

Official Press Release: 20th IORA Council of Ministers Meeting on 17 December 2020 held by the United Arab Emirates, virtually.

IORA News

17 December 2020



The United Arab Emirates (UAE) hosted the 20th IORA Council of Ministers (COM) Meeting on 17 December 2020, virtually.

This year, IORA held its first Council of Ministers virtually, welcoming its 22 Member States and 10 Dialogue Partners, to discuss ways in coordinating efforts to achieve IORA's vision for a peaceful, stable, and prosperous Indian Ocean region as outlined in the Jakarta Concord and IORA Action Plan.

The 20th Council of Ministers was inaugurated by His Highness Sheikh Abdullah bin Zayed Al Nahyan, Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of the United Arab Emirates. "...due to the exceptional circumstances brought about by Covid-19, we must meet virtually. I am very pleased that IORA has managed to sustain momentum within its core initiatives during the past year, and all Member States have worked together in the face of common challenges during this difficult time" His Highness said. The honourable Minister stated that "the challenges we face have only strengthened the importance of multilateralism and organizations such as IORA. It is clear that we must work together to achieve prosperity, overcome obstacles, and advance our development agenda".

Official Press Release – IORA Secretariat

The COM Meeting was chaired by His Excellency Ahmed Ali Al Sayegh, UAE Minister of State. The UAE assumed the position of the IORA Chair in November 2019 during the 19th COM, and adopted the theme of “Promoting a Shared Destiny and Path to Prosperity in the Indian Ocean” for its Chairship from 2019 – 2021.

H.E. Ahmed Ali Al Sayegh, said that “It has been a year since the UAE assumed Chairship of the IORA, and much has changed in that time. As we continue to address the challenge of a global pandemic, the UAE is deeply appreciative of the cooperative response of all Member States and Dialogue Partners of IORA.”. In particular H.E. Al Sayegh acknowledged “the unprecedented virtual meeting of the Committee of Senior Officials and Dialogue Partners, which was convened to discuss the impact of the pandemic, and ways to strengthen cooperation within Indian Ocean region. This led to the first ever intercessional Joint Statement, emphasizing IORA’s Solidarity and Cooperation in Response to COVID-19.”

Rear Admiral (Retd.) Md. Khurshed Alam, BN Secretary, Maritime Affairs Unit of the People's Republic of Bangladesh, highlighted that the “Indian Ocean is of paramount significance to us for security, connectivity, peace and prosperity, strengthening IORA ultimately would propel our strides for individual growth and development. In pursuit of that we believe IORA would initiate necessary steps in forging greater cooperation in areas of fisheries, shipping, maritime safety and security, tourism, disaster management etc. towards achieving a sustainable Blue Economy in the region”.

H.E. Dr Nomvuyo N. Nokwe, Secretary-General of IORA, expressed sincere gratitude and appreciation to the Government of the UAE, IORA Chair, for hosting the 20th IORA COM. “IORA is moving from strength to strength. Excellencies, this is my last tenure as the Secretary-General of IORA and I wish to express upfront how I have thoroughly enjoyed being at the helm of this august Association that has its hallmarks from Late President Nelson Mandela.” Dr Nokwe said. With Dr Nokwe’s term in office coming to an end, she stressed that IORA Member States are blessed with a great diversity of untapped resources and assets that if explored and exploited efficiently, could contribute to the successful and sustainable development of the region. Dr Nokwe served as the IORA Secretary General for a period of three years.

The meeting was attended by IORA Member States, Dialogue Partners and Specialised Agencies. The Ministers adopted the Emirates Communiqué as the outcome document for the virtual COM.

Additionally, the 22nd meeting of the Committee of Senior Officials (CSO) held from 15 – 16 December 2020, was chaired by H.E. Abdul Nasser Al Shaali, Assistant Minister for Economic and Trade Affairs at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation.

Other notable achievements included:

- welcoming Sri Lanka as the incoming Vice Chair of IORA for the period 2021-23;
- agreement to include the French Republic as the IORA’s 23rd Member State, on the basis of Réunion Island only;
- commencement of the forthcoming Nelson Mandela Be the Legacy Internship Programme at the IORA Secretariat in July 2021;
- establishing two new bodies within IORA, the Core Group on Fisheries Management (CGFM) and the Working Group on Science, Technology and Innovation (WGSTI);
- the launching of the IORA-UN Women report *Women’s economic empowerment in fisheries in the blue economy of the Indian Ocean Rim: A baseline report by the*

Official Press Release – IORA Secretariat

Australian Minister of Foreign Affairs and Minister for Women, Senator the Hon. Marise Payne;

- welcoming the recent signing of the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) for Promotion of Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) by Maldives, the UAE and Malaysia;
- welcoming the recent signing of the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the Governments of the Member States of the Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA) for the Coordination and Cooperation of Search and Rescue (SAR) Services in the Indian Ocean Region by India and Maldives;
- welcoming the extension and expansion of the IORA-GIZ partnership, following the announcement of an additional EUR1.2 million by Germany to the partnership;
- welcoming ongoing work to establish the IORA Human Development Fund, aimed towards closing the region's human development gaps;
- welcoming increasing engagements with China, France, Italy, Japan, the Republic of Korea, and the United States of America
- adopting IORA's Solidarity and Cooperation in response to COVID-19, developed during the first ever virtual Meeting of the Committee of Senior Officials (CSO) and Dialogue Partner Engagement on COVID-19: Responses, Cooperation, and Partnerships held on 21 May 2020.

For more information contact hq@iora.int. Follow the conversation #IORA @IORAofficial
