**IOR/25CSO /2023/DOC2**

Indian Ocean Rim Association

**25th Meeting of the IORA Committee of Senior Officials (CSO)**

**9-10 October 2023**

**At 09:30 – 17:00 SLST time (GMT+5)**

***Theme: “Strengthening Regional Architecture: Reinforcing Indian Ocean Identity”***

**Colombo, Sri Lanka**

**DECISION REPORT**

**INTRODUCTION**

The 25th Meeting of the IORA Committee of Senior Officials (CSO) was hosted by the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka in Colombo on 9-10 October 2023. The Meeting was chaired by Mrs Aruni Wijewardane, Secretary, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka, and was attended by representatives of IORA Member States, namely Commonwealth of Australia, People's Republic of Bangladesh, Union of Comoros, French Republic on account of Reunion (henceforth France/Reunion), Republic of India, Republic of Indonesia, Islamic Republic of Iran, Republic of Kenya, Republic of Madagascar, Malaysia, Republic of Maldives, Republic of Mauritius, Republic of Mozambique, Sultanate of Oman, Republic of Seychelles, Republic of Singapore, Federal Republic of Somalia, Republic of South Africa, Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka, United Republic of Tanzania, Kingdom of Thailand, United Arab Emirates and Republic of Yemen. The IORA Regional Centre for Science and Technology Transfer (RCSTT), the Fisheries Support Unit (FSU), and IORA Research Group (IORG) also attended the meeting.

**1. OPENING SESSION**

**1.1 Welcome Address and Report from the Outgoing Chair (Bangladesh)**

*Outcome:* The CSO noted the Welcome Address and report delivered by H.E. Rear Admiral (Rtd) Md. Khurshed Alam, Secretary of Maritime Affairs Unit, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Bangladesh, the Outgoing Chair of IORA.

**1.2 Welcome Address and Opening Remarks by Incoming Chair (Sri Lanka)**

*Outcome:* The CSO welcomed the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka as the Chair of the CSO meeting for a period of two years (2023-25)

The CSO noted the Chairperson’s Welcome Address and Opening Remarks by Mrs Aruni Wijewardane, Secretary, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka.

The CSO expressed appreciation to the People’s Republic of Bangladesh as the Outgoing Chair and to the United Arab Emirates who served as the Past Chair

**1.3 Remarks by the Incoming Vice-Chair (India)**

*Outcome:* The CSO welcomed the Republic of India as the Vice Chair of the IORA for the period 2023-2025 and noted the remarks delivered by the IORA Vice Chair, Mrs. Paramita Tripathi, Joint Secretary (Oceania), Ministry of External Affairs of India.

**1.4 Outline of Arrangements and Adoption of the Agenda (Chair)**

*Outcome:* The CSO adopted the agenda of the 25th Meeting of the CSO.

**1.5 Report of the Secretary-General (Secretariat, IORA)**

*Outcome:* The CSO noted the report of Dr. Salman Al Farisi, Secretary-General of IORA and requested the report to be circulated to all Member States for information.

**2. INSTITUTIONAL ARRANGEMENTS AND BROADENING ENGAGEMENT** - *Coordinating Country: Sri Lanka*

**2.1 Report: High-Level Strategic Dialogue (HLSD), 20-22 June 2023, Mauritius, and Strategic Review Session focusing on IORA’s African Member States and the IORA Indo- Pacific Outlook, 23-24 June 2023, Mauritius and consideration of the outcome document of the HLSD (South Africa/ Secretariat)**

*Outcome:* The CSO welcomed and appreciated South Africa and the IORA Secretariat for the successful co-hosting of the HLSD and IORA’s Africa Member States Perspectives on the implementation of the IORA Indo-Pacific Outlook.

The CSO endorsed the outcome document: “IORA Vision 2030 and beyond” for approval of the COM and noted the Vision document on IORA’s Africa Member States Perspectives on the implementation of the IORA Indo-Pacific Outlook.

The CSO requested South Africa and Secretariat to take forward the implementation of the recommendation of the Vision.

**2.2 Dialogue Partner’s application** **(Secretariat)**

**2.2.1 Update: Status of the application of European Union (EU) as Dialogue Partner**

The CSO, while registering Iran’s observations on the application by the European Union (EU) to become a Dialogue Partner (DP) of IORA, endorsed the application of the EU as the 12th IORA Dialogue Partner, subject to signing the Letter of Acceptance by which EU will adhere to Paragraph 2 CRITERIA FOR PARTNERSHIP of the Dialogue Partner’s Regulations where all activities undertaken under IORA-EU partnership will be inclusive, transparent, non-discriminatory against IORA Member States (as mentioned in Annex II of the IORA Charter), and on the basis of consensus.

**2.3 Implementation of the Regulations for implementation of Article 4 (b) (i) of the IORA Charter on status of Dialogue Partnership (Secretariat)**

**2.3.1 Update: Coordinating Countries for Dialogue Partners and Process for identification of Coordinating Countries for Dialogue Partners (Next round)**

*Outcome:* The CSO endorsed the nominations of the Member States which volunteered to be the coordinating countries for their respective Dialogue Partners for a period of two years and recommended for adoption by COM as follows:



The CSO requested the Secretariat to further consult with Member States to draft guidelines on the process.

**2.3.2 Update: Terms of Reference on the role of Coordinating Countries**

*Outcome:* The CSO considered the Terms of Reference on the role of Coordinating Countries for Dialogue Partners and recommended for intersessional approval by the CSO.

**2.3.3 Report: Status of Programmes/Commitments made by Dialogue Partners**

*Outcome:* The CSO noted the update on the status of Programmes/Commitments made by Dialogue Partners.

**2.3.4 Update: Letters received from Dialogue Partners on their interpretation of the IORA Regulations for the Implementation of Article 4 (b) (l) of the IORA Charter on status of Dialogue Partnership (India/Secretariat)**

*Outcome:* The CSO noted that India will update on its further consultation with the UK and USA on the revised IORA Regulations for the Implementation of Article 4 (b) (l) of the IORA Charter on status of Dialogue Partnership intercessionally.

**2.4 Report: IORA’s Outlook on the Indo-Pacific Region following the High-Level Strategic Dialogue and consideration of a roadmap (India)**

*Outcome:* The CSO appreciated the commitment expressed by India to formulate a Roadmap for the implementation of IOIP.

The CSO noted the inputs from Member States on the proposed Roadmap for the implementation of the IOIP. CSO encouraged India to continue its work on this and requested India to report back to the next bi-annual CSO.

**2.5 IORA Action Plan (2022-2027)**

**2.5.1 Update: Identification of future Coordinating and Cluster Countries (2023-2025) (Secretariat)**

*Outcome:* The CSO considered to finalise the future Coordinating Countries and Cluster Groups for the period (2023-2025) under the Second IORA Action Plan (2022-2027) and the Chair of the Functional Bodies intercessionally.

**2.5.2 Update: Term of Reference on the modality of the Coordinating Country (Secretariat)**

*Outcome:* The CSO considered Terms of Reference on the role of Coordinating Countries under the priority areas, cross-cutting issues and IABE including the Chair of Functional Bodies and recommended intersessional CSO approval by 31st of December 2023.

**2.5.3 Update: Proposed workshop to review the status on the Implementation of the IORA Action Plan (Chair, Sri Lanka)**

*Outcome:* The CSO noted the update from Sri Lanka on the preparation of the virtual workshop to review the status on the Implementation of the IORA Action Plan at the first quarter of 2024.

**2.6 Update: Consideration of proposed Draft Terms of Reference (ToR): Format of the Meetings of CSO and COM following the High-Level Strategic Dialogue (Secretariat)**

*Outcome:* The CSO considered the feedback provided by Member States on the Terms of Reference (ToR): Format of the Meetings of CSO and COM, including the ToR on Institutional Arrangements and Broadening Engagement (IABE). The CSO requested Secretariat to organize a virtual meeting to further discuss this matter. The CSO requested Bangladesh, as the new Chair of the IABE Cluster Group to lead the process.

**2.7 Update: Consideration of the Draft Terms of Reference (ToR):** **Institutional Arrangements and Broadening Engagement (IABE) as a Functional Body (Secretariat)**

*Outcome:* The CSO referred to the decision on the agenda item 2.6.

**2.8 Preparations for the Vacancy for the position of the next IORA Secretary-General (2025 -2027) (Secretariat)**

*Outcome:* The CSO noted the update from the Secretary General and the announcement of the vacancy for the position of the next IORA Secretary-General (2025 -2027) which would start in January 2024 and that the Secretariat would liaise with the IORA Chair, Sri Lanka to ensure the process goes as per the guidelines for the Recruitment and Selection Committee (RSC).

**2.9 Status of Institutional arrangements with other regional organisations and the United Nations** **(Secretariat)**

**2.9.1 Update: Proposed activities between IORA and the Centre for Science and Technology of the Non-Aligned and Other Developing Countries (NAM S&T Centre), India**

*Outcome:* The CSO noted the update by the IORA Secretariat on the proposed workshop. The CSO also noted the inputs from India on the joint activities of NAM S&T and IORA.

**2.9.2 Update: Collaboration with International Seabed Authority (ISA)**

*Outcome:* The CSO noted the update by the IORA Secretariat on the collaboration with International Seabed Authority (ISA).

**2.9.3 Update: Food and Agricultural Organisation (FAO)**

*Outcome:* The CSO noted the update by the IORA Secretariat on the collaboration with the Food and Agricultural Organisation (FAO).

**2.9.4 Update: Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission of UNESCO (IOC-UNESCO)**

*Outcome:* The CSO noted the update by the IORA Secretariat on the collaboration with the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission of UNESCO (IOC-UNESCO).

**2.9.5 Update: Collaboration between IORA and International Renewable Energy Agency (IRENA)**

*Outcome:* The CSO noted the update by the IORA Secretariat on the collaboration between IORA and International Renewable Energy Agency (IRENA).

**2.9.6 Update: International Solar Alliance (ISA)**

Outcome: The CSO noted that the extended MoU between IORA and the International Solar Alliance (ISA) would come to an end in August 2023 and requested the IORA Secretariat to engage with the ISA on the implementation of potential activities.

**2.9.7 Update: Collaboration between IORA and Indian Ocean Commission (IOC)**

*Outcome:* The CSO noted the Secretariat’s engagement with the IOC. The CSO also noted the update by Mauritius, as the current Chair of IOC on the future collaboration between both organizations including a possible trilateral meeting among Mauritius, IORA Secretariat and IOC Secretariat.

**2.9.8 Update: Pacific Islands Forum (PIF)**

*Outcome:* The CSO to note that the MoU was awaited to be received from the Secretariat of the Pacific Islands Forum (PIF) and that the IORA Secretariat would inform of its receipt to the IORA Member States.

**2.9.9 Update: Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC)**

*Outcome:* The CSO to note that the MoU was awaited to be received from the Secretariat of the Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC) and that the IORA Secretariat would inform of its receipt to the IORA Member States.

**2.9.10 Update: Collaboration with Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN)**

*Outcome:* The CSO noted the progress made on the collaboration between IORA and ASEAN including the CSO intersessional approval that was obtained on the MoU.

The CSO welcomed the signing of the MoU between the Secretary-Generals of ASEAN (H.E. Dr. Kao Kim Hourn) and IORA (H.E. Dr. Salman Al Farisi) in Jakarta, on 4 September 2023 on the sidelines of the 43rd ASEAN Summit and Related Summits which would be a solid foundation to develop cooperation between ASEAN and IORA, and to strengthen the Indo-Pacific region as the epicentrum of regional and global sustainable growth.

**2.9.11 Update: Collaboration with United Nations Economic Commission for Africa, Sub-Regional Office for Eastern Africa (UNECA SRO-EA)**

*Outcome:* The CSO noted the update by the IORA Secretariat on the collaboration with United Nations Economic Commission for Africa, Sub-Regional Office for Eastern Africa (UNECA SRO-EA).

**2.9.12 Update: Collaboration with the Indian Ocean Tuna Commission (IOTC)**

*Outcome:* The CSO noted the update by the IORA Secretariat on the collaboration with the Indian Ocean Tuna Commission (IOTC).

**2.10 Update: Calendar of Events 2023-2024 (Secretariat)**

*Outcome:* The CSO requested Member States to inform on any events (virtual or in-person) they are planning to host and also their national days.

**2.11 Report: Review mechanism of IORA Special Agencies** **(Iran/ Secretariat)**

*Outcome:* The CSO noted the update by Iran on the meeting on the review mechanism of IORA Special Agencies that took place on 19 September 2023 in virtual mode.

The CSO requested the Secretariat to circulate the Concept Note for consideration by Member States.

**2.12 Update: Preparation of the Third IORA Familiarization Visit for Media Practitioners and Journalists from IORA Member States to Sri Lanka** **(Sri Lanka)**

*Outcome*: The CSO noted the update by Sri Lanka on its plan to host the Third IORA Familiarization Visit for Media Practitioners and Journalists for IORA Member States in February 2024.

**2.13 Report: Fourth Meeting of the IORA Functional Body Chairs and the Coordinating Countries, Virtual (Secretariat)**

*Outcome:* The CSO noted the outcome of the Fourth Meeting of the IORA Functional Body Chairs and Coordinating Countries that took place in virtual mode on 25 September 2023 and hosted by the Chair, Bangladesh. The CSO requested the Secretariat to circulate the report to Member States for consideration.

**2.14 Report: Ninth Indian Ocean Dialogue (IOD) (Tanzania)**

*Outcome:* The CSO noted the update by Tanzania on the 9th IOD. The CSO also noted that Tanzania has submitted the accountability report and the audited financial statement that were being considered by the Finance and Cooperate Services team of the Secretariat.

**2.15 Next Host of the Tenth Indian Ocean Dialogue (IOD) in 2025 (Secretariat)**

*Outcome:* The CSO noted that the IORA Secretariat would send the invitation to Member States to volunteer hosting the Tenth Indian Ocean Dialogue (IOD) in 2025 at the appropriate time as mentioned in the Terms of Reference which is no less than (6) six months before the preceding COM every alternate year.

CSO noted that India and Sri Lanka will make further consultations on this in the coming months and they will keep the CSO informed intercessionally on the next host of the 10th IOD.

**3. Report: Way forward on Climate Change following the High-Level Strategic Dialogue (Bangladesh)**

*Outcome:* The CSO noted and thanked Bangladesh for its initiative to develop IORA’s climate change strategic agenda. The CSO noted that the Secretariat will develop a concept paper on the way forward following the High-Level Strategic Dialogue.

**4. IORA SPECIAL PROGRAMMES**

**4.1 Update: Concept Note on IORA Development Initiative (IDI) and way forward (UAE)**

*Outcome:* The CSO noted the update by the United Arab Emirates on the COM intersessional approval on the Concept Note on the IORA Development Initiative (IDI) and way forward.

**4.2 Update: Second iteration of the IORA Nelson Mandela Internship Programme (NMIP) 2023** **(Secretariat)**

*Outcome:* The CSO expressed appreciation for the Nelson Mandela Internship Programme (NMIP) and agreed that given its value to the organization, the Secretariat and South Africa will further consult on ensuring sustainability of funding of the programme with a view to continuing the programme in the future.

**4.3 Update: The Sheikh Zayed IORA Scholarship for Humanitarian Action and Development (UAE)**

*Outcome:* The CSO noted that the draft Collaboration Agreement between the Anwar Gargash Diplomatic Academy (AGDA) and the IORA Secretariat is being examined by the IORA Secretariat and requested the Secretariat to share the draft Agreement with Member States with a view to finalize the document.

The CSO appreciated UAE for the progress made in The Sheikh Zayed IORA Scholarship for Humanitarian Action and Development.

**5. MARITIME SAFETY AND SECURITY (MSS)** – *Coordinating Country: Sri Lanka*

**5.1 Report: Workshop on Cooperation on Maritime Safety, 24-28 July 2023 (Online) (Sri Lanka)**

*Outcome:* The CSO expressed its appreciation to Sri Lanka for the update of the Working Group on Maritime Safety and Security (WGMSS) and noted the update by Sri Lanka on the workshop on *Cooperation on Maritime Safety*. The CSO also expressed the high importance of the issue of Maritime Safety and Security amongst Member States and agreed to move forward the MoU between the Information Fusion Centre in the Indian Ocean Region (IFC-IOR) and IORA Secretariat.

**5.2 Report: Combined Workshop for Comparative Study on the Implementation of** **United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) in the Indian Ocean for IORA Member States and Maritime Regional Dialogue, 30 October – 03 November 2023 (Sri Lanka)**

*Outcome:* The CSO noted the update by Sri Lanka on the Workshop.

**6. TRADE AND INVESTMENT FACILITATION (TIF)** –*Coordinating Country: Australia*

**6.1 Report: 22nd Working Group on Trade and Investment (WGTI), 5 September 2023, Virtual (Australia)**

*Outcome:* The CSO noted the report by Australia on the 22nd Working Group on Trade and Investment (WGTI) that took place in virtual mode on 5 September 2023.

**6.2 Report: Professional short courses on climate change and renewable energy (Australia)**

*Outcome:* The CSO thanked Australia for their report and the opportunity for Member States to participate in the professional short courses on climate change and renewable energy.

**6.3 Update: Report from new Chair of Indian Ocean Rim Business Forum (Sri Lanka, new IORBF Chair)**

*Outcome:* The CSO noted the IORBF Chair’s report and agreed to work with the Secretariat and Member States to come up with a practical way forward on the workplan of the IORBF for the upcoming two years.

**6.4 Update: Progress on Creation of an IORA Centre of Excellence for Dispute Resolution, Special Fund (Mauritius)**

*Outcome:* The CSO thanked and noted the update by Mauritius on the report on this project implementation and agreed to extend the project timeline until February 2024.

**7. FISHERIES MANAGEMENT (FM)** – *Coordinating Country: Indonesia*

**7.1 Report: Third Core Group on Fisheries Management (CGFM) meeting, 12 September 2023 (Indonesia)**

*Outcome:* The CSO thanked Indonesia and noted the update on the Third Core Group on Fisheries Management (CGFM) meeting.

**7.2 Report: First of the Workshop Series on the Development of the IORA Guideline on Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated (IUU) Fishing, 13-14 September 2023 (Indonesia)**

*Outcome:* The CSO noted the update by Indonesia on the First of the Workshop Series on the Development of the IORA Guideline on Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated (IUU) Fishing and agreed that the draft Guideline be finalized two weeks prior to the 24th COM in 2024.

**7.3 Report: Projects under IORA-AFD MOU** **(France/ Reunion)**

*Outcome:* The CSO thanked France for their support through AFD and noted the update by France on the implementation of projects carried out under IORA-AFD MoU.

**7.4 Report: Activities of the Fisheries Support Unit (FSU)**

*Outcome:* The CSO thanked FSU and took note of the update by FSU.

**7.5 Update: Preparations for the Training study tour on health management, disease diagnosis and treatment of cultured species in IORA Region for aquaculture sustainable development, 22-26 October 2023, Oman, Special Fund (FSU)**

*Desired Outcome:* The CSO noted the update by the Fisheries Support Unit (FSU) on the preparations for the Training study tour on health management, disease diagnosis and treatment of cultured species in IORA Region for aquaculture sustainable development.

**8. DISASTER RISK MANAGEMENT (DRM)** – *Coordinating Country: India*

**8.1 Report: Second Meeting of the Working Group on Disaster Risk Management (WGDRM) (India)**

*Outcome:* The CSO noted the update by India on the Second Meeting of the Working Group on Disaster Risk Management (WGDRM).

**8.2 Capacity Building on ‘Space Technology for Disaster Risk Management’,6-8 September 2023 (Online) (India)**

*Outcome:* The CSO noted the update by India on *Capacity Building on ‘Space Technology for DRM’ (Online).*

**8.3 Update: Consideration of new source of funding: IORA Disaster Resilient Infrastructure (DRI) Workshop** **(Mauritius)**

*Outcome:* The CSO noted the update by Mauritius on the IORA Disaster Resilient Infrastructure (DRI) Workshop.

**8.4 Update: Proposed activities on the workplan under the MoU between Coalition for Disaster Resilient Infrastructure (CDRI) and IORA (Secretariat)**

*Outcome:* The CSO noted the update by Secretariat on the proposed activities on the workplan under the MoU between Coalition for Disaster Resilient Infrastructure (CDRI) and IORA.

**9.**  **ACADEMIC, SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY COOPERATION** – *Coordinating Country: India*

**9.1 Update: Third Meeting of the Working Group on Science Technology and Innovation (WGSTI)** **(India)**

Outcome: The CSO noted the update from India on the preparation for the Third Meeting of the Working Group on Science Technology and Innovation (WGSTI).

**9.2 Update: IORA Centre of Excellence (ICE) for the IORA Member States (India)**

*Outcome:* The CSO noted the update from India on the latest development regarding the establishment of their IORA Centre of Excellence. The CSO further noted the offer from Malaysia to include Maritime Institute of Malaysia (MMA) as part of IORA ICE.

**9.3 Report: 28th Meeting of the Indian Ocean Rim Academic Group (IORAG), September 2023, Special Fund (South Africa)**

Outcome: The CSO noted the report from South Africa and further information on the Concept Note submitted by Kenya on activity E1.3 “fostering Academia-Industry linkages through dissemination of research and innovation among IORA Member States”.

**9.4 Update: Establishment of the Research Support Unit (RSU) and the position of Policy Advisor and Research Coordinator (PARC)** **(South Africa)**

*Outcome:* The CSO noted the update by South Africa on the RSU and the PARC and requested the matter to be taken at the IORAG.

**9.5 Report: Activities of the Regional Centre for Science and Technology Transfer** **(RCSTT)**

*Outcome:* The CSO noted the update of the report by RCSTT and also noted the comment from South Africa on the need for an impact assessment of IORA’s project activities in the near future.

**9.6 Update: Journal of the Indian Ocean Region (JIOR) regarding source of funding** **(Secretariat)**

*Outcome:* The CSO welcomed Sri Lanka’s offer of contributing towards the subscription of the JIOR during its Chairship. The CSO agreed that the country chairing IORA will provide for the funding of the subscription of the JIOR.

**10. TOURISM AND CULTURAL EXCHANGES (TCE)** *– Coordinating Country: Mauritius*

**10.1 Update: Establishment of a website and a resource centre on tourism (France/Reunion)**

Outcome: The CSO noted the update from France/Reunion on the establishment of the Tourism Resource Centre (TRC).

**10.2 Update: Revitalisation of Sustainable Whale Watching Network, Special Fund (France/Reunion)**

Outcome: The CSO noted the update by France/Reunion on the Revitalisation of the Sustainable Whale Watching Network.

**10.3 Update: Workshop to raise awareness of coastal and marine protection and conservation issues and its importance to the Blue Economy, Special Fund (Malaysia), 31 October until 2 November 2023**

*Outcome*: The CSO noted the update by Malaysia on the Workshop to raise awareness of coastal and marine protection and conservation issues and its importance to the Blue Economy.

**10.4 Update: Research and Capacity Building Project in the African Diaspora on Cultural Heritage for Coastal Tourism and Climate Action in the Indian Ocean Region, Special Fund (South Africa)**

*Outcome:* The CSO noted the update from South Africa regarding the Research and Capacity Building Project in the African Diaspora on Cultural Heritage for Coastal Tourism and Climate Action in the Indian Ocean Region.

**11.** **BLUE ECONOMY (BE)** *– Coordinating Country: South Africa*

**11.1 Report: Third Working Group on Blue Economy (WGBE) meeting, 21 August 2023, Virtual (South Africa)**

*Outcome:* The CSO noted the update by South Africa on the Third WGBE Meeting held in virtual mode on 21 August 2023

**11.2 Update: Development of the new WGBE Work Plan 2024-2026 (South Africa)**

*Outcome:* The CSO noted the update by South Africa on the development of the new WGBE Work Plan 2024-2026.

**11.3 Update: Implementation on the Strategic Framework of Action on Marine Debris in the Indian Ocean** **(Secretariat)**

*Outcome:* The CSO noted the update by Secretariat on the implementation on the Strategic Framework of Action on Marine Debris in the Indian Ocean.

**11.4 Report: Fourth IORA Ministerial Blue Economy Conference (BEC-IV) (Sri Lanka)**

*Outcome:* The CSO noted the update by Sri Lanka on the new date of the Fourth IORA Ministerial Blue Economy Conference (BEC-IV) which will be held in virtual mode in February 2024.

**11.5 IORA Blue Carbon Hub (Australia)**

**11.5.1 Report: Activities by the IORA Blue Carbon Hub - Blue Carbon Think Tank Meeting on Nature-Based Solutions for Coastal Adaptation on 12-14 September 2023, Bali, Indonesia**

*Outcome:* The CSO noted with appreciation the update by Australia on the IORA Blue Carbon Hub Think Tank Meeting on Nature-Based Solutions for Coastal Adaptation

**11.5.2 Update: Third round of IORA Blue Carbon Hub Early Career Visiting Scientist programme**

*Outcome:* The CSO noted with appreciation the update by Australia on the third round of IORA Blue Carbon Hub Early Career Visiting Scientist programme.

**11.6 Update: Progress on Pilot Project entitled “Building Capacity of young environmental leaders across the Indian Ocean Rim to promote sustainable fisheries management”, Special Fund (Madagascar)**

*Outcome:* The CSO noted the update by Madagascar on the Pilot Project entitled “Building Capacity of young environmental leaders across the Indian Ocean Rim to promote sustainable fisheries management”.

**11.7 Update: Progress on Project on Ocean Knowledge Education Programme to strengthen the Blue Economy concept in the IORA region – A pilot study incorporating “Sustainable Ocean Management” into the curriculum for 12 to 13 yr old”, Special Fund (Seychelles)**

*Outcome:* The CSO noted the update by Seychelles on the Project on Ocean Knowledge Education Programme to strengthen the Blue Economy concept in the IORA region – A pilot study incorporating “Sustainable Ocean Management” into the curriculum for 12 to 13 yr old”.

**11.8 Electricity Production using Salinity gradient of the Sea Water adjacent to the Saint Martin’s of Bangladesh (Bangladesh)**

*Outcome:* The CSO noted the update by Bangladesh and further information by Secretariat on the project entitled “Electricity Production using Salinity gradient of the Sea Water adjacent to the Saint Martin’s of Bangladesh”.

**12. WOMEN’S ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT (WGWEE)** -*Coordinating Country: Islamic Republic of Iran*

**12.1 Report: Eighth Working Group on Women's Economic Empowerment (WGWEE), Virtual (Iran)**

*Outcome:* The CSO noted the report by the Islamic Republic of Iran on the Report: Eighth Working Group on Women's Economic Empowerment (WGWEE). The CSO also noted Australia had withheld consensus on the Tehran CommuniqueThe CSO noted the Secretary General’s advice that the Tehran Communique was not part of the COM agenda and would not be discussed at COM

**12.2 Report and Update: WEE Activities** **(Iran)**

*Outcome:* The CSO noted the brief report by the Islamic Republic of Iran on the activities under the WEE.

**13. FINANCE & ADMINISTRATION**

**13.1 Report: Sub-Committee on Finance (SCF), 2023** **(Chair of SCF, Sri Lanka)**

*Outcome:* The CSO noted the proposal from Iran on the Rotational Audit and Mauritius on the issues raised. The CSO also highlighted that the matters related to fraud and ongoing investigation needs to be expedited and the financial management process of IORA Secretariat needs to be strengthened. It also highlighted the responsibility of the host country of the Secretariat to take effective measures to finalise matters on the investigation. Mauritius explained that it held several meetings with the State Law Office (SLO) and the Secretariat with a view to expedite matters. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs was advised by the SLO not to interfere in the criminal investigation as the police has to act independently. However, Mauritius will see how best it can assist to have the enquiry completed at the earliest.

The CSO endorsed the report of the meeting of the Sub-Committee on Finance held in virtual mode on 27 September 2023 including its recommendations.

The CSO endorsed the proposed budget 2024 and recommended adoption by COM.

**13.2 Update: Fraudulent Financial Activities at the IORA Secretariat and measures taken by the IORA Secretariat (Secretariat)**

*Outcome:* The CSO noted measures against fraudulent activity taken by the IORA Secretariat on addressing the recommendations from the BDO report. The CSO recommended the Secretariat follows up with the police department so that the investigation is expedited.

The CSO noted the ongoing investigation by the police and that the investigation report will be shared with Member States upon completion.

The CSO noted the update on the Special Fund Audit report for 20 years (2003-2023).

**13.3 Update: Consideration of the Concept Note on the revision of the Annual membership contribution (South Africa)**

*Outcome:* The CSO noted the update by South Africa on the Concept Note on the revision of the Annual membership contribution, which will be submitted to the Secretariat on 30 November 2023.

**13.4 Report: Rotational Audit of IORA Secretariat** **and Terms of Reference** **(Tanzania)**

*Outcome:* The CSO endorsed the Concept Paper on the cost of Rotational Audit and recommended its adoption to COM, noting that the rotation audit exercise would commence following the endorsement of the rotational TOR by the CSO and COM intersessionally .

The CSO also noted the intention of the Secretariat to commence the Rotational Audit in 2025 subject to further assessments of the Secretariat by end of November 2023, based on sustainable funding.

**14. IORA SPECIAL FUND**

**14.1 Consideration of Proposals for future funding under Special Fund**

**14.1.1 New Proposal(s) under IORA Sustainable Development Programme (ISDP) (Secretariat)**

*Outcome:* The CSO noted the update that no new proposals were received from LDCs or SIDs Member States and encouraged LDCs or SIDs Member States to come up with proposals in consultation with the IORA Secretariat.

**14.1.2 New Proposal under IORA Somalia-Yemen Development Programme (SYDP) (Secretariat)**

*Outcome:* The CSO noted the update by the Secretariat on the fourth round of the IORA Somalia-Yemen Development Programme (SYDP). The CSO also noted the UAE’s request for a concept note from the Secretariat on the SYDP to consider future support or Funding.

**14.1.3 Progress on IORA-India Cruise Tourism Conference “Spotlight on the Indian Ocean”, Special Fund** **(India)**

*Outcome:* The CSO noted the update by India on the re-scheduling of the IORA-India Cruise Tourism Conference “Spotlight on the Indian Ocean”.

**14.2 Pending Accountability Report**

**14.2.1 Pilot Project on “Oyster (Crassostrea spp.) Culture (Bangladesh)**

*Outcome:* The CSO noted the update by Bangladesh on the Pilot Project on “Oyster (Crassostrea spp.) Culture and that the Accountability Report has already been submitted on 11th of September 2023.

**14.2.2 Training workshop on “Research and sustainable management of Blue Carbon Ecosystems in the Indian Ocean", 27 November - 2 December 2022, Toliara, Madagascar (Madagascar)**

*Outcome:* The CSO noted the update on the accountability report which is being prepared by Madagascar on the Training workshop on “Research and sustainable management of Blue Carbon Ecosystems in the Indian Ocean" held from 27 November - 2 December 2022, Toliara, Madagascar.

**14.2.3 IORA Workshop on Nature-Based Tourism and Lessons Learned from COVID-19,**

**03 to 05 May 2023, Mauritius (Mauritius)**

*Outcome:* The CSO noted the update provided by Mauritius that the accountability report for the Workshop on Nature-Based Tourism and Lessons Learned from COVID-19 held from 03 to 05 May 2023 at Maritim Resort & Spa, Balaclava in Mauritius has been submitted to Secretariat on 9th October 2023.

**14.2.4** **High-Level Strategic Dialogue, 20-22 June 2023, Mauritius (South Africa)**

*Outcome:* The CSO noted the update by South Africa that the accountability report of the High-Level Strategic Dialogue, Mauritius, held from 20-22 June 2023, will be submitted shortly to the Secretariat.

**14.2.5 Training Workshop on Best Practices in Sea cucumber seed production and Seaweed tubular farming (through two demonstration projects in Mozambique and Zanzibar, Tanzania), 7-11 November 2022, Zanzibar (Tanzania)**

*Outcome:* The CSO noted the update by Tanzania on the Training Workshop on Best Practices in Sea cucumber seed production and Seaweed tubular farming (through two demonstration projects in Mozambique and Zanzibar, Tanzania) and that the accountability report has been submitted to the Secretariat.

**14.2.6 SYDP-III entitled “Development and Management of Somalia’s and Yemen’s Marine Fisheries”, 27 September – 1 October 2021, Italy (Secretariat)**

*Outcome:* The CSO noted the update by the Secretariat on the SYDP-III entitled “Development and Management of Somalia’s and Yemen’s Marine Fisheries”

**14.3 Update: Review of the Administrative Arrangements of the Special Fund (Secretariat)**

*Outcome:* The CSO decided to form a Sub Committee led by Bangladesh and supported by the Secretariat to review the purpose and rules of the Special Fund which will report to the bi-annual CSO in May 2024.

**15. PREPARATIONS FOR THE 23RD COUNCIL OF MINISTERS’ MEETING,**

**15.1 DISCUSSION ON Draft COM Agenda (Chair, Sri Lanka)**

*Outcome:* The CSO considered and finalised the draft Agenda of the 23rd COM and recommended approval by COM.

**15.2 Draft Colombo Communiqué (Chair, Sri Lanka)**

*Outcome:* The CSO considered and finalised the Colombo Communiqué and recommended for its adoption by the COM.

**16. PREPARATIONS FOR THE 14th BI-ANNUAL CSO MEETING MAY 2024 (Chair, Sri Lanka)**

*Outcome:* The CSO noted the update by Sri Lanka that the 14th Bi-annual Meeting of the Committee of Senior Officials (CSO) will be held in May 2024. The exact date will be communicated to the Secretariat in due course.

**17. ANY OTHER BUSINESS (AOB) (Chair, Sri Lanka)**

*Outcome:* The CSO noted no matters were raised by Member States.

**18. ADOPTION OF THE DECISION REPORT AND CLOSING REMARKS (Chair, Sri Lanka)**

*Outcome:* The CSO agreed to adopt the decision report intercessionally.

