organisations;
- digital industry players (such as logistics firms, banks, infrastructure providers and investors);
- members of National Trade Facilitation Committees; and
- women's entrepreneur groups.

Day 1 aims to showcase the Indian Ocean as a region of growing economic importance as well as identifying emerging trends such as changing business ecosystems, the fourth industrial revolution, and tools to reduce barriers to increased regional trade. These tools include the WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement, innovative digital apps and online trading platforms, new dispute and arbitration mechanisms, and promoting women's entrepreneurship.

Day 1 will culminate with a networking cocktail for both business and government representatives. The first day will be facilitated by the Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ACCI - through funding from the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade) and the government of South Africa as convener of the WGTI and IORBF, and current IORA Chair.

Day 2 will convene the IORA Business Forum, hosted by Ms Judi Nwokedi, Chair of IORBF. A key focus of the IORBF will be the formulation of considered recommendations from the private sector to governments on how to boost regional trade and investment among IORA member states and dialogue partners.

Day 2 also comprises the formal meetings of the WGTI and WGWEE attended by official representatives designated by IORA National Focal Points. Officials are encouraged to attend all elements of Day 1 to facilitate engagement between the public and private sectors and to strengthen national and regional business enabling environments as drivers of economic growth. South Africa will host the WGTI which will consider its forward work plan and Terms of Reference for the first time. Australia will host the second meeting of the WGWEE and will co-chair the meeting with Mauritius. The working group meeting will include opportunities to hear from IORA co-collaborators in the region (UN Women, Human Sciences Research Council, International Trade Centre) on their recent work and their resulting recommendations for action. The WGWEE will consider these recommendations for inclusion in its work plan.

## **Expected Outcomes**

This two-day conference is expected to achieve the following outcomes:

- revitalisation of the IORA trade and investment agenda, including via stronger linkages with regional chambers of commerce
- a road map to formation of an IORA Women's Business Forum in consultation with the Indian Ocean Rim Business Forum
- clarity on a broad framework for the US-IORA partnership on women's economic empowerment
- agreement on draft Terms of Reference and key elements of a Work plan for the Working Group on Trade and Investment

- progress review of the IORA WGWEЕ work plan including priority activities for implementation.

### **Benefits to participants**

The ideas and networks generated via this trade modernisation conference and the meetings of the IORBF, WGTI and WGWEЕ will:

- expose participants to cutting edge ideas in the areas of trade and investment facilitation;
- inject energy and momentum into regional trade and investment efforts, across both private and public sectors
- shape the WGTI and WGWEЕ agenda and work plans, in particular ensuring that their work is complementary; and
- build active working groups with aligned programs that build IORA's cohesion and influence.

### **Administrative and logistical arrangements**

A draft Agenda for the conference has been circulated separately.

A detailed Administrative Arrangements document, including registration details, will be circulated shortly, as will further details about the ICC side event and associated UN Women workshop. To express interest in being invited to the UN Women workshop please contact [jhinni.awotar@iora.int](mailto:jhinni.awotar@iora.int).

For all other conference-related queries, including on the WGTI, IORBF and WGWEЕ, please contact the IORA Secretariat at [jhinni.awotar@iora.int](mailto:jhinni.awotar@iora.int).