

CELEBRATING 27 YEARS OF IORA: A CULTURAL SHOWCASE



The Secretariat of IORA marked its 27th anniversary with a vibrant cultural celebration at Tribeca Mall, Mauritius. His Excellency Prithvirajsing Roopun, President of Mauritius, underscored IORA's role in promoting regional cooperation, peace, and sustainable development. He hailed the IORA Open Fair as a platform for showcasing cultural diversity and fostering friendship among nations. Salman Al Farisi, IORA's Secretary-General, emphasized the significance of celebrating cultural richness. He lauded the diverse traditions, languages, and histories that shape each nation's identity. During this occasion, the new IORA website (www.iora.int) was launched by the President of the Republic of Mauritius and the Secretary-General of IORA. The IORA Open Fair served as more than just a celebration; it symbolized the association's commitment to unity and collaboration. By bringing together diverse cultures, it strengthened the bonds between nations and promoted mutual understanding.

SRI LANKA CELEBRATES IORA DAY UNDER ITS CHAIRMANSHIP

IORA Day was commemorated under the aegis of Sri Lanka's Chairmanship at the Galle Face Green overlooking the Indian Ocean on 10 March 2024 under the theme "Ensuring a Sustainable Indian Ocean for Future Generations". The event was jointly organized by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Education and the Sri Lanka Navy. The theme chosen underscores the importance Sri Lanka places on preserving the Oceans' health for the benefit of the future generations. Since this year's IORA Day was focused on children as the future generation, a series of all - island events with the participation of students from schools in all nine provinces were held.



EU BECOMES THE 12TH DIALOGUE PARTNER OF IORA



On 30 January 2024, the ceremony of submission of the letter of Acceptance of EU as the 12th Dialogue Partner of IORA took place at IORA Secretariat in Ebene, Mauritius. Mr Oskar Benedikt, Ambassador of the European Union Delegation to the Republic of Mauritius and the Republic of Seychelles handed over the Letter of Acceptance to Dr. Salman Al Farisi, Secretary-General of IORA. The joining of EU to IORA as Dialogue Partner marks a significant milestone in fostering collaboration, dialogue, and cooperation across the Indian Ocean region and beyond.

IORA-MCCI/MARC ALTERNATIVE DISPUTE RESOLUTION SYMPOSIUM

The IORA-MCCI/MARC ADR Symposium was held on February 8th, 2024, at the Labourdonnais Hotel in Port Louis, Mauritius. As part of the initiative to establish an IORA Centre of Excellence for Dispute Resolution and led by the The Mauritius Chamber of Commerce and Industry - MCCI, this project aims to put light on dispute resolution in the Indian Ocean region. The event was graced by the Hon. Mr. Mahen Kumar Seeruttun, the then Minister of Financial Services and Good Governance, and currently Minister of Agro-Industry and Food Security.

Additionally, the IORA Secretary-General, H.E. Dr Salman Al Farisi, delivered a thought-provoking address to the esteemed audience. Moreover Mr. Madhvendra Singh, an Indian consultant, presented his comparative study of ADR mechanisms in the Indian Ocean region to the arbitration professionals present at the event. The event delved into various critical topics such as Mediation, Investment Disputes, and Arbitration, shedding light on maritime disputes in the IORA region.



THE 3RD EU INDO PACIFIC MINISTERIAL MEETING, BRUSSELS

On 2nd February 2024, the IORA Secretary General was invited to participate in the EU Ministerial Meeting and shared his view at the roundtable on economic resilience and investment. The Secretary General reaffirmed the commitment of IORA to:

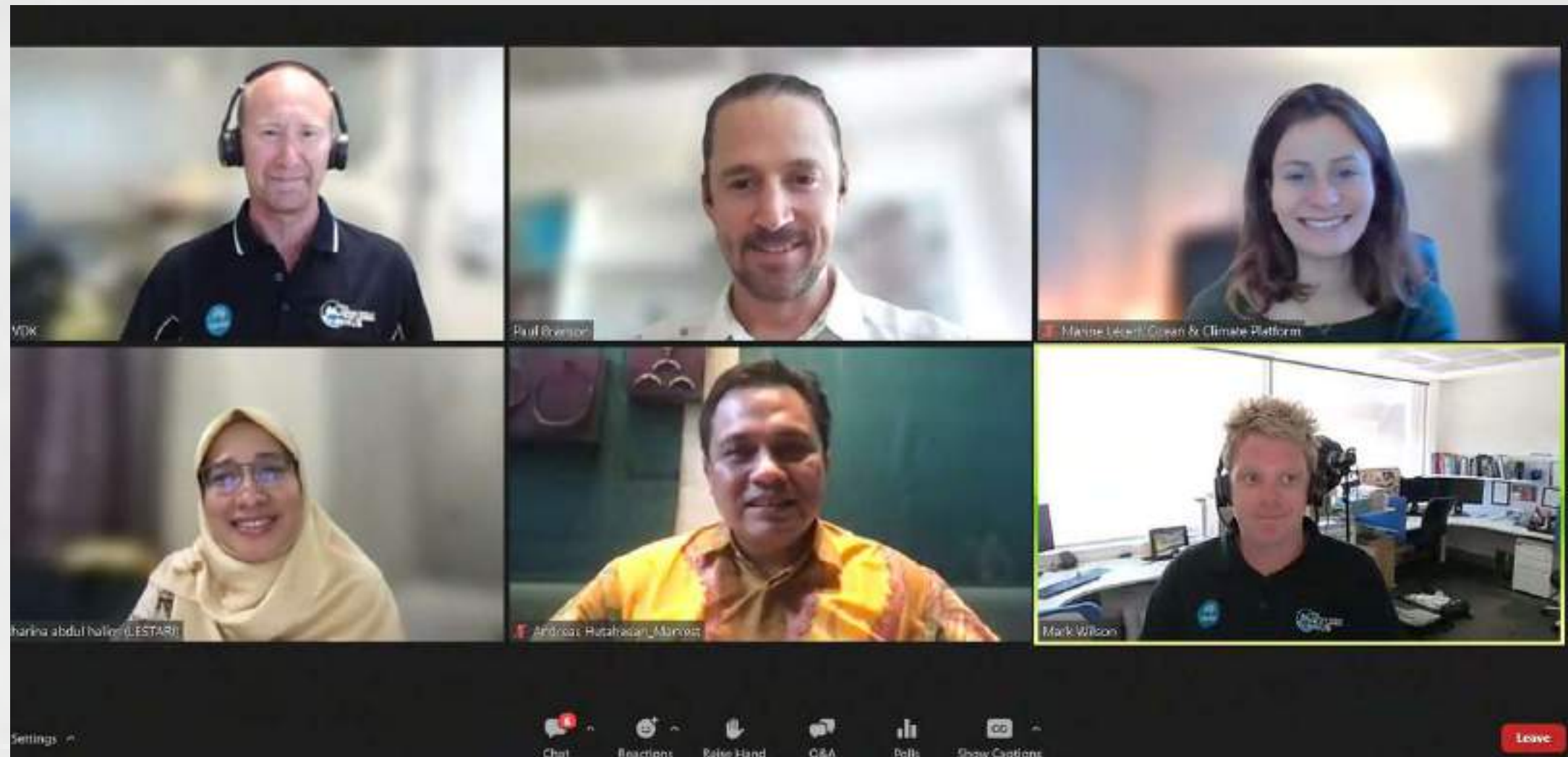
- (i) develop ocean economy in Indo-Pacific region,
- (ii) strengthen supply and value chains, and
- (iii) promote IORA-EU economic relations.

The Forum provides an opportunity to enhance collaboration between IORA and new potential partners.



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▶ WEBINAR ON NATURE-BASED SOLUTIONS FOR ADAPTATION TO CLIMATE IMPACTS IN THE COASTAL ZONE THINK TANK



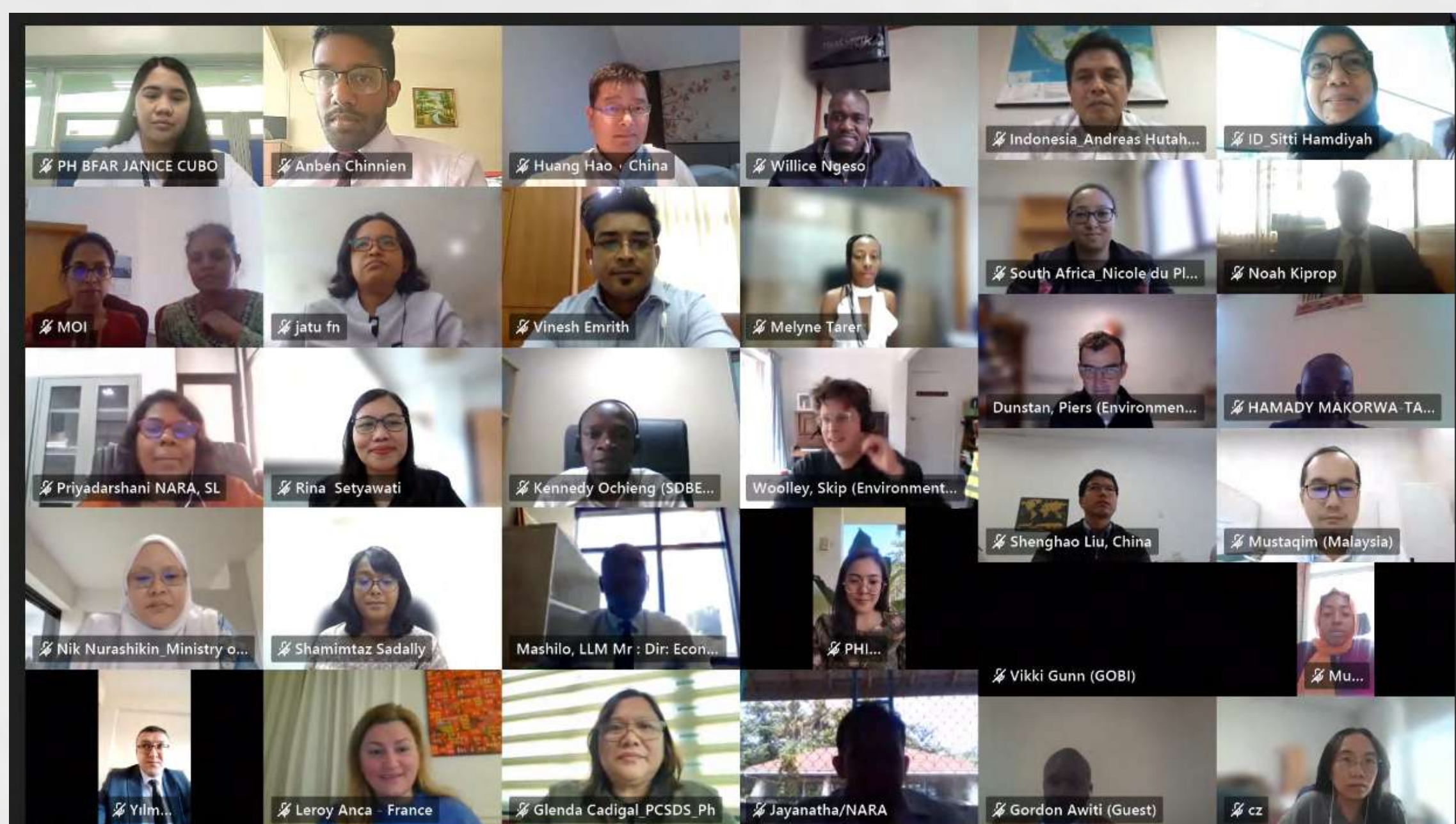
The IORA Blue Carbon Hub, in collaboration with the IORA Secretariat, hosted the Webinar on Nature-based Solutions for Adaptation to Climate Impacts in the Coastal Zone Think Tank on 2 February 2024. The webinar enabled relevant stakeholders to discuss challenges and opportunities related to Nature-based Solutions for Adaptation to Climate Impacts in the Coastal Zone and increased awareness of Nature-based Solutions for Adaptation to Climate Impacts in the Coastal Zone.

▶ VISIT OF 11 IRANIAN WOMEN ENTREPRENEURS, SCHOLARS, AND ACADEMICS TO IORA SECRETARIAT

H.E. Mr. Hassan Alibakshi, Ambassador of the Islamic Republic of Iran to Madagascar, and non-resident Ambassador to Mauritius, Comoros, and Seychelles, paid a courtesy visit to H.E. Dr. Salman Al-Farisi, Secretary-General of IORA, at IORA Secretariat on 7 March 2024. The Iranian ambassador was accompanied by 11 Iranian businesswomen, NGO leaders and scholars, who was visiting Mauritius for the Iranian Cultural week, an event which showcased the work of Iranian women in different business fields such as handicrafts, culinary arts, and women empowerment. It is worth noting that Iran is the chair of the IORA Working Group on Women's Economic Empowerment, for a mandate of two years from 2024 to 2026. This is Iran's second consecutive term in this role.

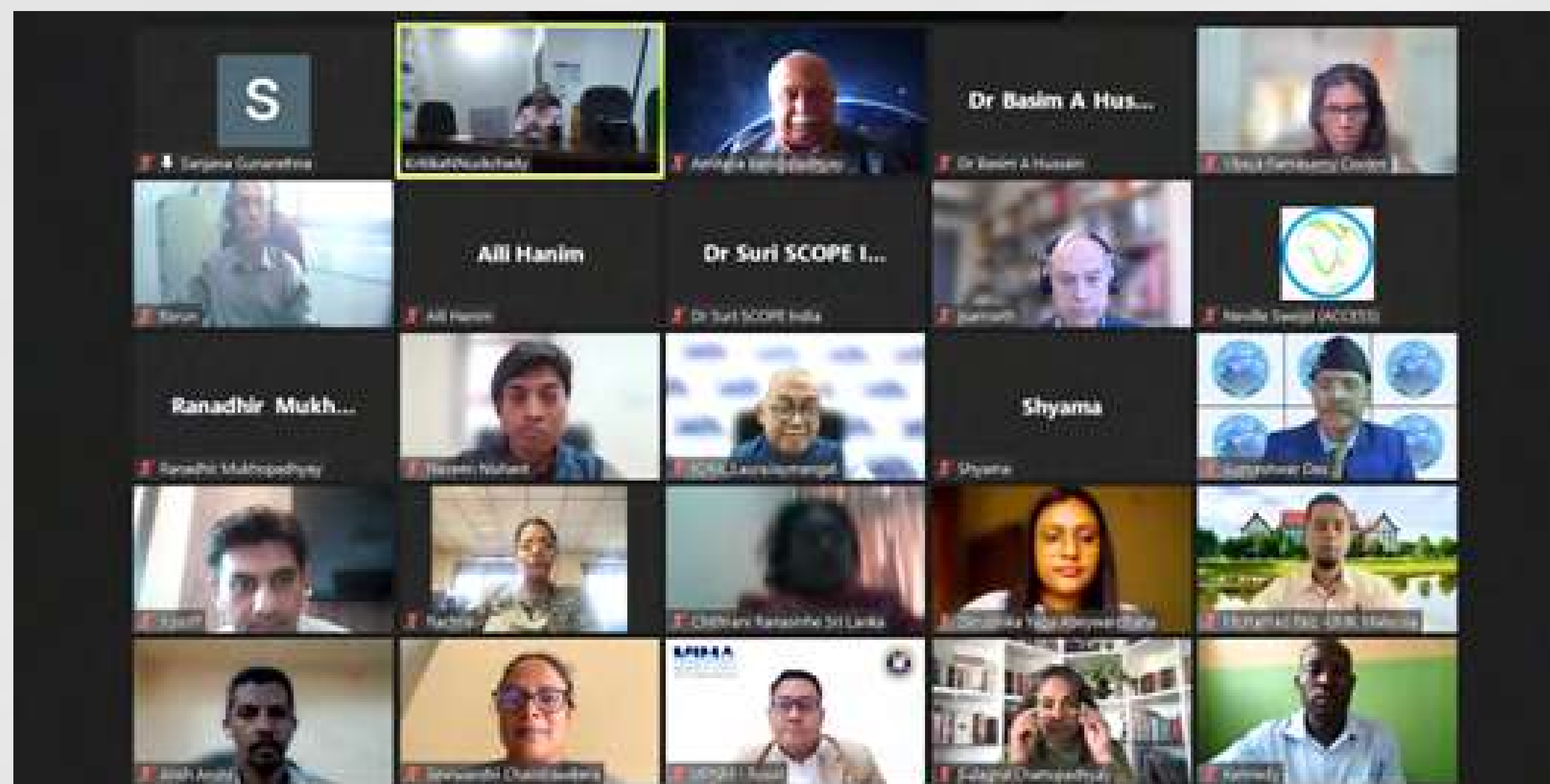


▶ FIRST ONLINE WORKSHOP ON THE BIOGEOGRAPHIC REGIONALISATION FOR THE INDIAN OCEAN



Australia's National Science Agency, the Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation (CSIRO), in collaboration with the IORA secretariat and the Government Departments of Climate Change, Energy, Environment and Water and Foreign Affairs and Trade, organised the First online Workshop on Biogeographic Regionalisation for the Indian Ocean on 22-23 January 2024, which aimed at sharing information on existing bioregional efforts, as well as reviewing and refining CSIRO's draft bioregionalisation for the Indian Ocean to ensure it represents expertise of representatives from IORA member States and dialogue partners.

▶ INTERNATIONAL WORKSHOP ON IMPACTS OF CLIMATE CHANGE ON SMALL ISLAND DEVELOPING STATES



The IORA, in cooperation with the Centre for Science and Technology of the Non-Aligned and Other Developing Countries (NAM S&T Centre) and the Scientific Committee on Problems of the Environment (SCOPE) hosted the workshop on 28 to 29 February 2024. The objectives of the workshop were to Share Knowledge and Research, Create Awareness, and Foster Collaboration among the participants to develop effective strategies and solutions for building climate resilience systems and infrastructure in SIDS. The topics covered included, Climate Change and Coastal Resilience; Climate Smart Technologies; Agriculture and Food Security; Biodiversity Conservation, Tourism and Fisheries; Water Management and Related Challenges due to Climate Variability; Coastal Environment Protection and Disaster-Risk Reduction, and Community Engagement and Women Empowerment.

The workshop gathered over 70 delegates including academics, government officials, representatives from international organisations, NGOs, stakeholders from SIDS community and IORA Member States and Dialogue Partners. The IORA Secretary General, Dr Salman Farisi, delivered opening remarks in which he highlighted the IORA's achievements in this field, and underline IORA's unique comparative advantage, which enables it to IORA can play a pivotal role in supporting SIDS in building resilience, fostering sustainable development, and advocating for their unique needs to address climate challenges.

▶ REVIEW OF CSO AND COM MEETINGS FORMAT

The People's Republic of Bangladesh, the Past Chair of IORA, hosted a virtual meeting on 06 February 2024 to review the format of Meetings of the IORA Council of Ministers (COM) and Committee of Senior Officials (CSO). At the meeting, IORA Member States considered the proposals made to reformat the COM and CSO Meetings including to allow greater discussion time on policy and strategic issues in the agenda. The meeting was chaired by Rear Admiral (Rtd). Md. Khurshed Alam, Secretary of the Maritime Affairs Unit, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Bangladesh, while senior officials of the IORA Member States and Secretary-General of IORA, Dr. Salman Al Farisi were present.



▶ SECRETARIAT-TO-SECRETARIAT MEETING, IORA-ASEAN



IORA Secretariat had an interactive meeting with ASEAN Secretariat virtually on 28 March 2024, to look at the good practices from ASEAN for the management of its external relations between countries and regional organizations and their project management system. The Secretariat-to-Secretariat meeting is part of the implementation of MoU between IORA and ASEAN. The insightful meeting has further set the vision, on how IORA can develop a strong project management system in future as well as highlighted the subtlety of the relations between Member State- Secretariat- Dialogue Partners. We look forward to further collaboration and Secretariat to Secretariat discussions in future.

➤ REVITALISATION OF THE SUSTAINABLE WHALE WATCHING NETWORK



With the significant growth of whale and dolphin watching tourism, France/Reunion has taken the lead to revitalise the Sustainable Whale and Dolphin Watching Tourism Network. The primary aim of the Network is to foster regional cooperation in sustainable whale and dolphin watching tourism. It seeks to do this by facilitating the sharing of information, promoting capacity building, and providing access to expertise. The overarching goal is to ensure the industry's economic, social, and environmental sustainability within the Indian Ocean region.

The newsletters will serve as a tool for achieving this objective playing a role in developing and sharing information as a collective resource. It fulfills multiple functions, including sharing success stories and information about initiatives supporting sustainable whale and dolphin watching tourism, disseminating new research and scientific insights to advance industry knowledge, and promoting partnerships and collaboration among stakeholders for the betterment of the sector.

➤ SECOND ONLINE WORKSHOP ON THE BIOGEOGRAPHIC REGIONALISATION FOR THE INDIAN OCEAN

IORA Member States presented on their experience and management of marine biodiversity, its distribution, as well as progress towards ratification of the BBNJ treaty during the second online Workshop on Biogeographic Regionalisation for the Indian Ocean that was held on 15-16 February 2024. The online workshop was organised by Australia's National Science Agency, the Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation (CSIRO), in collaboration with the IORA secretariat and the Australian Government Departments of Climate Change, Energy, Environment and Water and Foreign Affairs and Trade.



➤ THIRD OF THE WORKSHOP SERIES ON THE BIOGEOGRAPHIC REGIONALISATION FOR THE INDIAN OCEAN



The meeting was jointly organized by Australia's National Science Agency, the Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation (CSIRO), in collaboration with the IORA secretariat and the Australian Government Departments of Climate Change, Energy, Environment and Water and Foreign Affairs and Trade. The workshop which was held on 25-27 March in Singapore, resulted in concrete recommendations on the wayforward, including to increase awareness/understanding of the Biodiversity Beyond National Jurisdiction (BBNJ) treaty to support signature and ratification and the establishment of a Technical scientific experts' group that would support the IORA Working Group on the Blue Economy.

➤ WASTE SEGREGATION AND PLASTIC RECYCLING COURSE FOR IORA MEMBER STATES



Singapore hosted an in-person course on Waste Segregation and Plastic Recycling for Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA), which was held under the auspices of the Singapore Cooperation Programme and attended by 17 participants from 10 Member States. The course was held on 18-22 March 2024.

Waste segregation and plastic recycling (insert icon recycling) are important components of the IORA Strategic Framework of Action to Combat Marine Debris in the Indian Ocean and IORA's Blue Economy initiative. Through interactive sessions and hands-on activities, participants explored practical solutions and built networks with industry professionals across the region.

Singapore is happy to share their experiences and provide a platform for IORA member states to collectively work toward positive environmental outcomes for the Indian Ocean region.

➤ PILOT PROJECT : SALINITY GRADIENT POWER AS A SUSTAINABLE SOLUTION, SAINT MARTIN ISLAND - BANGLADESH

This ongoing project is implemented by University of Dhaka, Bangladesh and the Maritime Affairs Unit, Ministry of Foreign Affairs with the funding support of IORA Special Fund.

The project focuses on Salinity Gradient Power as a sustainable solution to address energy demands challenges in remote island of St. Martin. It promotes prototypes aim to improve locals' quality of life by providing reliable electricity, reducing CO2 emissions, and promoting sustainable fishing practices.

Progress is promising with six prototypes developed for saltwater-based lamps and reverse electro dialysis (RED) based salinity gradient power sources. This initiative not only benefits St. Martin's Island but also has implications for other coastal areas globally facing similar energy challenges



➤ 30TH INDIAN OCEAN BUSINESS FORUM MEETING (IORBF)

On the 25th of March 2024, the 30th Meeting of the IORBF was held virtually, under the able chairship of Sri Lanka, chaired by the CEO of the Sri Lanka- Ceylon Chamber of Commerce, Mr Buwanekabahu Perera. The meeting was attended by 8 Member States and 6 Dialogue Partners from IORA. It was an opportunity to discuss about upcoming events under the Business Forum, namely the IORA Business Conclave 2024, which shall be held in Sri Lanka, on 28-29 May 2024 and the IORA-India Cruise Tourism scheduled for June in New-Delhi, India. During the meeting, the Chair invited all member states to seize the opportunity to attend the Business Conclave, as is shall be a tremendous occasion for the promotion of trade and investment in the Indian Ocean Region and beyond.

▶ INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY CELEBRATION 2024



On the International Women's Day, IORA produced a celebratory video with messages from IORA Member States and Dialogue Partners. The video included the message for Women's Day from the Member States India, Iran, Kenya, Madagascar, Maldives, Oman, and UAE. Moreover, the Chair of the Working Group for the Women's Economic Empowerment (WGWEE), the Secretary General of IORA and the Dialogue Partner, the European Union participated in the video. The main take away was about working together through the WGWEE with the aim of shaking stereotypes and creating inclusive platforms where women can thrive and contribute to the success of their countries, and across the Indian Ocean Region and beyond.

▶ 68TH SESSION OF THE COMMISSION OF THE STATUS OF WOMEN (CSW68), NEW YORK, USA

On the occasion of the 68th Session of the Commission of the Status of Women held in UN Headquarters in New York, the Chair of the Working Group for the Women's Economic Empowerment (WGWEE), the Islamic Republic of Iran, hosted a panel discussion on the theme of Women's Economic Empowerment, the Family Empowerment, and Social Development, whereby IORA Member States were conveyed to participate. During the CSW68, the Chair of the WGWEE, seized the opportunity to highlight the ongoing work being done under the IORA WGWEE focusing on the role of women in the economic development, family enhancement and society promotion.

