



Indian Ocean Rim Academic Group (IORAG) - South African Chapter

Framework

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Working Document

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1. Background

The Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA) was formally launched by a Ministerial Meeting in Mauritius in March 1997. The Association's stated broad objective is "to promote the sustained growth and balanced development of the Region and of the 23 Member States¹, and to create common ground for Regional Economic Co-operation".

The Association's 8 Dialogue Partners are China, the United Kingdom, Egypt, Japan, Germany, Turkey, Republic of Korea and the United States of America. Observer organizations to the Association are the Indian Ocean Research Group (IORG) – a social science policy-oriented network, and the Western Indian Ocean Marine Science Association (WIOMSA). Since inception, the association has achieved measurable successes with great prospects for future relevance.

Prior to 2017, when IORA had its first Leader's Summit hosted by Indonesia, the main focus groups within IORA were: the Indian Ocean Rim Academic Group (IORAG); the Working Group on Trade and Investment (WGTI); and the Indian Ocean Rim Business Forum (IORBF). The Leader's Summit saw a reinvigoration of the commitment by Member States to strengthen IORA with the adoption of the IORA Action Plan 2017-2021, the establishment of new Functional Bodies (e.g. Core Groups and Working Groups) in the IORA priority areas², and the strengthening of the IORA specialized agencies – the Fisheries Support Unit (FSU), the Regional Centre for Science and Technology Transfer (RCSTT), and the Chair in Indian Ocean Studies (CIOS). All these IORA mechanisms and agencies have developed or are busy developing their own work plans, informed by the IORA Action Plan, and in support of the relevant Functional Bodies.

These bodies report to the Committee of Senior Officials which then advises the highest decision-making authority of the Association, the Council of (Foreign) Ministers. IORA has adopted the following priority areas:

- Maritime Safety and Security,
- Trade and Investment Facilitation,
- Fisheries Management (including aquaculture),
- Disaster and Risk Management,
- Academic cooperation, Science and Technology, and
- Tourism and Cultural Exchanges,
- Cross cutting issues include Women's Economic Empowerment and the Blue Economy.

¹South Africa, India, Australia, Mauritius, Indonesia, Comoros, Iran, Madagascar, Oman, Tanzania, United Arab Emirates, Kenya, Bangladesh, Seychelles, Malaysia, Mozambique, Singapore, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Yemen, Somalia, Maldives, and France

² New Functional Bodies: Working Group on Maritime Safety and Security, Working Group on Women's Economic Empowerment, Working Group on the Blue Economy, Working Group on Science, Technology and Innovation, Core Group on Fisheries Management, and Core Group on Tourism. The establishment of a Core Group on Disaster Risk Management is in process.

2. South Africa's IORA Membership

South Africa is an active member and co-founder of IORA. The country served as the Chair of IORA from 2017-2019, with the United Arab Emirates the current Chair. Priorities for South Africa's Chairship included, inter alia, the following:

- Ocean Economy/Operation Phakisa (WG on Blue Economy)
- Research Development and Innovation
- SADC³ and African Agenda in relation to capacity building, skills development, and technology transfer in the ocean economy
- Maritime Safety and Security
- Strong and sustained engagement with Dialogue Partners
- Civil Society Participation

These are still considered the priorities going forward.

3. Academic Group

The Indian Ocean Rim Academic Group (IORAG) was established in recognition of the important role of the academia in regional organizations. The role set out for the Academic Group is both advisory and catalytic, with the following principal objectives:

- to service the needs of Government, Business and society at large
- to promote intellectual dialogue amongst the participating Member States
- to serve as a vehicle for the development and dissemination of the Indian Ocean Rim Concept
- to serve the region through coordinated and rigorous research

IORAG traditionally met annually on the margins of the Council of Ministers (COM) and the Committee of Senior Officials (CSO). However, as part of its priorities during the chair period South Africa proposed a reform of the IORAG with annual meetings scheduled prior to the CSO and alongside the Indian Ocean Dialogue (IOD), or as often as mutually decided, to review the progress on projects and to propose new projects. It interacts with the Senior Officials and the Secretariat in the consideration, formulation, and implementation of the Policy and Work Programmes of the Association. The IORAG may draw upon other non-governmental regional academic networks, as required.

Currently India is the Chair of the IORAG, and the IORAG is still in the process of finalising its ToR and work plan which will need to be approved by the CSO.

4. South African Chapter of the IORAG

The South African Indian Ocean Rim Academic Group (SA IORAG) was established to serve as an advisory body towards realizing the priorities of South Africa as Chair and continuing post the Chair period to assist the South African government in consolidating multilateral engagements that relate to topics covered under IORA and associated areas.

³Southern African Development Community

The South African Chapter was established in accordance with the objectives of the Indian Ocean Rim Academic Group, which constitutes the academic arm of IORA.

The South Africa IORA Academic Chapter focusses on the IORA priority areas, with the view of underpinning policy formulation, design, development, and implementation with research in the IORA context. There are currently several themes for discussion under IORAG, these are:

- Maritime Safety and Security
- Trade and Investment Facilitation
- Fisheries Management (including Aquaculture)
- Disaster and Risk Management,
- Tourism and Cultural Exchanges
- Academic cooperation, Science and Technology
 - *Ecosystem, biodiversity and biodiscovery*
 - *Environment and global change*
 - *Renewable energy*
 - *Estuarine, coastal and marine resources, society and development*
- Blue Economy (Operation Phakisa, cross cutting theme)
- Women's Economic Empowerment (Transformation and Equity, cross cutting theme)

5. SA IORAG Chairperson

Prof Juliet Hermes is the Chairperson of the SA IORAG. The Chair coordinates the group's activities aimed at achieving the outlined priorities.

6. SA IORAG Steering Committee

The SA IORAG Steering Committee was established in 2016, and currently consists of members from the Department of Science and Innovation (DSI), the Department of International Relations and Cooperation (DIRCO), the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET), National Research Foundation (NRF), the former IORAG Chair (HSRC), the SA IORAG Chair (SAEON) and the SA IORAG Secretariat (SAEON), as well as alternate members as appropriate. Each organization has a specific role within the SC:

- ✓ DSI – Chair
- ✓ DIRCO – Act as liaison with IORA Secretariat
- ✓ DHET – provide input as the higher education authority
- ✓ NRF – Funding and reporting
- ✓ HSRC – provide continuity in the work of the SA IORAG within IORA
- ✓ SAEON - SA IORAG Chair and Secretariat to provide link between SC and SA IORAG, as well as assist with logistics of meetings.

The SC acts in an advisory and coordinating role to the SA IORAG, with the following responsibilities:

- They make and approve financial decisions, as well as key strategic decisions, such as the focus areas for South Africa and AG members;
- They assist in supporting the integration of the SA IORAG outcomes into Government policy;
- They act as liaison between SA IORAG members and international IORA Secretariat, providing information to the SA IORAG and relaying feedback from the SA IORAG back to IORA.

The group meets as needed. Post the South African chair period, planning meetings may be limited to one meeting a year as South Africa will not have as much responsibility to implement the activities of IORAG and the SA IORAG. Specialised theme group meetings may be supported by the core SA IORAG members (see Section 10) or all SA IORAG members when needed.

7. Terms of Reference of SA IORAG Chairperson

- Driving and promoting the IORAG agenda within SA, including hosting workshops, writing articles, etc.
- Liaising regularly with the DSI, NRF, DIRCO and IORAG
- Representing the SA IORAG at official IORA and IORA-related meetings, or facilitating specialists to attend IORA related meetings
- Disseminating information from IORA and collating reports and information
- Coordinating special fund applications
- Informing the public of IORA
- Hosting and chairing the SA IORAG meetings

8. South Africa IORAG Secretariat

To fully coordinate and implement SA IORAG activities, a Secretariat was established at the South African Environmental Observation Network (SAEON), consisting of the SA IORAG Chair and designated SA IORAG Coordinator and will manage day-to-day SA IORAG activities. This will include:

- Support the SA IORAG Chair, the Steering Committee Chair and Steering Committee
- Provide input to IORA documents and/or circulate to appropriate SA IORAG members for input
- Collate all information around IORAG and as necessary collate information and email details to all interested parties
- Maintain stakeholder database
- Maintain database of activities and reports
- Facilitate involvement in workshops
- Attend relevant meetings and provide support to the SA IORAG Chair and Steering Committee Chair as needed

- Assist with logistics/travel arrangements⁴
- Organize SCM and Academic Group meetings, take minutes etc.
- Update and maintain website
- Assist with report writing
- Pro-actively research information around IORA
- Develop full understanding of IORA activities
- Assist with writing journal and popular articles
- Promote the SA IORAG both nationally and internationally at relevant conferences and workshops
- Manage budget for Academic Group

The Secretariat reports primarily to the SA IORAG Steering Committee.

9. SA IORAG Terms of Reference

The SA IORAG membership will comprise of 1-2 experts (core group leads) in each of the 8 priority areas and cross cutting issues listed under point 4, as well as representatives from the SC departments, the former IORAG Chair, SA IORAG Chair and Secretariat. The group meets at least once a year with focus group meetings as required. The core group leads may nominate academics in their networks to attend the SA IORAG meetings to allow greater national involvement and local networking opportunities.

Terms of Reference:

In line with the IORAG the SA IORAG priorities are:

- To service the needs of government and business;
- To promote intellectual dialogue between partners;
- To serve as a vehicle for development and dissemination of the Indian Ocean Rim concept;
- To interact with the IORA South Africa in the consideration, formulation and implementation of Policy and Work programmes contributing to the work of the Association and its academic arm;
- To draw up academic networks with local and international partners;
- To prioritise the publication of research related to the Indian Ocean Rim concept and IORA priority areas in international journals and other platforms;
- To promote outreach programmes to increase the visibility of IORA South Africa and the Association through public lectures especially at institutions of higher learning.

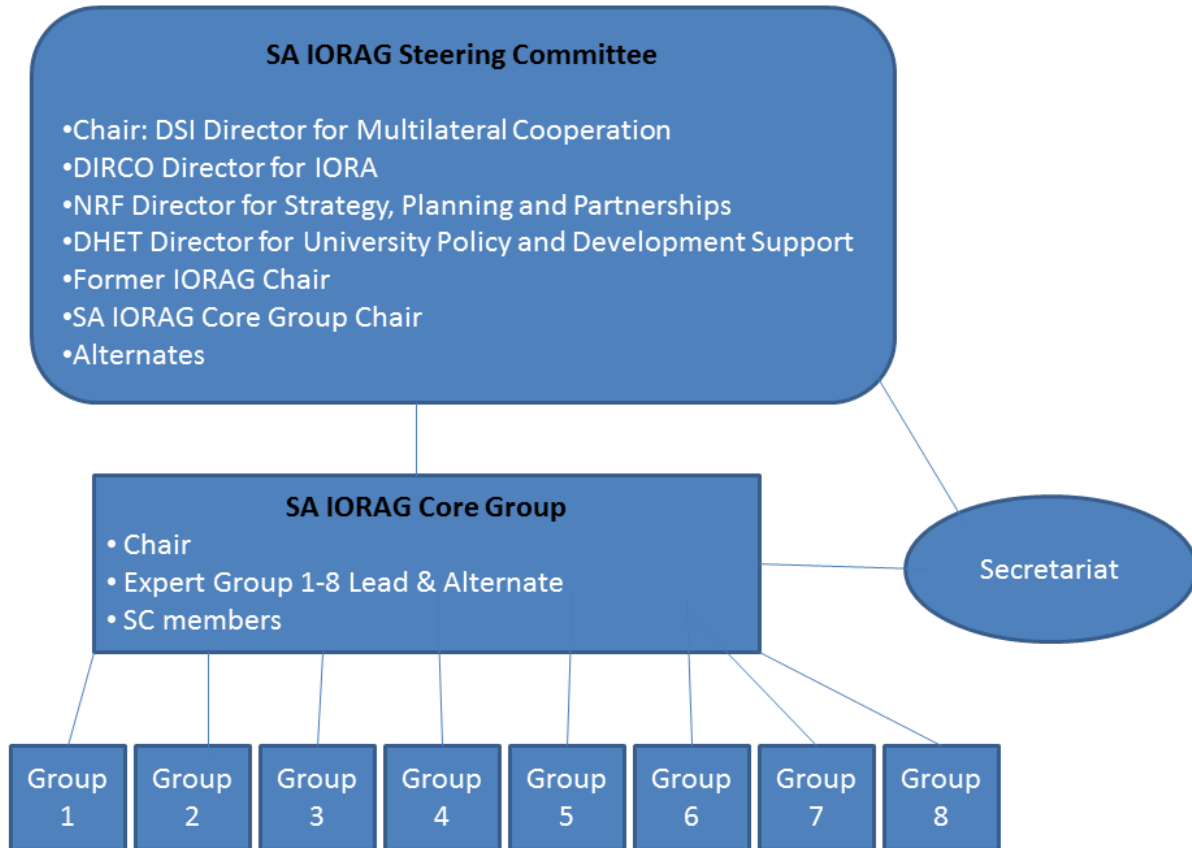
In addition the experts are:

- Required to attend *ad hoc* IORA workshops in their field or assist with nomination of the relevant experts.

⁴ As per the SAEON travel policy, a minimum of 3 weeks' notice is needed for all international travel and this must include all of the relevant documents. Late applications will not be considered.

- Identify gaps in the IORAG and suggest possible areas of collaboration
- Encouraged to apply for bilateral and multilateral calls involving IORA countries, as disseminated by NRF

10. Structure



11. Work Plan and Budget 2020/21

Due to the Covid-19 epidemic, activities for the SA IORAG has been limited. The SA IORAG Secretariat has focused on maintaining the networking function of the group by continuing the information exchange with the IORA Secretariat (through DIRCO as the national IORA focal point) as well as supporting DIRCO and DSI regarding the academic priorities within IORA.

The budget requirements are also under review.

Proposed SA IORAG Activities 2021/22 – See Spreadsheet Attachment

12. Continuation of the SA IORAG Secretariat within SAEON

Post the period of South Africa as chair of IORA, the function of the SA IORAG Secretariat will be maintained at SAEON.

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