

FOURTH INDIAN OCEAN DIALOGUE

9-10 October 2017



وزارة الخارجية
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مركز الإمارات للدراسات والبحوث الاستراتيجية
The Emirates Center for Strategic Studies and Research

حوار المحيط الهندي الرابع لرابطة الدول المطلة على المحيط الهندي 9-10 أكتوبر 2017م – أبوظبي

4th Indian Ocean Dialogue-Indian Ocean Rim Association 9-10 October 2017- Abu Dhabi

ABU DHABI CONSENSUS

1. The Fourth Indian Ocean Dialogue (IOD) was held in Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates (UAE) on 9-10 October 2017. The Dialogue was hosted by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation (MOFAIC) of the UAE and the Emirates Centre for Strategic Studies and Research (ECSSR), with the support of the Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA).
2. The Dialogue was attended by 75 government officials and representatives of think tanks and civil society from 16 Member States of the IORA (Australia, Bangladesh, Comoros, India, Indonesia, Kenya, Malaysia, Mauritius, Oman, Seychelles, Somalia, Sri Lanka, South Africa, Tanzania, United Arab Emirates, Yemen) and 4 Dialogue Partners (China, Egypt, Germany, United Kingdom).
3. The Fourth IOD held discussions in keeping with the tradition of the three previous IODs which were held in India, Australia and Indonesia, respectively. The Dialogue retained its role as a platform to discuss and debate key opportunities and challenges in the Indian Ocean Region (IOR) by facilitating exchange of ideas and promoting new and constructive recommendations for the consideration of all stakeholders, with a view to strengthening regional cooperation in the IOR. By hosting the Fourth IOD, the UAE targeted the requirement of the IORA Member States to address current challenges and opportunities facing the region and provided a platform to invite suggestions for possible future actions to effectively combat these challenges.
4. Four major themes were discussed at the Fourth IOD namely: (i) Maritime Safety and Security: Enhancing Cooperative Mechanisms in the IOR, (ii) Renewable Energy and Innovation: New Technologies for Sustainable Energy Security, (iii) Climate Change: Adaptation and Resilience of Coastal Communities in the IOR, and (iv) Cyber Security in the IOR: Partnership for Sustainable Development.

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5. The Fourth IOD noted a marked trend towards more tangible and operations-oriented discussions, with Member States expressing the need to identify specific issues to effectively progress further, and calling for the IORA to move from focusing on threats to responses.
6. The Dialogue recognized that the Indian Ocean is facing grave on-going maritime safety and security challenges, which require coherence in regional cooperation to secure and enhance the economic potential of the region. The inter-relatedness of maritime safety and security threats and economic and ecological hazards was highlighted.
7. The meeting touched upon the growing global interest in maritime safety and security in the IOR, triggered by the challenges represented by terrorism; piracy; armed robbery; transnational organized crimes; trafficking in humans, drugs, arms and other illicit items; Illegal, Unregulated and Unreported (IUU) fishing; and other maritime activities that threaten the stability, security and prosperity of the region.
8. The importance of advancing progressive policy formulation for regional capacity building, and the significance of enhancing partnership value for active collaboration among IORA Member States and Dialogue Partners was highlighted; it was agreed that all relevant stakeholders need to be suitably and actively engaged in the process.
9. The Member States urged that a regional maritime safety and security structure that accommodates the requirements of the diverse nations of the IORA, and examines the possibility of coordination and cooperation with extra regional forums be formulated. It was noted that establishment of a maritime safety and security “culture” could be actively pursued, with the ultimate goal being the establishment of a coherent security architecture for the region.
10. The delegates noted that successful implementation of Maritime Domain Awareness (MDA) programs rests on the foundations of education and awareness among the maritime community, willingness to share information and data, and fostering awareness through education, training and public outreach.
11. They affirmed that these issues require mutual assistance in capacity building, law-enforcement cooperation, information sharing, enhancing legal capacity, technical assistance and training; and suggested that the various maritime safety and security agencies in the region could be linked together to further this aim.

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12. It was suggested that Coast Guard Agencies (CGAs) may be considered for handling of maritime safety and security issues in the IOR, in view of their adaptability and flexibility.
13. It was mentioned that the IORA Member States may consider designating specific National Focal Points to focus on the IORA Priority Area of “Maritime Safety and Security”, to coordinate work in this area.
14. The role and contribution of academia and universities towards the development of capabilities in maritime safety and security, and for realizing endeavors for strengthening cooperation in the same was noted by the participants.
15. The meeting recognized that Renewable Energy is a critical driver for future economic growth and sustainable development, as it provides diversity and security of energy supply, reduction of pollutants and global greenhouse gas emissions and employment generation.
16. The participants at the Fourth IOD noted that the proportion of demand for energy to its available supply is very high, resulting in lack of access to energy to a sizeable section of the region’s population. Concerns were raised about the foreseeable surge in demand for energy in the near future, with its consequential adverse repercussions.
17. It was suggested that Member States may consider creation of Transmission Beltways for sharing surplus clean power amongst them.
18. The Member States noted that, for the IOR to emerge as a cost competitive market for Renewable Energy, there is urgent need to encourage innovations; develop renewable energy alternatives (such as solar, wind, geothermal, ocean tidal and wave energy) to diversify energy sources; remove discrepancies in standards and norms at various stages of the energy process; build capacity, especially for research and technology; increase energy efficiency in order to neutralize and decrease the ever-increasing demand for energy; make information and data obtained through comprehensive resource mapping publically accessible; and simultaneously evolve the regulatory and policy frameworks to embrace these developments.
19. The critical requirement to evolve a holistic view for the comprehensive development of the Renewable Energy sector was emphasized, so that due attention is provided to each stage of the energy process – from generation to transmission, transportation, conversion and distribution.

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20. It was also noted that the IORA Member States need to adopt a “systemic approach” to determining their energy mix in a manner that leads to “sector-coupling”.
21. The participants highlighted the obstacles raised by financial challenges at various stages from the initiation to the final implementation of renewable energy projects, and requested Member States to consider development of suitable financial mechanisms to address the same.
22. The meeting agreed that IORA Member States may examine the option of setting targets for the share of Renewable Energy in total national energy mix to be achieved by the year 2025. This ambition was inspired by the leadership demonstrated by the United Arab Emirates in setting a target of 44% Renewable Energy by 2025.
23. It was urged that a template of cooperation between IORA and IRENA may be formulated, with the UAE playing a leadership role for cooperation in Renewable Energy. Ideas for project proposals from all member states and Dialogue Partners were invited.
24. The Fourth IOD recognized that the IOR is highly vulnerable to humanitarian, ecological and economic calamities as a direct consequence of climate change, through fluctuations in temperatures, rising sea levels and increased risks of disasters. Climate change places coastal economies at high risk, threatening food security, livelihood and lives within the IOR. The meeting recognized that climate change is a real and existential threat, and placed it within the wider narrative to ensure peace, stability and prosperity across the region.
25. The importance of enhanced regional cooperation in Disaster Risk Management was flagged. It was recommended that think tanks, universities and other stakeholders may enhance sustainable research to mitigate climate change impacts and to ensure food security for the region. Capacity, competence and transparency of institutions were emphasized during the session.
26. The meeting recognized the importance of strengthening the IORA nations with comprehensive disaster risk governance by means of capacity building for coastal communities and development of sustainable strategies for food security and disaster risk reduction through institutional cooperation that could reduce vulnerabilities, increase risk resilience, and enhance preparedness.
27. Adaptation to and mitigation of climate change, including effective preparedness for disasters were among the foremost issues discussed by the delegates. It was noted that addressing climate change would provide job security and gender empowerment across the region.

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28. The meeting also recognized that adaptation and resilience alone may not be adequate to arrest damage induced by climate change. The meeting called for scaling up of international commitment and delivery on mitigation measures to reduce effects of climate change.
29. It was suggested that the IORA could utilize the expertise provided by its Academic Group and its status as a platform for dialogue to help build a suitable investment framework, including participation by the private sector.
30. It was observed that cyber security today has become the most critical imperative in an increasingly digital world. The delegates noted the urgency of building infrastructure to protect electronic data whether on land or at sea. The importance of regional cooperation to combat and identify cyber-attacks within the region was recognized.
31. The Dialogue recognized the development of cyber security policies and strategies by IORA Member States and proposed consideration of an IORA Regional Capacity Building Centre to address cybercrime.
32. The Dialogue recommended regional cooperation between CERTS and sharing of best practices in cyber security innovation and technology. The meeting included the proposal of establishing an IORA National Focal Point to strengthen regional cooperation in early warning systems of cyber-attacks and proactively monitoring regional threats. The development of cybersecurity solutions with collaborative research and development within the region was also emphasized.

10 October 2017

Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates