



**THE 19th INDIAN OCEAN RIM ASSOCIATION MEETING OF THE COUNCIL OF MINISTERS
ABU DHABI COMMUNIQUE
7 NOVEMBER 2019**

We, the Ministers and Heads of Delegation of the Member States of the Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA), Australia, Bangladesh, Comoros, India, Indonesia, Iran, Kenya, Madagascar, Malaysia, Maldives, Mauritius, Mozambique, Oman, Seychelles, Singapore, Somalia, South Africa, Sri Lanka, Tanzania, Thailand, United Arab Emirates and Yemen met in Abu Dhabi, the United Arab Emirates (UAE) for the 19th Meeting of the Council of Ministers (COM) on the 7th of November 2019.

The meeting underscored the benefits for multilateral cooperation among Member States in the pursuit of a more peaceful, stable, and prosperous Indian Ocean region. We affirm our steadfast commitment in supporting the IORA as a platform to enhance constructive dialogue, and to support the IORA's efforts to promote sustainable growth and balanced development in the Indian Ocean rim.

We recognize the efforts of South Africa during its Chair of IORA (2017–2019) and commend its immense contributions, including the establishment of “The IORA Nelson Mandela be the Legacy Internship Programme” in November 2018.

We welcome the UAE as the Chair, and the People's Republic of Bangladesh as the Vice Chair of the Association for the period of 2019 to 2021. We pledge to work closely with the UAE in its efforts to enhance cooperation among Member States, and to develop new mechanisms to augment the effectiveness of the IORA.

We commend the theme selected by the UAE for the period of its Chairmanship: “Promoting a Shared Destiny and Path to Prosperity in the Indian Ocean”. In this regard, we convey our approval of the UAE's IORA priority and focus areas as Chair, namely to better support maritime security and safety, facilitate trade and investment, enhance cultural and tourist exchange, and to promote women's economic empowerment and the Blue Economy.

We commend the Republic of Maldives for the resolution adopted by the 18th Meeting of the Council of Ministers to accept its membership in the IORA and recognize the signing of the instrument of acceptance.

We emphasize our shared desire to safeguard maritime security in the Indian Ocean region. It was noted that acts of destabilization in the region have a negative impact on the maritime security in the interconnected Indian Ocean trading system, and require joint consultation and collaboration among the IORA Member States. We acknowledge the importance of the Working Group on Maritime Safety and Security in initiating constructive dialogue and forging partnerships among Member States.

We underline our strong condemnation of terrorism and extremism in all its forms and manifestations and reaffirm the solidarity of Member States' in combatting terrorism.

We note the importance of the Ministerial Retreat between IORA Member States and Dialogue Partners. We acknowledge that cooperation between Member States and Dialogue Partners is essential in order to fulfil the Association's goals and to overcome the Indian Ocean's critical challenges.

We recognize the constructive discussions held during the 21st Committee of Senior Officials in Abu Dhabi and the outcomes of the workshop on the Mid-term Review and Future IORA Action Plan.

We laud the progress made in Dhaka, the People's Republic of Bangladesh during the 3rd IORA Blue Economy Ministerial Conference in September 2019 and welcome the efforts of IORA Member States towards strengthening cooperation in the focus area of the Blue Economy.

We recognise the importance of ocean health for a sustainable blue economy and well-being of Indian Ocean communities. We share concern about the pressures on our oceans, including the impacts of marine litter, illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing and climate change.

We note the importance of convening the sixth edition of the Indian Ocean Dialogue in New Delhi on 13 December 2019, as part of the IORA's endeavours to enhance Indo-Pacific collaboration in Maritime Security, Economic Cooperation, Disaster Risk Management, and Blue Economy.

We appreciate the work of the Cluster Group on Disaster Risk Management (DRM), which held its first meeting in New Delhi in February 2019, resulting in a proposed Work Plan for IORA Member States to prevent and mitigate disaster risks in the Indian Ocean Region. We also welcome the proposal to set up a new Working Group on DRM, and the publication by India of the first edition of a booklet of "IORA Guidelines for Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief".

We recognize the obstacles and challenges facing multilateral cooperation at the regional and global levels, and we affirm the critical importance of reforming IORA's Secretariat in order for it to promote collaboration across the Indian Ocean region. We extend our appreciation to Member States that have seconded officials to the Secretariat and implore Member States to provide further support to assist the Secretariat in fulfilling its mandate in an efficient and effective manner. In this context, we welcomed the IT expert seconded by India to the Secretariat and India's new contribution of USD 1 million to the IORA Special Fund.

We extend our appreciation for the warm hospitality displayed by the Government of the United Arab Emirates and we praise the work of the Secretariat in preparation for the hosting of the 19th Meeting of the Council of Ministers and related meetings in Abu Dhabi.

Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates

7 November 2019