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**Eleventh IORA Bi-Annual Meeting of the**

**Committee of Senior Officials (CSO) (Virtual)**

**Platform: CISCO WebEx**

**Tuesday, 15 June 2021 to Wednesday 16 June 2021**

**At 10 am to 2 pm UAE time (GMT+4)**

**Theme: “Promoting a Shared Destiny and Path to Prosperity in the Indian Ocean”**

**DECISION REPORT**

The Eleventh Bi-annual Meeting of the Committee of Senior Officials (CSO) took place virtually via the Cisco Webex platform on 15-16 June 2021. The Meeting was chaired by H.E. Abdulnasser Alshaali, Assistant Minister for Economic and Trade Affairs, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, United Arab Emirates (UAE), and was attended by representatives of IORA Member States, namely the **Commonwealth of Australia, People's Republic of Bangladesh, Union of Comoros, the French Republic, on account of Reunion only (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, 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 **Acting Secretary-General**, **Regional Centre for Science and Technology Transfer (RCSTT)**, and the **Fisheries Support Unit (FSU)** also attended the meeting.

# 1. OPENING SESSION

### 1.1 Welcome Address and Opening Remarks (Chair, UAE)

*Outcome:* The CSO noted the Chairperson’s opening remarks.

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### 1.2 Remarks by the Vice-Chair (Vice-Chair, Bangladesh)

*Outcome:* The CSO noted the remarks by the Vice-Chair and the Past Chair.

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### 1.3 Outline of Arrangements and Adoption of the Agenda (Chair)

*Outcome:* The CSO adopted the Agenda.

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### 1.4 Report of the Acting Secretary-General (Secretariat, IORA)

*Outcome:* The CSO noted the report of the Acting Secretary-General*.*

# 2. IORA ACTION PLAN (2017-2021) AND PREPARATIONS FOR A NEW IORA ACTION PLAN

### 2.1 Update: Progress on the current IORA Action Plan (2017-2021) (Vice-Chair & Coordinating Countries of each Priority Area)

*Outcome:* The CSO noted the update by the Vice-Chair on the progress on the implementation of the current IORA Action Plan (2017-2021), as reflected in the Secretariat’s progress report, including the substantial number of items that remained to be implemented.

The CSO noted that prior to the CSO meeting, feedback had been received from Mauritius (Trade and Investment Facilitation) and Sri Lanka (Maritime Safety and Security). The CSO requested the Secretariat to consolidate further feedback from other Coordinating Countries provided during this CSO meeting for reporting to the Chair as a matter of urgency.

### 2.2 Report: Concept Note and Workshop to prepare new IORA Action Plan (Vice-Chair)

*Outcome:* The CSO noted the report from the Vice-Chair on the workshop held on 20 May 2021 on the preparation of the Second IORA Action Plan, including that the Second IORA Action Plan required clear timeframes and allocations of responsibilities.

The CSO noted the Secretariat’s communication of 2 June 2021 requesting Member State input on the draft report of the meeting, and Coordinating Country input on the ‘Draft Zero’ of the Second IORA Action Plan, by 11 June 2021. To date, Mauritius, Singapore, Sri Lanka and the UAE had responded. The CSO requested Member States to provide their inputs by the rescheduled deadline of 25 June 2021.

The CSO agreed that the Second IORA Action Plan should be agreed by the next CSO and recommended to the COM for endorsement at the end of the year.

# 3. DIALOGUE PARTNERS: STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT, ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA AND APPLICATIONS

### 3.1 Update: Concept Note and Workshop on the strategic management of IORA’s engagement with Dialogue Partners, and criteria/eligibility of potential Dialogue Partners (India)

*Outcome:* The CSO welcomed the update by India that a revised Concept Note had been circulated to all Member States which now included discussion on the eligibility criteria of potential Dialogue Partners as well on strategic management of Dialogue Partners.

The CSO welcomed advice from India that the proposed workshop would be scheduled by the end of June 2021. The CSO requested any final comments from Member States on the revised Concept Note to be sent to the Secretariat before Friday 25 June 2021.

The CSO agreed that the guidelines for strategic management and criteria for Dialogue Partners should be finalised for endorsement at the next meeting of the CSO for endorsement by the COM.

The CSO noted the Acting Secretary-General’s update that Germany had requested CSO guidance on how the Germany-IORA partnership would progress after the conclusion of the current IORA-GIZ MOU concludes at the end of June 2022, which would be informed by the initiative led by India.

### 3.2 Reports: Status of Programmes/Commitments made by Dialogue Partners (Secretariat)

**China:**

*Outcome:* The CSO noted the update that the IORA Secretariat was in the process of consulting China on future collaborations.

**Egypt:**

*Outcome:* The CSO noted the update that the IORA Secretariat was in the process of consulting Egypt on future collaborations.

**Germany:**

*Outcome:* The CSO noted the update by the IORA Secretariat and welcomed the extensive projects and initiatives envisaged for implementation under the MOU.

**Italy:**

*Outcome:* The CSO noted the update by the IORA Secretariat and welcomed the extensive projects and initiatives with Italy planned for 2021 and beyond.

**Japan:**

*Outcome:* The CSO noted the update on the current proposal to host IORA-Japan Workshop on Multi-Hazard Warning Systems (MHWS).

**Republic of Korea:**

*Outcome:* The CSO noted the update by the IORA Secretariat and the Second ROK-IORA Partnership Seminar to be hosted by the ROK on 8-9 July 2021.

**Turkey**:

*Outcome:* The CSO noted the update on the proposed cooperation in Disaster Risk Management (DRM) with Turkey.

**United States of America (USA)**

*Outcome:* The CSO noted the update by the IORA Secretariat on the forthcoming virtual IORA Symposium for women business owners in the Indian Ocean region to be co-hosted by Australia and the USA, including that a draft agenda and further details would be circulated in due course.

**United Kingdom (UK)**

*Outcome:*  The CSO noted the update that the UK had recently indicated an interest in supporting a trade and investment initiative, and that the Secretariat was currently liaising with Mauritius as TIF Coordinating Country in this regard.

### 3.3 Update: Application by the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia as Dialogue Partner (Chair/ Secretariat)

*Outcome:* The CSO agreed to Iran’s request for more time to consider the application of Saudi Arabia’s to become a Dialogue Partner. The CSO agreed to consider the application from Saudi Arabia again at the next CSO.

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### 3.4 Update: Application by the Russian Federation as Dialogue Partner (Chair/ Secretariat)

*Outcome:* The CSO agreed to recommend the acceptance of the Russian Federation as a Dialogue Partner of IORA and agreed to present this recommendation to the COM for approval.

# 4. MEMBERSHIP ELIGIBLITY CRITERIA AND APPLICATIONS

### 4.1 Update: IORA Workshop to consider the status of IORA’s membership criteria (Bangladesh)

*Outcome:* The CSO noted the update by Bangladesh on the preparations of the workshop to consider the status of IORA’s membership criteria, including that dates would be communicated in due course.

### 4.2 Report: Signature of IORA Instrument of Acceptance by France (Secretariat)

*Outcome:* The CSO welcomed the signing by France/Reunion of the IORA Instrument of Acceptance, and noted that France/Reunion was in the process of preparing its annual membership contribution.

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

### 5.1 Update: Progress Report on the IORA Action Plan 2017-21 (MSS) and Work Plan of the WGMSS (Sri Lanka)

*Outcome:* The CSO expressed its deep concern and sympathy with Sri Lanka with respect to the marine disaster of the grounding and leaking of the “X-Press Pearl” off the coasts of Sri Lanka.

The CSO noted the update on the pending tasks under MSS in the IORA Action Plan 2017-21. The CSO requested Member States that had not yet nominated the MSS focal points to the WGMSS to do so via the Secretariat as soon as possible.

The CSO requested Member States who have not yet signed the IORA SAR MoU to consider signing it as early as possible.

The CSO requested the IORA Secretariat to update the IORA Action Plan 2017-21 progress report on Pending Tasks (Under Progress and No Progress) under MSS (IOR/11BI-CSO/21/DOC2.2) based on the update from Sri Lanka.

The CSO noted the report by Sri Lanka on the progress of the Work Plan of the WGMSS.

### 5.2 Report: Second Meeting of the IORA Working Group on Maritime Safety and Security (WGMSS) (Sri Lanka)

*Outcome:* The CSO noted the outcomes of the Second Meeting of the WGMSS held from 17 – 19 March 2021, including a meeting of Cluster Countries on 17 March 2021. The CSO noted edits to the WGMSS Work Plan to strengthen its focus on implementation.

The CSO noted the updated Work Plan had been circulated to guide the way forward for the MSS objectives for the Second IORA Action Plan (2022-2026).

The CSO also noted the deadline of 8th June 2021 set for Member States to indicate their interest to lead activities listed in the “Summary of the WGMSS Work Plan” which was circulated among Member States as an outcome document of the Second Meeting of the WGMSS held from 17-19 March 2021.

### 5.3 Report: Webinar on Port State Control and Maritime Safety and Security in the Indian Ocean Region (Sri Lanka)

*Outcome:* The CSO noted the report by Sri Lanka on the Webinar held on Port State Control (PSC) and MSS in the Indian Ocean Region and that the Outcome Report would be circulated by Sri Lanka in due course.

### 5.4 Report: Webinar IORA Capacity Building Workshop on the 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) (India)

*Outcome:* The CSO noted the report by India on the Webinar IORA Capacity Building Workshop on the 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) held virtually on 29 January 2021. The CSO noted that an edited volume of the discussions from the webinar was being prepared and would be circulated to Member States once finalised.

The CSO noted the update from France/Reunion that France/Reunion was the current chair of the Indian Ocean Commission (IOC) and Indian Ocean Naval Symposium (IONS), from the end of June 2021). The CSO welcomed France/Reunion’s proposal to investigate greater synergies between IORA and other aspects of the maritime security architecture in the region, such as joint initiatives between the IOC and IORA in this area. The CSO requested France/Reunion to provide further information on its proposals for consideration.

The CSO noted the update from Mauritius on preparations for the third regional Ministerial Conference on Maritime Safety and Security (MSS) which is being jointly organised with the Indian Ocean Commission . Mauritius informed that it will provide further information on the event in due course.

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

### 6.1 Update: Progress Report on the IORA Action Plan 2017-21 (TIF) and Work Plan of the WGTI (Mauritius)

*Outcome:* The CSO noted the update on pending tasks under Trade and Investment Facilitation of the IORA Action Plan 2017-21, and progress in implementing the WGTI Work Plan. The CSO requested the Secretariat to update the IORA Action Plan progress report as necessary.

The CSO noted the longstanding business proposal to facilitate movement of businesspeople in the region, and requested the next meeting of the WGTI to consider this issue.

### 6.2 Update: Preparations for the 19th Meeting of the Working Group on Trade and Investment (WGTI) (Mauritius)

*Outcome:* The CSO noted the update by Mauritius that the next meeting of the WGTI will be held virtually in the week of 12 July 2021, and that further information would be circulated in due course. The CSO requested Member States who are yet to confirm their commitments under items 4 and 6 of the WGTI Work Plan to communicate same to the Secretariat in preparation for the next WGTI meeting and any other updates on the WGTI Work Plan, by 30 June 2021, as per the Secretariat’s request to Member States dated 27 May 2021.

### 6.3 Update: Status of the Indian Ocean Rim Business Forum (IORBF) (UAE)

*Outcome:* The CSO noted the update that the last meeting of the IORBF was held virtually on 20 October 2021, and that a new incoming IORBF Chair had been nominated by Bangladesh, Mr Sheikh Fazle Fahim.

The CSO welcomed the nomination of the incoming Chair of the IORBF, Mr Sheikh Fazle Fahim, by Bangladesh.

### 6.4 Update: Creation of an IORA Centre of Excellence for Dispute Resolution (Mauritius)

*Outcome:* The CSO noted the update on the Creation of an IORA Centre of Excellence for Dispute Resolution, including the selection of arbitration expert from India (Mr Madhvendra Singh) to complete the comparative study on dispute resolution mechanisms in the Indian Ocean region.

The CSO welcomed the offer from the international law firm Freshfields Bruckhaus Deringer to provide pro bono support to the project.

The CSO welcomed Singapore’s offer to connect the relevant dispute resolution agencies in Singapore with Mr Singh for purposes of the comparative study of dispute resolution mechanisms in the Indian Ocean region, and requested the Secretariat to liaise with Singapore to make this connection.

### 6.5 Update: Signature of SME MOU (Secretariat)

*Outcome:* The CSO noted the update on the SME MOU, including signatures by Indonesia and Iran since the last CSO.

The CSO welcomed Kenya’s announcement that Kenya had signed the SME MOU and would provide the necessary documentation to the IORA Secretariat in due course.

### 6.6 Update: Collaboration between IORA and Global Trade Review (GTR) (Australia)

*Outcome:* The CSO noted the update on the IORA-GTR partnership, and welcomed its success in lifting IORA’s profile among the global business community.

The CSO encouraged Member States to submit nominations for the standing list of nominated speakers, maintained by the Secretariat, and to participate in GTR events.

### 6.7 Update: IORA’s partnership with Italy and Assoittica Italia for the Digital Seafood Trade Show, 20-21 May 2021 (Secretariat)

*Outcome:* The CSO noted the update on the partnership with Italy and Assoittica Italia for the Digital Seafood Trade Show.

The CSO noted the low level of participation from seafood companies from the region, and encouraged greater participation in future such events.

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

### 7.1 Update: Progress Report on the IORA Action Plan 2017-21 (FM) and Work Plan of the Core Group on Fisheries Management (CGFM)

*Outcome:* The CSO noted the update on the pending tasks under Fisheries Management in the IORA Action Plan 2017-21 and the status on the implementation of the CGFM Work Plan, and requested the Secretariat to update the IORA Action Plan progress report accordingly.

### 7.2 Update: Preparations for the First CGFM meeting (Indonesia)

*Outcome:* The CSO noted the update from Indonesia on the preparations for the First Core Group on Fisheries (CGFM), envisaged for the second half of 2021, and that further information would be provided in due course.

The CSO noted advice from Iran that the Iranian Port Authority and Fisheries Organisation was willing to share lessons and experiences on fisheries management.

### 7.3 Report: Activities of the Fisheries Support Unit (FSU)

*Outcome:* The CSO noted the FSU Report, FSU Work Plan and the Concept note on the nomination of Focal Points for FSU.

### 7.4 Update: Meeting between the FSU and the Chair of the CGFM (Indonesia) and the Chair of the WGBE (South Africa) to confirm working arrangements for the alignment of the work of the FSU, CGFM and WGBE (Secretariat)

*Outcome:* The CSO noted the update from the IORA Secretariat on the engagement between FSU and the Chair of the CGFM (Indonesia) and the Chair of the WGBE (South Africa).

The CSO welcomed efforts to align the activities of the FSU, CGFM and WGBE, and encouraged these efforts to be embedded to ensure ongoing close collaboration between these bodies.

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

### 8.1 Update: Progress Report on the IORA Action Plan 2017-21 (DRM) and Work Plan of the Core Group on Disaster Risk Management (CGDRM)

*Outcome:* The CSO noted the update by India on Progress Report on the IORA Action Plan 2017-21 (DRM) and Work Plan of the Core Group on Disaster Risk Management (CGDRM), and requested the Secretariat to update the IORA Action Plan progress report accordingly.

### 8.2 Update: IORA Guidelines for Human Assistance and Disaster Relief (HADR) (India)

*Outcome:* The CSO noted the update and the guidance provided by India to finalise the IORA Guidelines for HADR.

The CSO endorsed the HADR guidelines as circulated by India and recommended them to the COM for adoption.

### 8.3 Report: First IORA Expert Group Meeting on Disaster Risk Management (1st EGMDRM) (India)

*Outcome:* The CSO noted the report by India on the First IORA Expert Group Meeting on Disaster Risk Management (1st EGMDRM) that took place virtually on 19 January 2021.

### 8.4 Update: Establishing legal frameworks in the Indian Ocean region in the field of Disaster Risk Management (India)

*Outcome:* The CSO noted the update by India on the discussion paper circulated to Member States on the proposal for establishing legal frameworks in the Indian Ocean region in the field of DRM.

The CSO requested the Secretariat to propose a way forward to progress this discussion and possible steps to implement initiatives agreed by Member States.

The CSO noted Bangladesh’s proposal to include nature-based solutions to manage disasters, and requested Bangladesh to provide written inputs via the Secretariat.

### 8.5 Update: Signature on Search and Rescue (SAR) MOU (Secretariat)

*Outcome:* The CSO noted the update by the Secretariat on the signature status of the MOU by Member States encouraged Member States yet to sign to do so.

The CSO welcomed Indonesia’s notification that it had signed the MOU and would forward the signed signature page to the Secretariat in due course.

The CSO welcomed advice that India is preparing an implementation plan for the MOU in the form of Search and Rescue Guidelines for IORA.

### 8.6 New proposal: IORA Sustainable Health Initiative (Mauritius)

*Outcome:* The CSO noted Mauritius’ proposal that, given the ongoing COVID pandemic, it was timely to consider the establishment of health as a priority area of cooperation of the IORA.

The CSO noted the update by Mauritius on the new proposal for the establishment of an IORA Sustainable Health Initiative. The CSO requested the Secretariat to circulate the proposal to all Member States for inputs. The CSO agreed that further discussion was required on whether this proposal will be progressed under the DRM Priority Area or under Academic, Science and Technology

CSO noted the support of Australia and India on this proposal.

# 9. ACADEMIC, SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY COOPERATION (AST) – *Coordinating Country: India*

### 9.1 Update: Progress Report on the IORA Action Plan 2017-21 (AST) (India)

*Outcome:* The CSO noted the update on the pending tasks under Academic, Science and Technology of the IORA Action Plan 2017-21.

The CSO welcomed establishment of the Working Group on Science, Technology and Innovation (WGSTI) to accelerate progress on items in the IORA Action Plan under AST.

The CSO noted that the IORAG had not been able to meet since its last meeting in India in December 2019, and that progress was expected once the Sub-Committee on Indian Ocean Rim Association Academic Group (IORAG) Reform was able to meet to consider the draft Terms of Reference and Work Plan of a reformed IORAG.

### 9.2 Update: Preparations for the First Working Group on Science Technology and Innovation (WGSTI) (India)

*Outcome:* The CSO noted the update from India on the preparations for the First meeting of the Working Group on Science Technology and Innovation (WGSTI), including the tentative timing of September 2021.

### 9.3 Update: Preparations for the Third Meeting of the Sub-Committee on Indian Ocean Rim Association Academic Group (IORAG) Reform (India)

*Outcome:* The CSO noted the postponement of the 3rd meeting of the Sub-Committee on Indian Ocean Rim Association Academic Group (IORAG) Reform owing to the prevailing COVID-19 situation in India.

The CSO noted that the Third Meeting of the Sub-Committee on Indian Ocean Rim Association Academic Group (IORAG) Reform would be scheduled in July 2021.

### 9.4 Update: Preparations for the 26th Meeting of the Indian Ocean Rim Academic Group (IORAG) (UAE)

*Outcome:* The CSO noted the update by UAE that the 26th Meeting of the Indian Ocean Rim Academic Group (IORAG) would be scheduled as soon as possible after the third meeting of the Sub-Committee on Indian Ocean Rim Association Academic Group (IORAG) Reform.

# 9.5 Indian Ocean Dialogue

#### 9.5.1 Consideration of IOD Terms of Reference (Secretariat)

*Outcome:* The CSO noted the update that the IORA Secretariat was in the process of preparing the IOD Terms of Reference and would circulate in due course.

The CSO noted there was currently no system to track and report on the consideration of IOD recommendations, and requested the Secretariat to address this issue in the draft IOD Terms of Reference (TORs).

#### 9.5.2 Report: Seventh Indian Ocean Dialogue (IOD) (UAE)

*Outcome:* The CSO noted the update by the UAE that the UAE hosted the Seventh Indian Ocean Dialogue on 2-3 February 2021.

#### 9.5.3 Update: Preparations for the Eighth IOD (India)

*Outcome:* The CSO noted the update by India that preparations for hosting the Eighth Indian Ocean Dialogue virtually were underway and further details would be circulated in due course.

The CSO noted the proposal from India that since the IOD Terms of Reference are under formulation, it would be in IORA’s interest if the IOD is hosted by different member states every year in the spirit of promoting inclusiveness and transparency in IORA, rather than India hosting the same every alternate year.

Given the previous CSO decision to traditionally have India and the IORA Chair host the IOD and IORAG back-to-back, the CSO requested India to discuss this proposal for IOD ToR with the incoming IORA Chair, Bangladesh.

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### 9.6 Update: Implementation of ICE for the IORA Member States (India)

*Outcome:* The CSO noted the update that India remained committed to establishing an IORA Centre of Excellence in India, and would restart internal consultations now that the criteria to establish IORA Centers of Excellence had been finalized.

### 9.7 Report: Activities of the Regional Centre for Science and Technology Transfer (RCSTT)

*Outcome:* The CSO noted the RCSTT’s Activity Report.

### 9.8 Update: Future Role of the Chair in Indian Ocean Studies (CIOS) (India)

*Outcome:* The CSO noted India’s recommendation that the position of Policy Advisor and Research Coordinator (PARC) be funded through the IORA Secretariat budget for the Research Support Unit (RSU), using Member State membership fees. The remuneration and other allowances for PARC may be based on an equivalent position within the Mauritian public sector. Mauritius supported India’s proposal. The Secretariat will work with Mauritius to finalize the note in this regard.

The CSO noted that the agenda item considering this issue in future meetings should be titled “Establishment of the Research Support Unit (RSU) and the position of Policy Advisor and Research Coordinator (PARC)”.

The CSO requested India and the Secretariat to expedite the circulation of all documents relating to the establishment and funding of the RSU, including the staffing of the vacant PARC position, to the CSO for consideration given its importance to achieving IORA’s objectives.

The CSO noted that all the initiatives and activities related to the former CIOS (including the reform of JIORS) would be considered after the establishment of the RSU and the recruitment of the PARC.

### 9.9 Update: Journal of the Indian Ocean Region (JIOR) (Secretariat)

*Outcome:* The CSO recalled that the 2014 COM had “welcomed IORAG’s formal association with the Journal of the Indian Ocean Region as an initiative that will foster greater academic collaboration among IORA countries”.

The CSO noted India’s preference that IORA should have its own official journal rather than subscribing and paying for other journals (JIOR), and that any decision on further funding of Journals for IORA may be deferred till PARC and RSU are established. Mauritius also supported the proposal and indicated that the journal initiated by CIOS (JIORS) be converted to an online newsletter once PARC and RSU are established. This would substantially reduce the costs.

CSO also noted that several Member States welcomed retaining the JIOR as an important academic journal affiliated with and subscribed to by IORA, and that the proposed Research Support Unit (RSU) and the Policy Adviser and Research Coordinator (PARC) at the Secretariat (once recruited) manage the subscriptions going forward. Furthermore, several Member States were of the view that until such time that the IORA RSU and the PARC become functional, the IORA Chair (beginning with Bangladesh) will pay for subscriptions to be managed by the Secretariat.

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

### 10.1 Update: Progress Report on the Action Plan 2017-21 (TCE) (UAE)

*Outcome:* The CSO noted the update by UAE on the pending tasks under Tourism and Cultural Exchanges of the IORA Action Plan 2017-21 and requested the Secretariat to update the Progress Report on the IORA Action Plan accordingly.

The CSO noted Mauritius’ advice that it was revising its Concept Note on a proposed IORA Tourism Awards initiative and would be recirculating the note to Member States in due course.

The CSO noted that the UAE reiterated its openness to handing over as coordinating country, should another Member State be interested in assuming this role.

### 10.2 Update: Preparations for the Second meeting of the Core Group on Tourism (CGT) (UAE)

*Outcome:* The CSO noted the update by UAE on hosting the Second meeting of the Core Group on Tourism (CGT) and that internal consultations were continuing.

The CSO noted advice from Iran that it was willing to cooperate and lead initiatives to strengthen tourism, and requested Iran to convey details to the Secretariat and the CGT.

### 10.3 Establishment of the Tourism Resource Centre (TRC) (Oman)

*Outcome:* The CSO noted the update that Oman was discontinuing the offer to establish the Tourism Resource Centre (TRC). The CSO thanked Oman for its efforts to date with respect to the proposed TRC.

The CSO requested the Secretariat to circulate a Note Verbale to all Member States with background and calling for nominations from Member States who may be prepared to consider hosting the proposed TRC.

The CSO noted advice from Iran that it would consider the possibility of hosting the proposed TRC.

### 10.4 Creation of tourism platforms (digital or otherwise) for sharing of best practices (South Africa)

*Outcome:* The CSO noted the update from South Africa that the Concept Note on the creation of tourism platforms (digital or otherwise) for sharing of best practices had been revised following Member State input.

The CSO requested the Secretariat to circulate the final Concept Note on the creation of tourism platforms for the CSO’s endorsement and recommendation to the COM for approval.

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

### 11.1 Update: Progress Report on the Action Plan 2017-21 (BE) and Work Plan of the WGBE (South Africa)

*Outcome:* The CSO noted the update on the pending tasks under Blue Economy in the IORA Action Plan 2017-21 and requested the Secretariat to update the IORA Action Plan progress report accordingly.

The CSO noted the status on the progress made on the WGBE Work Plan, including significant progress on assessments of capacity needs in Member States, fish stocks and IUU fishing with the support of the IORA-AFD partnership.

### 11.2 Update: Preparations for the Fourth IORA Ministerial Blue Economy Conference (BEC-IV) (Sri Lanka)

*Outcome:* The CSO noted Sri Lanka’s advice that Sri Lanka intended to host the fourth IORA Ministerial Blue Economy Conference as soon as circumstances allow, and that a Concept Note would be circulated in due course.

### 11.3 Report: Second meeting of the Working Group on Blue Economy (WGBE) (South Africa)

*Outcome:* The CSO noted the update by South Africa on the Second meeting of the Working Group on Blue Economy (WGBE) that took place virtually on 12 April 2021.

The CSO noted South Africa’s proposal that IORA consider ways to incorporate climate change as a priority in its work, including through a brainstorming session and discussion paper in early 2022, with outcomes to be reported to the CSO. The CSO requested further information be circulated by South Africa on the proposal.

The CSO welcomed France/Reunion’s advice that it would host an IORA workshop on Blue Economy issues in La Reunion in the second half of 2021, and would circulate more information in due course.

The CSO noted advice from Iran that it was willing to share experiences on the blue economy, particularly aquaculture and fish farming.

### 11.4 Activities by IORA Blue Carbon Hub

#### 11.4.1 Update: Second round of IORA Blue Carbon Hub Early Career Visiting Scientist programme (Australia)

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

The CSO noted the postponement of the second round of the visiting scientist programme due to the prevailing COVID situation, and that new dates would be conveyed in due course.

The CSO welcomed the announcement by Australia of a forthcoming initiative by Australia, India and France/Reunion for an “Earth Observation Project” being a 1.5 track workshop to assist Member States to build capacity to access data from devices that observe the earth, and to enhance Member States’ abilities to strengthen their Blue Economy sectors. The CSO noted a Concept Note would be circulated in due course.

#### 11.4.2 Update: Webinar on Blue Carbon Initiatives in IORA (Australia)

*Outcome:* The CSO noted the update by Australia on the preparation of the Webinar on Blue Carbon Initiatives in IORA.

#### 11.4.3 Report: Webinar entitled “Towards a sustainable blue forest economy (Australia)

*Outcome:* The CSO noted the report by Australia on the Webinar entitled “Towards a sustainable blue forest economy” that took place on 10 March 2021.

#### 11.4.4 Report: Workshop entitled “IORA Blue Carbon Hub think tank meeting- Nature Based Solution for Coastal Risk Reduction (Australia/ Bangladesh)

*Outcome:* The CSO noted the report by Australia on the Workshop entitled “IORA Blue Carbon Hub think tank meeting- Nature Based Solution for Coastal Risk Reduction” that took place virtually on 25-27 May 2021.

### 11.5 Update: Consideration of IORA White Paper on Blue Carbon Finance (Australia)

*Outcome:* The CSO noted the update by Australia on the IORA White Paper on Blue Carbon Finance, which will outline policy options to catalyse financing of blue carbon assets in the Indian Ocean region.

The CSO noted that the draft of the White Paper would be circulated to Member States in August 2021.

### 11.6 New proposal: IORA Actions Against Marine Debris (Indonesia)

*Outcome:* The CSO welcomed the update by Indonesia on the new proposal on IORA Actions Against Marine Debris, including that Indonesia would collaborate with GIZ on a series of workshops with Member States on initiatives to minimise plastic waste on land to prevent debris entering the sea. The CSO noted India’s support for this proposal and expression of intent to explore synergies on this issue with the Indo-Pacific Ocean’s Initiative (IPOI).

The CSO noted that Indonesia will revise the Concept Note based on Member States’ inputs and will circulate the revised version and further information in due course.

**11.7** **New Proposal: Research Study: “COVID-19 and Climate Change: Prospects for a “Blue”**  **Recovery in the Indian Ocean Region” (Secretariat)**

*Outcome:* The CSO noted the update by the Secretariat on the new proposal for the IORAG to conduct a Research Study on “COVID-19 and Climate Change: Prospects for a “Blue” Recovery in the Indian Ocean Region”.

The CSO noted that India was in the process of preparing its inputs on the proposal, and that the WGBE was in the process of preparing the Terms of Reference for the study.

The CSO requested the Secretariat to consider revising the proposed title of the study in consultation with the WGBE.

**11.8 Update: Activities under MoU between IORA and AFD** **(Secretariat)**

*Outcome:* The CSO noted the update by the IORA Secretariat on the activities under MoU between IORA and AFD.

# 12. WOMEN’S ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT (WGWEE) - *Coordinating Country: Australia*

### 12.1 Update: Progress Report on the Action Plan 2017-21 (WEE) and Work Plan of the WGWEE (Australia)

*Outcome:* The CSO noted the update on the Women’s Economic Empowerment components of the IORA Action Plan 2017-21, and asked the Secretariat to update the IORA Action Plan Progress Report accordingly.

The CSO noted the progress in implementing the WGWEE Work Plan.

The CSO welcomed the announcement by Australia of the formal launch of the UN Women report “Women’s Economic Empowerment in the Indian Ocean Rim: Progress and Challenges” produced under the IORA-UN Women partnership.

The CSO encouraged Member States to promote the report and its recommendations to increase the visibility and impact of IORA through this initiative, and noted that a social media package was available from the Secretariat on request.

The CSO expressed its appreciation to Australia for its effective implementation of the three-year IORA-UN Women partnership.

### 12.2 Update: Preparations for the Fourth Meeting of the Working Group on Women’s Economic Empowerment (WGWEE) (Australia/Mauritius)

*Outcome:* The CSO noted the update that the next meeting of the WGWEE would be convened on 22 July 2021, and that details would be circulated shortly.

The CSO encouraged Member States to consider what outcomes they wished to seek from the WGWEE meeting, given the UN Women partnership was concluding, and raise the level of ambition for what IORA may seek to achieve in Women’s Economic Empowerment.

The CSO noted the update from Mauritius that its period as Chair of the WGWEE would come to an end at the end of 2021. The CSO called on any Member State interested in assuming the position of Chair of the WGWEE to convey this at the upcoming meeting of the WGWEE on 22 July 2022.

The CSO noted that, as with other Priority Areas, support was available from the IORA Secretariat and Special Fund.

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### 12.3 Update: Progress in implementing the IORA-UN Women project “Promoting women’s economic empowerment in the Indian Ocean Rim” (Australia)

*Outcome:* This item was discussed under item 12.1.

### 12.4 Update: IORA virtual symposium on Building Women’s Economic Resilience in the face of COVID-19 (Australia)

*Outcome:* The CSO noted the update from Australia that it would co-host a virtual symposium with the USA later in 2021 for women business owners in the region, and further details would be circulated in due course.

# 13. INSTITUTIONAL ARRANGEMENTS AND BROADENING ENGAGEMENT - *Coordinating Country: South Africa*

### 13.1 Report: Status of Ad-hoc Working Group (AhWG) for the eligibility and criteria for selecting the Secretary-General (Sri Lanka)

*Outcome:* The CSO noted the report by Sri Lanka, the Chair of the AhWG, that the AhWG had met three times, most recently on 8 and 14 June 2021, and had come to consensus on the eligibility criteria and composition of the Selection Committee for the position of Secretary-General.

The CSO noted that the AhWG was continuing to deliberate on the selection process for the position of Secretary-General. The CSO noted that Sri Lanka would host the next meeting of the AhWG on Tuesday 22 and Wednesday 23 June 2021.

The CSO agreed that an extraordinary CSO and COM meeting will be hosted by the IORA Chair, to consider and endorse the report and recommendations of the AhWG once the AhWG complets its deliberations.

### 13.2 Update: Vacancy for the position of the Corporate Services Manager/ Director (Secretariat)

*Outcome:* The CSO welcomed the nominee from Mauritius, Mr. Cholakumar Ramchurn for the position of Supervisor: Finance, Budgeting, Accounting and Human Resources who joined the Secretariat on 4 May 2021 replacing the former secondee from Mauritius, Mr. Navin Rughoonundun. The CSO noted that the tenure of Mr. Ramchurn is for one year, with a possibility of renewal .

The CSO thanked the Government of Mauritius for the services of Mr. Navin Rughoonundun who had occupied the position since 15 May 2019.

The CSO welcomed Tanzania’s advice that it was considering seconding an officer to the position of Corporate Services Manager/Director at the Secretariat when it next became vacant.

### 13.3 Update: Annual IORA Calendar of events (Secretariat)

*Outcome:* The CSO noted the progress made on the Annual Calendar of events and agreed on the requests made by the IORA Secretariat in scheduling the meetings:

a) to avoid planning (if possible) any events one month prior to the CSO-COM meetings in order not to delay sending the documents for the said meetings;

b) to avoid any virtual meetings that are scheduled for times that require other Member States to attend outside office hours, due to the time difference; and

c) to take this into account when scheduling meetings, including by not scheduling meetings for Fridays (noting that Muslim-majority Member States are also not often in the office on Fridays).

The CSO requested that the Secretariat circulate the calendar as well as the IORA Directory of contact points together, once per quarter, for Member States ready reference and regular submission of updates.

### 13.4 Update: IORA’s role in the Indo-Pacific (India)

*Outcome:* The CSO noted the update by India on the paper on IORA’s role in the Indo-Pacific and expressed its appreciation to India for leading this process.

The CSO requested the Secretariat to recirculate the paper to all Member States for any final inputs by 14 July 2021.

The CSO noted the intention to submit the paper to the CSO/COM for approval.

### 13.5 Update: Streamlining decision-making processes through sub-structures (South Africa)

*Outcome:* The CSO noted the update by South Africa on the proposal on streamlining decision-making processes through sub-structures, and expressed its appreciation to South Africa for leading this process.

The CSO requested the Secretariat to circulate the updated and consolidated final draft of the paper for endorsement at the next CSO/COM meeting.

### 13.6 Status of Institutional arrangements with other regional organisations and the UN (Secretariat)

#### 13.6.1 Update: Status of cooperation with the United National Institute for Training and Research (Secretariat)

##### 13.6.1.1 Training Programme Geospatial Information Technology (GIT) for Operational planning and Decision-making in Disaster Risk Management (Secretariat)

*Outcome:* The CSO welcomed the GIZ support for the provision of the online component to the GIT training programme from 20-24 September 2021, and encouraged Member States to participate.

#### 13.6.2 Update: The World Bank Proposal - Letter of Intent between IORA, SACEP and Parley or the project on “Plastic Free Rivers and Seas for Nations of the Indian Ocean Rim” (Secretariat)

*Outcome:* The CSO noted the update by the IORA Secretariat that it was liaising with the Chair of the WGBE on a way forward with respect to the World Bank Proposal - Letter of Intent between IORA, SACEP and Parley and IORA’s proposed involvement in the “Plastic Free Rivers and Seas for Nations of the Indian Ocean Rim” to be proposed to the CSO for its consideration.

#### 13.6.3 Update: progress in collaboration with the Indian Ocean Commission (IOC) (Secretariat)

*Outcome:* The CSO welcomed the progress in IORA’s collaboration with the IOC, including that a draft framework Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) was being prepared between the IORA and IOC Secretariats.

The CSO agreed to accelerate cooperation with the IOC and requested Member States to liaise with the Secretariat on any tangible activities that could be undertaken between IORA and the IOC, subject to the approval of the CSO.

#### 13.6.4 Update: Other regional organisations and the UN (Secretariat)

**Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN)**

*Outcome:* The CSO endorsed the Secretariat’s Concept Note on engagement with the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN).

The CSO requested the Secretariat to approach the ASEAN Secretariat to explore potential collaboration based on the Concept Note, and update the CSO on the response.

**International Renewable Energy Agency (IRENA) (UAE/Secretariat)**

*Outcome:* The CSO noted the update by the IORA Secretariat that it had written to IRENA to convey draft proposals suggested by the Chair of the WGBE.

The CSO requested the Secretariat to update the CSO on the response once received from IRENA.

**International Solar Alliance (ISA)**

*Outcome:* The CSO noted the update by the IORA Secretariat that an extension to the MOU between IORA and the International Solar Alliance (ISA), which had previously been approved by the CSO, had not yet been signed.

The CSO requested clarification from the Secretariat on the reasons behind the delay in signing an extension to the MOU, to be circulated to Member States.

The CSO requested the Secretariat to conclude the process to extend the MOU as a priority.

**Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission of UNESCO (IOC-UNESCO)**

*Outcome:* The CSO noted the update by the IORA Secretariat on the engagement with the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission of UNESCO (IOC-UNESCO), including that the draft MOU between IORA and IOC-UNESCO was under consideration by the IOC-UNESCO.

**The Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) of the United Nations**

*Outcome:* The CSO noted the update by the IORA Secretariat on the engagement with The Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) of the United Nations.

**The International Seabed Authority (ISA)**

*Outcome:* The CSO noted the update by the IORA Secretariat on the engagement with The International Seabed Authority (ISA). The CSO noted that the Secretariat had conveyed IORA’s agreement to the draft MOU to the ISA, and was waiting for an indication that the ISA also agreed to the MOU.

### 13.7 Strengthening of the IORA Secretariat

#### 13.7.1 Capacity Building Programmes for IORA – Offer of Project Management Training (Singapore/ Secretariat)

*Outcome:* The CSO noted the update by Singapore that it was awaiting confirmation from the Secretariat on the dates and content for the proposed capacity building programme on project management, to be delivered virtually for the IORA Secretariat and Member States in the second half of 2021.

#### 13.7.2 Update: Refurbishment of the Secretariat (Secretariat)

*Outcome:* The CSO noted the update by the IORA Secretariat on the refurbishment of the Secretariat, including that the Secretariat continued to liaise with potential service providers.

#### 13.7.3 Update: Capacity building initiatives under Financing Agreements with GIZ (Secretariat)

*Outcome:* The CSO noted the update from the Secretariat on the Capacity building initiatives under Financing Agreements with GIZ.

#### 13.7.4 Update: Capacity building initiatives under Financing Agreements with AFD (Secretariat)

*Outcome:* The CSO endorsed the revised Financing Agreement between IORA and AFD and authorised the immediate signature of the Financing Agreement by the Acting Secretary-General.

The CSO expressed its appreciation to France/Reunion for this forthcoming support to strengthen the Secretariat.

### 13.8 Update: Bi-annual meeting of the IORA Working/ Core Group Chairs/ Priority Area Coordinating Countries (Secretariat)

*Outcome:* The CSO requested the Secretariat to recirculate the Concept Note on the proposal for a Bi-annual meeting of the IORA Working/ Core Group Chairs/ Priority Area Coordinating Countries, with Member State inputs to be provided to the Secretariat by 28 July 2021.

The CSO noted India’s proposal for expansion of this Concept Note to include formal definition of Core Group, Cluster Group and Working Group ; and for rotation of Coordinating countries for priority areas and Working Group Chairs every 2 years.

The CSO noted the proposal to hold the bi-annual meeting of Working/Core Group Chairs / Priority Area Coordinating countries virtually and not necessarily in the margins of the CSO given that the CSO agenda is already lengthy.

### 13.9 Update: IORA Media Network (Secretariat)

*Outcome:* The CSO welcomed the report by the IORA Secretariat on the status of the proposed IORA Media Network.

The CSO encouraged nominations from Member States yet to join the Media Network.

The CSO requested the Secretariat to audit the IORA website and ensure all pages are correct and up to date.

The CSO requested the Secretariat to consider new and innovative ways to present IORA virtually, including the possibility of a short video about IORA and the Secretariat to be posted online.

### 13.10 Report: IORA Day 2021 & preparations for 2022 (Secretariat)

*Outcome:* The CSO noted the report on the IORA Day 2021 virtual celebrations and thanked the Secretariat for its efforts to promote IORA in Mauritius and to other Member States online. The CSO appreciated India’s efforts in hosting the IORA Workshop on Yoga and Holistic Living in the times of COVID-19.

The CSO encouraged Member States to suggest programmes and/or a workshop/seminar for the IORA Day 2022 virtual celebrations.

# 14. FINANCE & ADMINISTRATION

### 14.1 Report: Sub-Committee on Finance (SCF) (Chair of SCF, UAE)

*Outcome:* The CSO endorsed the Decision Report of the SCF that was held on 9 June 2021.

The CSO noted that Mauritius had sent a detailed list of follow-up questions to the Secretariat, and requested the Secretariat to provide its written response to Mauritius and the Troika by 30 June 2021.

The CSO noted that several decisions of the previous meeting of the SCF on 15 December 2020 had not been implemented, and requested the Secretariat to ensure implementation of all SCF decisions moving forward.

The CSO requested the Secretariat to circulate the financial documents well in advance of the SCF meeting to enable more comprehensive review by Member States in advance of the SCF meeting.

The CSO noted the update from the Secretariat that the next audit for the Secretariat’s financial and administrative processes would commence in July 2021.

The CSO noted the proposal to rotate responsibility for conducting audits of the Secretariat among Member States. The CSO requested Tanzania to prepare a Concept Note on the proposal to circulate to Member States by 13 August 2021, for consideration at the next SCF meeting. Mauritius indicated its willingness to be a permanent member of any Audit committee given that it hosts the Secretariat.

### 14.2 Update: Secretariat’s proposed structure and staffing needs (Secretariat)

*Outcome:* The CSO noted the update by the IORA Secretariat on the Secretariat’s proposed structure and staffing needs, and endorsed the Secretariat proceeding with urgent recruitment needs as previously approved by the Troika.

The CSO noted that inputs from Mauritius with regards to the setting up of a selection committee for recruitment of local staff had not been fully reflected in the compiled table of Member State inputs circulated by the Secretariat, and requested the Secretariat to ensure that all Member State comments are taken into account.

The CSO noted the importance of establishing a dedicated position of HR Manager in the Secretariat, and requested the Secretariat to carry out a budget analysis to determine whether this position could be funded through savings in other budget areas. The CSO requested the Secretariat to provide this analysis to Mauritius and the Troika by 16 July 2021.

### 14.3 Update: Study of the Secretariat’s staffing & budget needs (Secretariat/Indonesia)

*Outcome:* The CSO recalled the Secretariat’s internal study on Human Resource Management, carried out by the Secretariat in 2020, and requested the Secretariat to circulate the duly filled implementation plan to Member States by 16 July 2021.

The CSO recalled the offer from Indonesia to fund an external study on staffing and budget needs, should this be required.

### 14.4 Update/ Report: Sub-Committee for the Review and Finalisation of IORA Secretariat HR and Finance Manuals, Code of Conduct, Grievance Policy and Procedures, Disciplinary Code & Procedures (Secretariat)

*Outcome:* The CSO noted the update by the IORA Secretariat that the IORA manuals were discussed at a dedicated meeting of interested Member States on 19 May 2021.

The CSO agreed that a dedicated meeting would be convened by the Secretariat in August 2021 to provide Member States ample time to consider and endorse the IORA manuals as living documents for the endorsement of the CSO/COM.

The CSO requested the Secretariat to update the manuals according to Member State inputs, and circulate the updated manuals and a list of responses to Member State inputs well in advance of the meeting in August. The CSO requested the Secretariat to finalise the revised Financial Regulations and Staff Regulations for CSO endorsement and COM approval. The CSO also requested that where differences of approach between Member States were identified, the Secretariat would draft and propose a preferred way forward.

### 14.5 Update: Review of the host country agreement (Secretariat)

*Outcome:* The CSO noted the update by the Secretariat that the review of the host country agreement had been delayed. The CSO requested the Secretariat to engage with Mauritius to discuss the way forward on this issue.

**14.6 Update: Workshop to consider non-payment of membership fees (Secretariat)**

*Outcome:* The CSO noted the update by the Secretariat on the Workshop to consider non-payment of membership fees.

The CSO requested the Secretariat to recirculate the draft report of the Workshop for any further inputs from Member States within one month of the date of circulation. The Secretariat will then consolidate and recirculate a revised version to all Member States.

The CSO noted this was a longstanding issue and encouraged Member States to finalise the following outstanding issues, among others: longstanding arrears; access to SYDP and other Special Fund support if in arrears; whether remittance plans could be considered; the proposal to adjust contributions based on development levels of Member States.

The CSO noted the preference of some Member States to not list publicly those Member States currently in arrears, and to ensure that measures would not constitute further economic burden and pressure, and would not go against the IORA goal of economic development and solidarity.

# 15. IORA SPECIAL FUND

### 15.1 Update: Review of the Administrative Arrangements of the Special Fund including the emergency use of the Special Fund for COVID-19 response projects (Chair/ Secretariat)

*Outcome:* The CSO noted the update from the IORA Secretariat on the circulation of the Review of the Administrative Arrangements of the Special Fund including the emergency use of the Special Fund for COVID-19 response projects.

The CSO agreed that Small Island Developing States (SIDS) should have the same access to, and be treated in the same way as, Least Developed Country (LDC) Member States in the Administrative Arrangements of the Special Fund.

The CSO agreed to discuss the issue of whether Member States currently in arrears of membership fees would, or would not, be able to apply for Special Fund support, as part of its deliberations on the non-payment of membership fees.

The CSO requested the Secretariat to provide further clarifications as requested directly to India, and to prepare a consolidated clean version of amendments to be circulated at least two months before the next CSO meeting, to enable the next CSO to recommend the amendments to the COM for approval.

The CSO requested that the Secretariat liaise with India on devising an appropriate way to prioritize project applications that were reflected under Provision Four: Arrangements for allocation of funds (“Member States should prioritise the order in which projects qualify for funding.”). This should be included in the clean version of the document to be circulated.

The CSO agreed, in the unlikely event of no consensus on the Administrative Arrangements of the Special Fund in the next CSO meeting, to seek mandate from the COM to discuss and determine the parameter and technical approval for the emergency use of the Special Fund for COVID-19 response projects.

### 15.2 Special Fund projects (approved)

#### 15.2.1 Update: International Relations in the Indian Ocean Region: Collaborative Study Experience, Special Fund (Australia)

*Outcome:* The CSO noted the update from Australia on the International Relations in the Indian Ocean Region: Collaborative Study Experience that an in-person course has been delayed and new dates would be communicated in due course.

#### 15.2.2 Update: IORA-India Cruise Tourism Conference “Spotlight on the Indian Ocean” (India)

*Outcome:* The CSO noted the update by India that the IORA-India Cruise Tourism Conference “Spotlight on the Indian Ocean” had been delayed and new dates would be communicated in due course.

#### 15.2.3 Update: High Level Capacity Building Programme on Gender Mainstreaming in the Six Priority Areas of IORA, Special Fund (Mauritius)

*Outcome:* The CSO noted the update on the High-Level Capacity Building Programme on Gender Mainstreaming in the Six Priority Areas of IORA, including that the initiative had been delayed and that new dates would be communicated in due course.

#### 15.2.4 Update: Workshop on the Impacts of Climate Change on the Marine Environment for IORA Countries (RCSTT)

*Outcome:* The CSO noted the update by RCSTT on the preparations of the Workshop on the Impacts of Climate Change on the Marine Environment for IORA Countries including that the workshop had been delayed, and that new dates would be communicated in due course.

#### 15.2.5 Update: Creation of a Centre of Excellence for Dispute Resolution (Mauritius)

*Outcome:* The CSO noted the update on the Creation of a Centre of Excellence for Dispute Resolution, including the extension of the project by one year to end in December 2022, and the provision of pro-bono support for the project by law firm Freshfields Bruckhaus Deringer.

### 15.3 Consideration of Proposals for future funding under Special Fund (Secretariat)

#### 15.3.1 Update: 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 years old (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 years old.

The CSO endorsed the Special Fund application that had been circulated to Member States on 31 May 2021.

#### 15.3.2 Update: Workshop on Nature-based tourism: “Boosting Livelihoods across the Indian Ocean Rim through Nature-Based Tourism”, Special Fund (Mauritius)

*Outcome:* The CSO noted the update by Mauritius on the Workshop on Nature-based tourism: “Boosting Livelihoods across the Indian Ocean Rim through Nature-Based Tourism” including that the initiative had been delayed and would be held in 2022 or 2023, subject to travel restrictions in the region.

#### 15.3.3 Third Somalia-Yemen Development Programme (SYDP-III): “Development and Management of Somalia's and Yemen’s Marine Fisheries” (Secretariat)

*Outcome:* The CSO approved the SYDP-III project and Special Fund application as circulated to Member States on 24 May 2021.

#### 15.3.4 IORA Sustainable Development Programme (ISDP) (Secretariat)

*Outcome:* The CSO noted the update by the IORA Secretariat on the IORA Sustainable Development Programme (ISDP) and encouraged LDC Member States to propose projects to host under the ISDP.

# 16. IORA SPECIAL PROGRAMMES

### 16.1 Update: IORA Human Development Fund (IHDF) (UAE)

*Outcome:* The CSO noted the update by UAE on the IORA Human Development Fund (IHDF), that the UAE was actively considering alternatives to the IHDF. The UAE further noted that it was undertaking consultations with internal stakeholders and would update Member States in due course. The UAE reiterated that these consultations may necessitate an entirely new concept, while retaining the central objective of enhancing human development outcomes in the Indian Ocean region.

The CSO noted Mauritius’ proposal for the Secretariat to commission a study on, inter alia, the benefits, financial sustainability and modalities of accessing an IORA Development Fund. In this context, the CSO requested the Secretariat to engage with Member States and Dialogue Partners regarding the proposed study. The Secretariat should respond to Member States by 28 August 2021.

The CSO noted South Africa’s suggestion that the IBSA Fund modalities be reviewed as a contribution to the ongoing process of establishing the IHDF.

### 16.2 Update: IORA Nelson Mandela Internship Programme (NMIP) (Secretariat)

*Outcome:* The CSO noted the update by the IORA Secretariat on the IORA Nelson Mandela Internship Programme, including that the program had been delayed due to COVID-related travel restrictions.

The CSO requested the Secretariat to closely monitor the situation and advise Member States as soon as possible when circumstances allow the program to proceed.

The CSO noted that the application process will need to be reintroduced, with preferential consideration being given to those individual candidates already approved in March 2021, should they still be available.

### 16.3 Update: IORA “Connecting the Youth of the Indian Ocean Region” Writing Competition (Secretariat)

*Outcome:* The CSO welcomed the launch of the IORA “Connecting the Youth of the Indian Ocean Region” Writing Competition at the occasion of IORA Day 2021. The CSO requested the Secretariat to circulate the modalities for the writing competition by 30 June 2021.

### 16.4 Update: Indian Ocean Champion Concept (Secretariat)

*Outcome:* The CSO noted the update by the IORA Secretariat on the preparation of the Terms of Reference/Technical Arrangements for the Indian Ocean Champion Concept. The CSO requested the Secretariat to circulate the arrangements in due course.

# 17. NEW PROPOSALS BY MEMBER STATES (if any) (Chair)

*Outcome:*  The IORA Sustainable Health Initiative was tabled by Mauritius as a new proposal.

# 18. PREPARATIONS FOR THE 21ST IORA MEETING OF THE COUNCIL OF MINISTERS (COM) AND RELATED MEETINGS (Bangladesh)

*Outcome:* The CSO noted that Bangladesh was planning to host the next CSO on 15-16 November 2021 and the next COM on 17 November 2021.

The CSO noted that in-person attendance in Dhaka was currently under consideration subject to the COVID-related travel restrictions in the region. Alternatively, a hybrid or virtual meeting will be considered.

# 19. ANY OTHER BUSINESS (AOB) (Chair)

*Outcome:* The CSO requested that CSO meeting connection information and background documents be shared well in advance of future meetings, to enable comprehensive Member State consideration and preparation.

The CSO expressed its appreciation for the leadership of the CSO Chair, HE Abdulnasser Alshaali, and the Government of the UAE for its leadership of IORA during the UAE’s tenure as IORA Chair and the Vice-Chair also commended South Africa as Troika Member and Past IORA Chair for its constructive support to the Chair and Vice-Chair.

The CSO expressed its appreciation for the work of Mr Marc Livsey and Mr Nooh Alhammadi for their contributions to IORA during their tenures as seconded Directors from Australia and the UAE respectively.

# 20. ADOPTION OF THE DECISION REPORT AND CLOSING REMARKS (Chair)

*Outcome:* The CSO requested the Secretariat to circulate the Draft Decision Report as at 16 June 2021 to all Member States, with 24 hours to provide inputs. The CSO requested the Secretariat to subsequently circulate the final Decision Report.

The CSO noted the closing remarks by the Chair.

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