



The United Arab Emirates (UAE) assumed the position of Chair of the Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA) during the 19th meeting of the Council of Ministers (COM) held on 7 November in Abu Dhabi, UAE.

H.E. Ahmed Al Sayegh, Minister of State and Chair of the COM, announced that the UAE's theme for its two-year period as Chair of IORA was "*Promoting a Shared Destiny and Path to Prosperity in the Indian Ocean*". H.E. Al Sayegh said that the UAE "was incredibly proud to chair IORA, the only Ministerial-level organization that focuses purely on the Indian Ocean region, bound together by growing economic and trade linkages, and a shared interest in promoting prosperity, peace and stability".

"The UAE wishes to leave a lasting legacy that not only allows IORA to fulfil its potential as a globally significant regional organization, but one that brings our countries together in the spirit of cooperation", H.E. Al Sayegh said.

The Hon. Dr Naledi Pandor, Minister of International Relations and Cooperation of the Republic of South Africa, handed over the Chairship of IORA to the UAE. "The sentiments expressed by President Mandela 23 years ago remain true today and continue to bind us in ensuring that the Indian Ocean Rim region remains an important global player that promotes peace, socio-economic development and solidarity, especially under the current global environment that is characterised by surging doubts on the centrality of multilateralism", Minister Pandor said.

Bangladesh assumed the position of Vice-Chair of IORA during the meeting. Admiral (retd.) Md. Khurshed Alam of Bangladesh said "the spirit of cooperation and momentum of collaboration among the IORA members will be the key to taking us to our desired destination in the days to come."

Dr Nomvuyo N. Nokwe, Secretary-General of IORA, congratulated South Africa for its successful Chairship of IORA over the last two years, including IORA's Nelson Mandela Be the Legacy Internship Programme, due to commence in 2020. Dr Nokwe said it was important to "strengthen our efforts in IORA to move from a premise of promoting economic cooperation to a stronger commitment to the implementation of projects that are people centred and sustainable."

The meeting was attended by IORA's 22 Member States and nine Dialogue Partners. The attached [Abu Dhabi Communiqué](#) was produced as the final outcome document.

Other notable achievements included:

- the signing of the IORA Instrument of Acceptance by the Republic of Maldives, IORA's newest Member State;
- agreement to include the Republic of Italy as IORA's 10th Dialogue Partner;
- agreement to include the Western Indian Ocean Marine Science Association (WIOMSA) as an Observer;
- the signing of the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) for Promotion of Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) by the United Republic of Tanzania;
- signing of the MOU to strengthen IORA between the IORA Secretariat and the German Development Agency (GIZ) governing a EUR995,000 partnership over three years;
- signing of the MOU on Application of Science and Technology and Innovation for Sustainable Development between the IORA Secretariat and the Centre for Science and Technology of the Non-Aligned Movement and other developing countries (NAM S&T Centre) on Application of Science and Technology and Innovation for Sustainable Development;

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- endorsement of a MOU to strengthen IORA between the IORA Secretariat and the French Development Agency (AFD) governing a EUR1 million partnership over three years
- welcoming of a USD1 million contribution from India to the IORA Special Fund
- welcoming of a USD100,000 contribution from China to the IORA Special Fund
- launching of the Journal of the Indian Ocean Rim Studies (volume two, issue one).

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