

IOR/16COM/REP/16/11

**16th Meeting of the Council of Ministers
Bali, Indonesia
Thursday, 27 October 2016**

Declaration on Gender Equality and Women's Economic Empowerment

WE, the Foreign Ministers of the Member States of the Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA), Australia, Bangladesh, Comoros, India, Indonesia, Iran, Kenya, Madagascar, Malaysia, Mauritius, Mozambique, Oman, Seychelles, Singapore, Somalia, South Africa, Sri Lanka, Tanzania, Thailand, United Arab Emirates and Yemen, on the occasion of the sixteenth Council of Ministers' Meeting (COMM):

- Recall existing IORA Member State commitments to advancing gender equality, including the recognition at the 2013 COMM that the empowerment of women and girls is a cross cutting theme in all of IORA's work, the 2014 IORA Economic Declaration which stated that *"the prosperity of the region will only be realised fully by investing in the empowerment of women"*, and the 2015 Padang Communique, which reaffirmed *"commitment to the importance of women's economic empowerment as an effective driver of economic growth and development"*.
- Reaffirm the commitments made on gender equality and women's economic empowerment in the Addis Ababa Action Agenda of the Third International Conference on Financing for Development and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development including the Sustainable Development Goals.

HEREBY DECLARE AS FOLLOWS:

That the Member States of IORA recognise that:

- Women's economic empowerment is a foundational element of gender equality and the full and equal realisation of women's human rights.
- Women's full and equal participation and leadership in the economy are vital for realising gender equality and empowerment of women that will make a crucial contribution to progress across all goals and targets of the 2030 Agenda.
- Higher female earnings also lead to greater investment in children's health and education, which likewise contribute to longer term economic growth.
- Many women in IORA Member States are engaged in the informal economy, without adequate job or income security and inadequate social protection.
- Women make a significant contribution to peace and security, which are key ingredients for advancing economic prosperity.

- Women's voice, participation in leadership and decision-making is important in our quest for gender equality and women's economic empowerment and sustainable economic growth.

And further, the Member States of IORA will make efforts towards our shared goal to promote gender equality and women's economic empowerment in the Indian Ocean region in the following ways:

1. Prioritise efforts to promote equal opportunity in employment and non-discrimination in formal and informal economic sectors through laws, policies and practices.
2. Prioritise efforts towards the elimination and prevention of all forms of violence against women and girls.
3. Promote an enabling environment in which women and girls can reach their full economic potential through increasing social awareness and providing economic opportunities.
4. Review and address the barriers which limit women's economic participation, such as access to financial resources and markets, leadership and participation in decision-making, skills and capacity building, and innovation and technology.
5. Invest in education for women and girls, including technical training and skills development.
6. Support and expand opportunities for women business leaders, women entrepreneurs and women-owned businesses in supply chains.
7. Encourage businesses working in IORA Member States to adopt relevant internationally-recognised gender equality standards into their business policies and practices.