

## CONCEPT NOTE

### FIRST MEETING OF THE IORA WORKING GROUP ON THE BLUE ECONOMY (WGBE)

**Date: 05-06 December 2019**

**Venue: Voila Hotel Bagatelle, Réduit  
Republic of Mauritius**

#### 1. Background

At the IORA Leader's Summit that was held on 7 March 2017, IORA Member States adopted the IORA Action Plan 2017-2021, which provides a firm set of realistic and measurable commitments for the IORA Council of Ministers to implement the Jakarta Concord and take IORA forward in a more outcome orientated manner.

The IORA Action Plan 2017-2021 articulates, as short-term targets, the establishment of an IORA Working Group on the Blue Economy (WGBE) as well as the implementation of the outcomes of the Blue Economy Core Group Workshops, including those from the Ministerial and High-level Expert Meetings.

This is in line with the outcomes of the 14<sup>th</sup> Council of Ministers' Meeting of the Indian Ocean Rim Association held in Perth, Australia from 6 - 9 October 2014, which adopted the Blue Economy as a top priority for generating employment and ensuring sustainability in business and economic models for the Indian Ocean Rim region. In this regard, the Ministers affirmed the commitment *"...to strengthening the blue economy—maritime related economic activity—as a common source of growth, innovation and job creation"*. The Ministers further underscored the importance of *the expansion of trade and investment within the region, including fisheries activities, minerals exploration, development of renewable energy and coastal tourism, particularly that these possess a great potential to stimulate growth and improve food and energy security in the IORA region.*

The 17<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Council of Ministers and Related Meetings of the Indian Ocean Rim Association, held in Durban from 14 to 18 October 2017 marked an important milestone on the realisation of the above objectives as the Ministers agreed that South Africa should coordinate the processes towards the implementation of the Action Plan, including the establishment of the Working Group on the Blue Economy. The meeting further agreed on the core group of countries that should ensure that this objective is fully realised. South Africa is the coordinating country for the WGBE, while there are 11 Member States that are part of the cluster group namely: Australia, Bangladesh, Comoros, India, Indonesia, Iran, Kenya, Madagascar, Mozambique, Thailand and UAE.

The First Preparatory Meeting for the Establishment of the WGBE was held in Port Elizabeth, South Africa on 12-13 September 2018. The Terms of Reference were finalised and elements for inclusion into the Work Plan have been discussed. The Work Plan was finalised inter-sessionally through the engagements with Member States and incorporated the following six (6) priority pillars:

- Fisheries and Aquaculture;
- Renewable Ocean Energy;
- Seaports and Shipping;
- Seabed Exploration and Minerals;
- Marine Biotechnology, Research and Development; and

- Tourism (in particular Coastal and Marine Tourism).

## **2. Hosting of the Working Group on the Blue Economy**

The Republic of South Africa (Department of Environment, Forestry and Fisheries) and the IORA Secretariat, in collaboration with Germany as a Dialogue Partner, through GIZ (Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit) will host the First Meeting of the IORA Working Group on the Blue Economy in the Republic of Mauritius from 05-06 December 2019.

## **3. Aims and Objectives**

The aim of this meeting will be to, among other: (a) conduct a focused discussion on the modalities for implementation of the Work Plan on the Blue Economy; (b) consider emerging issues raised by the Committee for Senior Officials related to climate change and marine pollution (in particular plastic pollution); (c) deliberate on the engagement of Dialogue Partners and other relevant stakeholders in the implementation of the Work Plan and (d) to discuss potential resourcing of initiatives in the Work Plan.

## **4. Participation**

Member States are therefore encouraged to send Senior Officials from the Government departments dealing with the Blue Economy, including identified experts in these areas as this will help in deepening discussions in this specialised field.

Full hospitality will be extended to One (1) participant from each IORA Member State, except for high income Member States (Australia, Oman, Seychelles, Singapore, and UAE). Full hospitality will cover the air ticket (Economy Class), hotel accommodation, transport to and from the airport, and selected meals during the workshop.

Dialogue Partners are invited to attend Day 2 of the meeting on 06 December 2019 in Session 4 and 5 to discuss the engagement and collaboration with Dialogue Partners and relevant stakeholders to implement the Work Plan of the WGBE.

## **5. Expected outcomes**

- Agreement on the modalities for implementation of the Work Plan on the Blue Economy.
- Agreement on priority projects of regional significance that can be implemented in the IORA region.
- Agreement on the consideration of aspects related to climate change and marine pollution, in particular plastics.
- Agreement on the roadmap for engagement of Dialogue and other partners in the implementation of the Work Plan.
- Identification of potential sources for funding the implementation of the Work Plan.
- Enhancement of the blue economy priority as a cross-cutting theme within IORA.
- Ensure prioritisation of women and youth participation in the region's blue economy programmes.

## **6. Benefit to Participants**

- Participation in the deliberations to craft the roadmap for implementation of the Work Plan on the Blue Economy.
- Networking opportunity among experts and functionaries dealing with the blue economy.