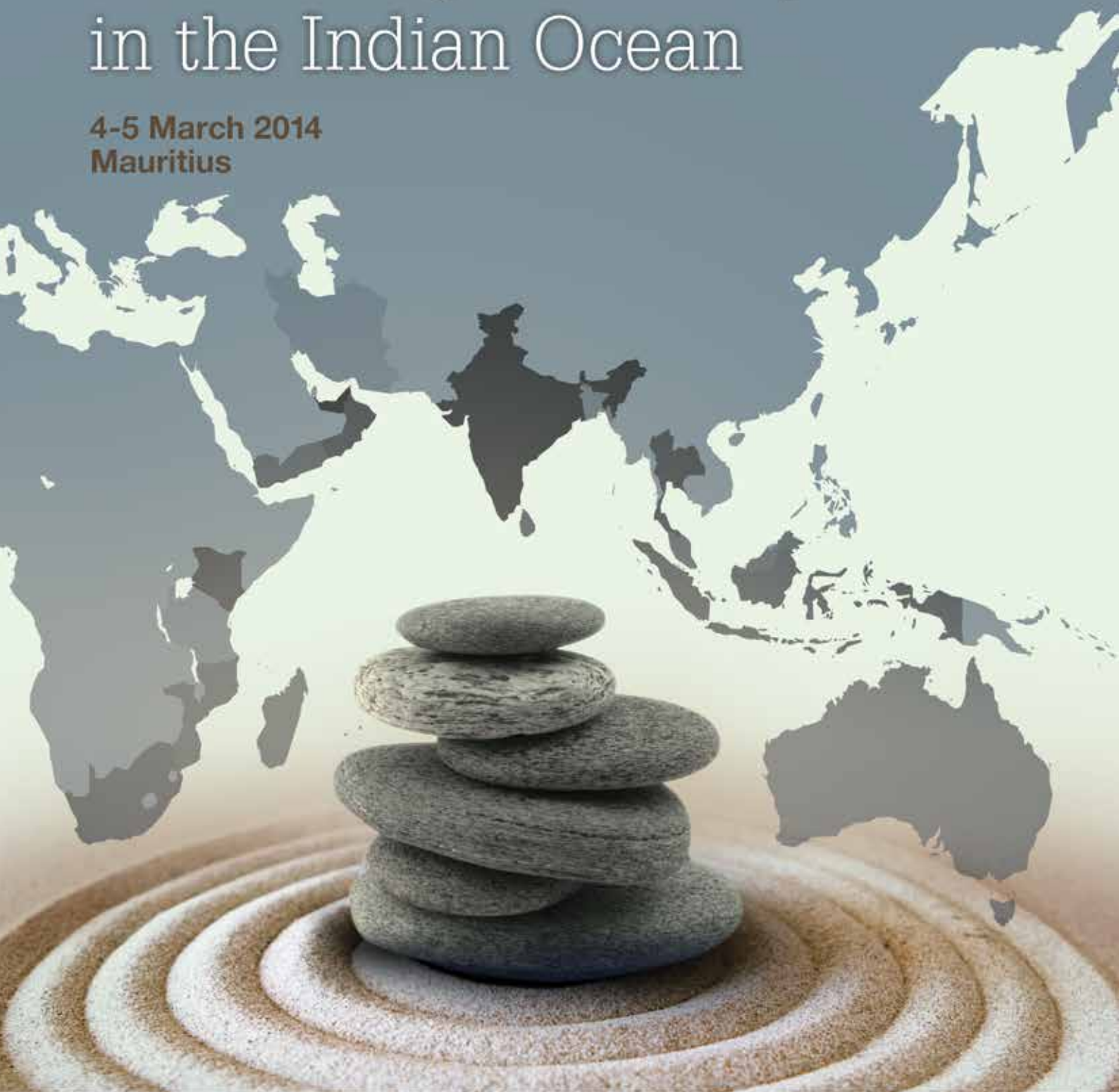# Workshop on IORA and Strategic Stability in the Indian Ocean

4-5 March 2014
Mauritius

S. RAJARATNAM SCHOOL OF INTERNATIONAL STUDIES
A Graduate School of Nanyang Technological University

IORA
INDIAN OCEAN RIM ASSOCIATION

Workshop on
IORA and Strategic Stability
in the Indian Ocean

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PREFACE

Comprising 20 member states and covering a region with a total gross domestic product of US$6.5 trillion in 2011, the Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA) possesses great potential to facilitate regional cooperation. It seeks to become a serious actor in the international system and to spearhead future regional integration as the Indian Ocean grows in economic importance. To this end, the Perth Principles promulgated during the 13th Council of Ministers of the Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA) meeting in November 2013 reaffirmed six priority areas of cooperation for the organization, namely: 1) maritime safety and security; 2) trade and investment facilitation; 3) fisheries management; 4) disaster risk management; 5) academic and science and technology cooperation; and 6) tourism and cultural exchanges.

In conjunction with the S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies (RSIS), IORA held a Workshop on *IORA and Strategic Stability in the Indian Ocean* on March 5, 2014 in Mauritius. The Workshop focused on ways to promote security cooperation as a stepping stone towards strategic stability. Key security challenges to the region, including issues related to building interstate trust and confidence, were discussed during the panel meeting. Barriers to effective cooperation amongst IORA member states and external stakeholders were also examined before the workshop concluded with recommendations on possible ways forward for IORA.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1) The Indian Ocean faces many traditional and non-traditional security challenges. Strategic uncertainties arise from rivalries amongst the Indian Ocean littoral states and extra-regional powers. Non-state actors and climate change are primary sources of non-traditional security challenges.

2) Barriers to effective cooperation exist, including some lack of coherence in regional cooperation, lack of capacity and difficulties with reconciling diverse and competing national interests amongst littoral states and external stakeholders.

3) Indian Ocean stability requires holistic cooperation on various fronts – diplomatic, economic, environmental, political and security – while at the same time respecting member states' national sovereignty and ensuring an inclusive approach to foster interstate trust and cooperation.

4) IORA may look into the greater involvement of external stakeholders and other regional and sub-regional groupings. Extra-regional powers, especially those maritime users of the Indian Ocean, should be encouraged to increase their contributions to IORA.

5) On the more practical level, the IORA Secretariat may need to be expanded in order to enhance its capacity to deal with broadening responsibilities in promoting stability and security in the Indian Ocean.. The existing working groups within IORA may require restructuring to enable the Association to address the priority areas of cooperation more effectively. Capacity-building for IORA policymaking can also be enhanced by promoting more Track 2 initiatives.

6) IORA may consider establishing a mechanism for humanitarian assistance and disaster management, such as creating a regional early warning system for natural calamities.

7) A more specific and comprehensive declaration on ocean issues than that provided by the Perth Declaration might be formulated.

SECURITY CHALLENGES IN THE INDIAN OCEAN

The strategic importance of the Indian Ocean region cannot be overstated, but currently some strategic uncertainty is apparent in the region. Extra-regional power involvement spawns strategic uncertainties. The extra-regional powers have maintained an active naval presence in the Indian Ocean to assist in combating non-traditional threats to maritime safety and security in the region. One concern is whether these extra-regional powers will withdraw their naval presence from the Indian Ocean after bringing those threats under control or maintain a permanent naval presence, which may potentially result in a new era of "colonization from the sea", as one of the speakers put it.

Sovereignty and territorial disputes also exist amongst the littoral states, for instance the Indian-Sri Lankan fishery disputes in the Palk Strait. Some regional nation-states possess substantial military power, including weapons of mass destruction. Strategic stability depends largely on the signaling of strategic intent between states and perceptions of strategic intentions. Unfortunately, Indian Ocean states and extra-regional powers do not necessarily understand one another's strategic intent. Regional and extra-regional powers operate actively in the Indian Ocean in pursuit of their own national objectives, inevitably giving rise to competing interests.

Smaller Indian Ocean states are particularly wary about uncertainties arising from strategic rivalries and competition for influence amongst the major powers. Some of the participants at the workshop argued that this constitutes a major source of interstate distrust and suspicions. This is especially seen in the case of Sino-Indian competition for influence in the region. So far, the non-inclusivity exhibited in existing institutions has not fostered an environment more conducive for nurturing greater interstate trust and cooperation.

The workshop recognized the salience of non-traditional security challenges which, in the era of globalization, have serious ramifications for Indian Ocean strategic stability, food security and economic development. Such challenges include illegal fishing, threats posed by non-state actors to vital sea lines of communication (SLOCs) and environmental pollution. Despite the fall in the incidence of piracy attacks in the region, other non-traditional security challenges such as maritime terrorism and arms trafficking, still have to be addressed. In particular, climate change poses another perennial threat to the Indian Ocean: rising sea levels threaten the future existence of small island states, as well as low-lying areas elsewhere.

Systemic developments in the Indian Ocean look set to sharpen these non-traditional security challenges. For example, rapid urbanization, high levels of youth unemployment, as well as unprecedented rapid population growth in the African continent and South Asia shape the region's security landscape now and will continue to do so in the foreseeable future. Parts of the region are also characterized by fragile governance, which directly impinges upon stability, as seen in the failure of governance in Somalia and the emergence of piracy off its coast.

BARRIERS TO EFFECTIVE COOPERATION IN THE INDIAN OCEAN

The Indian Ocean security architecture is fragile, vulnerable to failure and will take time to morph into more stable security arrangements. While prospects for effective cooperation appear positive, potential barriers do exist and need to be addressed.

The first barrier is the lack of coherence in regional cooperation. Discussions initiated by various regional and sub-regional groupings on security cooperation in the Indian Ocean revolve mainly around capacity building, but these groupings do not necessary coordinate or cooperate with one another. Instead, they work primarily in "silos" leading to potential duplication of and disconnected efforts towards enhancing strategic stability in the region.

The second barrier concerns lack of capacity, especially amongst the less-endowed nation-states. The region is saddled with a broad range of security challenges, yet lacks the wherewithal to fully tackle them, not to mention committing to so many bilateral and multilateral security arrangements. For instance, most of the African Union's funding comes from external sources, not from within. At the strategic-political level, the agenda for IORA cooperation has been decided upon. However, the challenge lies in the difficulties of implementing those initiatives due to lack of funds, manpower and resources (as an example, see Annex 1 for comparison of staffing levels between the secretariats of IORA and a peer organization, Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation or APEC). IORA membership fees are relatively low and major members of IORA, such as Australia and India, may not be able to commit necessary funds and resources. As one of the speakers pointed out, IORA member states and external stakeholders may only commit themselves to sustaining Indian Ocean cooperation if they perceive it to be in their best interests to do so.

The third barrier relates to the diverse and competing national interests of the region. African countries appear to be more focused on domestic stability and governance issues and less concerned about broader strategic issues than other IORA members. Critical stakeholders of Indian Ocean strategic stability include not just member states of IORA but also international organizations, regional and sub-regional institutions as well as dialogue partners and other extra-regional countries. In particular, dialogue partners are extra-regional powers who represent a difficulty for IORA owing to their diverse national interests, which may at times come into conflict with the interests of regional states. Competing national priorities and strategies may therefore pose significant challenges to identifying common interests and forging consensus for cooperation in the region.

Effective cooperation in the Indian Ocean is also impeded by other potential factors. A recurring issue which arose during the discussion was about the employment of navies for tackling maritime safety and security challenges in the region. This runs the risk of militarizing otherwise non-traditional security problems. Nevertheless, the Indian Ocean Naval Symposium (IONS), with its membership of both regional navies and coast guard forces, provides a useful forum for maritime cooperation.

The proliferation of non-state security providers in the Indian Ocean, in particular private security companies, also poses a potential problem. These entities do not support enhanced security cooperation amongst regional states since this will tend to deprive them of lucrative business deals in providing for security. No consensus exists in the region about the rules for employing these non-state actors.

PROMOTING STRATEGIC STABILITY IN THE INDIAN OCEAN

Developing strategic stability in the Indian Ocean region requires holistic cooperation on various fronts – diplomatic, economic, environmental, political and security – while at the same time respecting member states' national sovereignty. IORA could examine the type of institutional structure required for effective cooperation amongst its member states and external stakeholders. As highlighted by one of the speakers, there is a need for IORA to evolve. This could be done by examining existing frameworks of cooperation such as the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC). IORA may also look into ASEAN's model of regional cooperation, including its various sub-groups, with the objective of eventually forming an Indian Ocean community, or creating norms for pan-Indian Ocean identity-building. To this end, participants at the workshop generally agreed that an inclusive approach is essential for fostering interstate trust and cooperation.

On a more pragmatic level, measures are required to address the lack of coherence and capacity and reconcile diverse and competing interests amongst the IORA stakeholders. IORA may look into creating a coherent strategy with external stakeholders and especially other regional and sub-regional groupings to avoid duplication of efforts. For example, the Indian Ocean Commission and ASEAN could be invited to join IORA as dialogue partners. ASEAN has a potential to contribute towards greater strategic stability in the Indian Ocean and foster cooperation because of the geographical contiguity between Southeast Asia and the Indian Ocean region as well as common security challenges. Potential areas of cooperation between ASEAN and IORA in this respect include transnational crime and good order at sea, as well as ocean management.

Since extra-regional powers have vital stakes in the Indian Ocean with important roles to play in maintaining strategic stability in the region, they could be invited to expand their contributions to IORA. Other extra-regional maritime user states in the Indian Ocean, for instance South Korea, might be considered for dialogue partnership with IORA. In addition, IORA may also look into expanding linkages with international organizations, such as the International Maritime Organization, to allow for tapping on their expertise and resources. In case more external funding sources are not forthcoming, it may be necessary to review the IORA membership fees and, where required, revise those contributions. At the same time, attention should be given to setting the payment of fees according to the member states' ability to cope and also to ensuring that the less-endowed member states are not marginalized in the organization by the better-endowed ones.

To help alleviate the manpower shortfalls of the IORA Secretariat in view of its foreseeable expanding responsibilities, each IORA member state may consider deploying one government representative to the IORA Secretariat. The cost of the official's salary should be covered by the respective national government.

More political interactions at various Track 1 levels are essential both for discussing issues of common concern and for implementation purposes. At present the Committee of Senior Officials holds meetings bi-annually. It may be necessary for more regular meetings to facilitate more effective policy implementation. It is worthwhile to explore the establishment of sectoral sub-working groups at the ministerial or senior officials' level also involving extra-regional stakeholders. IORA working groups may consider restructuring themselves on the six priority areas, learning from external models such as the ASEAN Regional Forum. Depending on the priority areas, relevant ministries or departments can contribute manpower and resources towards sectoral implementations.

1ˢᵗ Row (seated): Captain Martin A. Sebastian, Mr Tony Huber, Dr Anthony Bergin, Ms Jane Chan Git Yin, Mr Graham Anderson, Dr Vijay Sakhuja, Dr Rajesh M. Basrur, Dr Martin Kimani

2ⁿᵈ Row (standing): Mr Collin S. L. Koh, Mr Rudaralingum Coopamootoo, Mr Ristian A. Supriyanto, Dr Edmund K. W. Chia, Dr C. Raja Mohan, Major General ANM Muniruzzaman, Mrs Minakshi Dabee-Hauzaree, Ms Leesta Moteea, Ms Tania Diolle, Ms Nawshin Mahadooa, Ms Naaziah Busawon, Mr Musabbeh Al Shamsih, Ms Venessa S. T. Quatre, Mr Shem P. Pillay

3rd Row (standing): *Mr Gregory Martin, Dr Anit Mukherjee, Dr Terence McNamee, Dr Sam Bateman, Mr Patrick Davis, Dr Hiran W. Jayewardene, Captain Mohammed S. G. Ali, Mr Kevin Romain*

The current three working groups (on Trade and Investment, the Business Forum and the Academic Group) are very broad. The Academic Group, which might focus on security issues such as terrorism and disaster relief, is a Track 2 forum, whereas relevant security issues also need to be studied at a Track 1 or Track 1.5 level. Consideration should be given to restructuring the current framework of working groups so that specific aspects of the priority areas of cooperation can be addressed in an effective manner.

To complement Track 1 efforts, more could be done at the Track 2 level. For instance, an Indian Ocean equivalent of the Council for Security Cooperation in the Asia Pacific (CSCAP) or even the Network of ASEAN Defence and Security Institutes (NADI) may be established as part of efforts to enhance the non-official component of IORA to build its capacity towards policymaking. This component may form study groups to mirror Track 1 working or sub-working groups that delve into the six priority areas of cooperation.

The strategic uncertainty in the region might be alleviated by greater awareness among IORA members of the strategic interests and intentions of other members. This could be achieved in the first instance by a study conducted under the auspices of the IORA Academic Group directed towards producing a report similar to the Regional Security Outlook regularly produced for the Asia-Pacific region by CSCAP.

IORA may consider establishing a mechanism for disaster management. In particular, a system of early warning for natural calamities such as earthquakes and tsunamis ought to be created. The Indonesian proposal on Disaster Risk Reduction introduced during the 12th Council of Ministers of IOR-ARC meeting in India in 2012, which entails the establishment of an Earthquake and Tsunami Center of Excellence, ought to be given further impetus to kick-start the establishment of such a mechanism.

Ocean issues are a central common interest of regional countries with significant security ramifications. Enhanced cooperation on ocean issues would have significant benefits for strategic stability, including by providing a platform for the constructive involvement of extra-regional stakeholders. IORA might foster projects on oceanography and meteorology as a base for exploring more systematic work on the 'blue' economy. The Indian Ocean remains one of the least studied and understood of the world's oceans, so IORA should support projects such as the ambitious International Indian Ocean Expedition 50th Anniversary Initiative. A more specific and comprehensive declaration on ocean issues than that provided by the 2013 Perth Declaration might be considered.

SUMMARY OF CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The workshop concluded that ensuring strategic stability and providing greater security certainty in the Indian Ocean region is a major challenge for IORA. It acknowledged, however, that the current charter of the association and its limited resources inhibit its ability to address the challenge. The lack of resources is clearly the major factor. Despite these limitations, ways and means are available that, if implemented, could facilitate the ability of the association to progress towards a regional institution better equipped to deal with security challenges. The recommendations to enhance strategic stability include the following:

- An inclusive approach is essential for fostering interstate trust and cooperation;

- Sub-regional groupings, such as the Indian Ocean Commission and ASEAN, might be invited to join IORA as dialogue partners or observers;

- Other extra-regional maritime user states in the Indian Ocean, for instance South Korea, might be considered for dialogue partnership with IORA;

- Dialogue partners and other extra-regional stakeholders, as well as relevant international organisations, should be invited to contribute resources to the IORA;

- An Eminent Persons Group might be established by IORA to foster modalities of initial multilateral security cooperation;

- IORA working groups may consider restructuring themselves to focus on the six priority areas, learning from external models such as the ASEAN Regional Forum;

- IORA members should identify which areas would be suitable for initiating region-wide security cooperation, e.g. disaster management and counter-terrorism.

- A study might be conducted under the auspices of the IORA Academic Group directed towards promoting greater awareness of their strategic interests among IORA members.

- An Indian Ocean Study Group should be established to explore the above and other areas of security cooperation.

- IORA may consider establishing a mechanism for disaster management.

- IORA should foster enhanced cooperation on oceans issues, including a more specific and comprehensive declaration than that provided by the Perth Declaration.

ANNEX : COMPARING IORA AND APEC STAFFING LEVELS

	IORA	**APEC**
Year formed	1997	1989
Number of members	20	21
Total population	2.6 billion	2.7 billion
% share of global trade	11.6%	44%
Secretariat staffing level	9	49

Source: IORA official website, online available: <http://www.iora.net/default.aspx> (accessed on March 7, 2014); APEC official website, online available: <http://www.apec.org/> (accessed on March 7, 2014); Indian Ocean Rim Association for Regional Cooperation (IOR-ARC), website of the Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India, online available: <http://www.mea.gov.in/in-focus-article.htm?20707/Indian+Ocean+Rim+Association+for+Regional+Cooperation+IORARC> (accessed on March 7, 2014).

PROGRAMME

4 March 2014

Accommodation in Hotel Hennessy

1900 - 2200   Welcome Dinner at Hennessy Hotel

5 March 2014

0830 - 0900   Registration of delegates at Venue of Conference

0900 - 0930   - Welcome Remarks by
Amb K. V. Bhagirath
Secretary-General of IORA

- Welcome Remarks by
Ms Jane Chan Git Yin
S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies (RSIS)
Singapore

- Opening Remarks by
Dr Arvin Boolell
Minister of Foreign Affairs
Mauritius

0930 - 1100   **Panel Session 1**
IORA's common interests
Chair: Dr Anthony Bergin
Panellists: Dr Vijay Sakhuja
               Ms Jane Chan Git Yin
               Dr Sam Bateman

1100 - 1115   Coffee break

1115 - 1245   **Panel Session 2**
Challenges to effective security cooperation in the Indian Ocean Rim region
Chair: Dr C. Raja Mohan
Panellists: Dr Terence McNamee
               Dr Hiran Jayewardene
               MG Anm Muniruzzaman
               Mr Ristian A. Supriyanto

1245 - 1415   Lunch

1415 - 1545   **Panel Session 3**
Role of the IORA to build trust, confidence and effective security cooperation
Chair: Dr Sam Bateman
Panellists: Amb Martin Kimani
               Dr C. Raja Mohan
               Dr Anthony Bergin
               Capt Martin A. Sebastian

1545 - 1600   Closing remarks

Evening   Dinner at Hennessy Hotel

PARTICIPANTS

1. **Captain Mohammed Saif Gubran Ali**
   General Manager
   Maritime Affairs Authority
   Yemen

2. **Mr Graham Anderson**
   Director
   IORA Secretariat
   Mauritius

3. **Dr Rajesh M. Basrur**
   Professor of International Relations
   S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies (RSIS)
   Singapore

4. **Dr Sam Bateman**
   Professorial Research Fellow
   Australian National Centre for Ocean & Security
   Australia

5. **Dr Anthony Bergin**
   Deputy Director
   Australian Strategic Policy Institute
   Australia

6. **Ambassador K. V. Bhagirath**
   Secretary General
   IORA Secretariat
   Mauritius

7. **Ms Naaziah Busawon**
   Investment Executive
   Board of Investment
   Mauritius

8. **Ms Jane Chan Git Yin**
   Research Fellow
   S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies (RSIS)
   Singapore

9. **Dr Edmund Chia Keng Wei**
   Deputy Director General
   South Asia and Sub-Saharan Africa
   Singapore

10. **Mr Rudaralingum Coopamootoo**
    Second Secretary
    Mauritius

11. **Dr Nick D'Adamo**
    Officer in Charge
    Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission, UNESCO
    Australia

12. **Mrs Minakshi Dabee-Hauzaree**
    Principal Cooperation Analyst
    Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade
    Mauritius

13. **Mr Patrick Davis**
    Lieutenant Commander
    U.S. Embassy
    U.S.A.

14. **Ms Tania Diolle**
    Lecturer
    University of Mauritius
    Mauritius

15. **Mr Tony M. Huber**
    Director
    Department of Foreign Affairs & Trade
    Australia

16. **Ms Liu Guiming**
    First Secretary Political
    Chinese Embassy
    China

17. **Dr Hiran W. Jayewardene**
    Secretary General
    Indian Ocean Marine Affairs Co-operation (IOMAC)
    Sri Lanka

18. **Dr Vanessa Jumnoodoo**
    Coordinator
    IORA Secretariat
    Mauritius

19. **Mr Collin Koh Swee Lean**
Associate Research Fellow
S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies (RSIS)
Singapore

20. **Ms Nawshin Mahadooa**
Investment Executive
Board of Investment
Mauritius

21. **Mr Gregory Martin**
Policy Officer
France

22. **Dr Martin K. Mbugua**
Ambassador
Kenya Mission to UNON
Kenya

23. **Dr Terence McNamee**
Deputy Director
The Brenthurst Foundation
South Africa

24. **Dr C. Raja Mohan**
Distinguished Fellow
Observer Research Foundation
India

25. **Ms Leesta Moteea**
Cooperation Analyst
*Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration
and International Trade*
Mauritius

26. **Mr Chantanu Mukharji**
Security Advisor
Prime Minister's Office
Mauritius

27. **Dr Anit Mukherjee**
Assistant Professor
S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies (RSIS)
Singapore

28. **MG Anm Muniruzzaman**
President
Bangladesh Institute of Peace and Security Studies
Bangladesh

29. **Mr Shem P. Pillay**
Public Relations Officer
IORA Secretariat
Mauritius

30. **Ms Venessa S. T. Quatre**
Senior Development Programme Officer
Ministry of Foreign Affairs
Seychelles

31. **Mr Kevin Romain**
Assistant Economist
Ministry of Foreign Affairs
Seychelles

32. **Dr Vijay Sakhuja**
Director (Research)
Indian Council of World Affairs
India

33. **Captain Martin A. Sebastian**
Fellow/Centre Head
Maritime Institute of Malaysia (MIMA)
Malaysia

34. **Mr Musabbeh Al Shamsih**
Deputy Director
International Security Department
United Arab Emirates

35. **Mr Ristian A. Supriyanto**
Associate Research Fellow
S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies (RSIS)
Singapore

ABOUT RSIS

The S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies (RSIS) is a professional graduate school of international affairs at the Nanyang Technological University, Singapore. RSIS' mission is to develop a community of scholars and policy analysts at the forefront of security studies and international affairs. Its core functions are research, graduate education and networking. It produces cutting-edge research on Asia Pacific Security, Multilateralism and Regionalism, Conflict Studies, Non-Traditional Security, International Political Economy, and Country and Region Studies. RSIS' activities are aimed at assisting policymakers to develop comprehensive approaches to strategic thinking on issues related to security and stability in the Asia Pacific.

For more information about RSIS, please visit www.rsis.edu.sg

ABOUT IORA

The Indian Ocean Rim Association for Regional Cooperation (IOR-ARC) was formally launched at the first Ministerial Meeting in March 1997 in Mauritius. The IOR-ARC was renamed the IORA - Indian Ocean Rim Association at the Council of Ministers Meeting in Perth on November 1, 2013, when Australia took over as the Chair of the Association. IORA is today the apex regional organization in the Indian Ocean and currently has 20 Member States and two observers. The objectives of the Association are to promote sustainable growth and balanced development of the region and of the Member States and to create common ground for regional economic cooperation. The IORA strives towards building and expanding understanding and mutually beneficial cooperation among the countries in the Indian Ocean Rim region.

For more information about IORA, please visit the IORA website at: www.iora.net