



**Dhaka Declaration on Blue Economy**

**Declaration**

**Declaration of the Indian Ocean Rim Association on the Blue Economy in the Indian Ocean Region**

Dhaka, Bangladesh

4-5 September, 2019

**Preamble:**

**WE**, the Ministers and representatives of the Member States of the Indian Ocean Rim Association (hereinafter referred to as “IORA”), the Commonwealth of Australia, the People’s Republic of Bangladesh, the Union of the Comoros, the Republic of India, the Republic of Indonesia, the Islamic Republic of Iran, the Republic of Kenya, the Republic of Madagascar, Malaysia, the Republic of Maldives, the Republic of Mauritius, the Republic of Mozambique, the Sultanate of Oman, the Republic of Seychelles, the Republic of Singapore, the Federal Republic of Somalia, the Republic of South Africa, the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka, the Kingdom of Thailand, the United Arab Emirates and the Republic of Yemen attended the Third IORA Blue Economy Ministerial Conference (BEC-III) in Dhaka, Bangladesh, on 4-5 September, 2019;

**RECOGNIZING** the Indian Ocean and its coastal and marine resources as a vital source for food security, renewable energy, job creation, poverty alleviation, trade, tourism and investment opportunity and connectivity;

**REAFFIRMING** the objectives and principles of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), 1982 and other relevant international conventions and instruments relating to the oceans and seas, as well as the commitments of the parties to these instruments;

**RECALLING** the recommendations and the Declarations of the First and Second Ministerial Blue Economy Conference held in Pointe aux Piment, Mauritius on 2-3 September 2015 and Jakarta, Indonesia on 8-10 May 2017;

**UPHOLDING** the solidarity, unity and the spirit of collaboration in the Blue Economy among the IORA Member States and Dialogue Partners for balanced and sustainable economic development in the Indian Ocean Rim region;

**APPRECIATING** the inauguration of Third IORA Blue Economy Ministerial Conference (BEC-III) by Her Excellency Sheikh Hasina, Honourable Prime Minister of the People’s Republic of Bangladesh;

**NOTING** the inclusion of a stand-alone goal relating to the Blue Economy in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) Agenda-2030;

**REITERATING** the need for the IORA Member States to harness the potential of the Blue Economy to promote economic growth, job creation, trade and investment, and contribute to food security and poverty alleviation, whilst safeguarding the ocean's health through the sustainable development of its resources;

**UNITED** in our determination to combat the global menace of marine pollution which inflicts great disruption on marine ecosystems and causes irreversible damage to marine life;

**EMPHASIZING** the means and methods related to development of infrastructure and human resources inter alia for deep sea fishing and mariculture, promotion of maritime transport and connectivity, cooperation in seabed exploration and sustainable utilization of other marine resources;

**ENCOURAGING** the IORA Member States to design appropriate policy frameworks so that critical private investments and multilateral financing are attracted to Blue Economy initiatives, in order to secure sustainable and inclusive growth;

**STRESSING** the importance of promoting entrepreneurship and innovation, with a special focus on promoting youth and women's engagement as well as generating decent employment opportunities in the sustainable development of the Blue Economy;

**RECOGNIZING** the role of cooperation and collaboration among IORA Member States as well as between public and private institutions to enhance skills development, transfer of marine technology and capacity building;

**HIGHLIGHTING** that inclusion, ownership and empowerment of communities are among the core elements of implementing the Blue Economy;

**ACKNOWLEDGING** the need for enhanced national level coordination on maritime issues for maritime sovereignty, capacity building in education, innovation and research, strengthening associated institutional mechanism and assuring ocean governance;

**CONCERNED** about the emerging threats arising from human acts that are placing oceanic biodiversity and marine resources into jeopardy such as overexploitation of resources, ocean acidification, increase in marine plastics debris and nutrient pollution, illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing, over fishing, destructive fishing, drug and human trafficking by sea, maritime crime and terrorism, illegal mining and the impacts of global climate change;

**URGING** implementation of the call of the UN Decade of Ocean Science for sustainable development (2021-2030) by the Member States in cooperation with Dialogue Partners in materializing the SDGs and Blue Economy;

**NOTING** Bangladesh's readiness to play a leading role ensuring cooperation on Blue Economy initiatives in the region;

**EXPECTING** the Functional Bodies of IORA to become platforms for lesser developed Member States to actively participate and to optimize the benefits from its cooperation with the Association;

**RECALLING** the renewal of commitments of IORA Member States, realizing the challenges and potential of the Indian Ocean Rim region, to intensify cooperation and commitment to the Association's priority areas, through the implementation of IORA Action Plan for 2017-2021;

**ENCOURAGING** IORA Member States and Dialogue Partners to enhance capacity and share information, experiences, expertise, best practices and technology for development of marine tourism including cruise tourism in the Indian Ocean Rim region;

We, the Ministers and Heads of Delegation of the Member States of the Indian Ocean Rim Association;

**HEREBY DECLARE AS FOLLOWS:**

That the Member States of IORA will be guided by the following principles in pursuit of promoting an inclusive Blue Economy through sustainable use of its opportunities for socio-economic development in the Indian Ocean Rim region:

1. Blue Economy requires a balanced approach between conservation and development & utilization of marine and coastal eco-systems, all oceanic resources and services with a view to enhancing their value and generating decent employment, securing productive marine economy and healthy marine eco-systems. Blue Economy recognizes that the ocean economy is dependent on the health of coastal and marine ecosystems and IORA Member States need to consider the protection of these ecosystems. Ideas, principles, norms of Blue Economy contribute significantly towards eradication of poverty, contributing to food and nutrition security, mitigation and adaptation of climate change and generation of sustainable and inclusive livelihoods.
2. IORA Member States recognize the Blue Economy as a mean to attain the sustainable development, taking into account advantages and strategies of managing the oceanic resources at regional and sub-regional levels, keeping in view their specific resource-base as well as peculiar characteristics.
3. IORA Member States need to consider 'Marine Spatial Planning' as a useful tool to carry out integrated and cross-sectoral planning at country level *inter alia* to develop marine value chains to meet demand for new and additional goods and services out of existing as well as emerging marine resources and industries.
4. IORA Member States will endeavor to prioritize Blue Economy with adequate focus on well-being and livelihood of people through engagements among countries and stakeholders on Blue Economy based on the principles *inter alia* of mutual trust and respect, equitable mutual benefit, and sharing of benefits to secure sustained and beneficial outcomes of all ocean-centric enterprises.
5. IORA Member States will align their legal, regulatory, and institutional framework and ocean management policies with the sustainable development of the Blue Economy.
6. IORA Member States and Dialogue Partners will attach higher importance in entering into equitable, mutually beneficial collaboration *inter alia* to generate scientific knowledge and evidence, develop managerial-technical-technological capabilities and marine skills, establish academic and research institutions, strengthen governance, institutional and legal framework, transfer of various marine technologies and create further collaborative arrangements at different levels (sub-national, national, regional).

7. IORA Member States, in collaboration with Dialogue Partners, will promote partnership(s) among and between stakeholders – within and across countries and oceans and seas and international systems to facilitate greater flow of expertise, finance, effectively closing capacity gaps and freedom of navigation.
8. Member States are encouraged to consider the potential risks while exploring marine resources and minerals, particularly in the High Seas and ocean-beds.
9. IORA Member States will acknowledge importance and contribution of key global processes with regard to governance, observation, and assessment of oceans and seas within the UN Systems since the outputs of all such global processes and outcomes could provide critical inputs and context to national and regional planning, management and strategic initiatives.
10. In the wake of growing marine pollution and ocean acidification, IORA Member States will address consequent impacts by supporting the advancement of ocean science in these areas, particularly through enhanced cooperation with Dialogue Partners.
11. IORA Member States will promote the greater role and engagement of the private sector across all areas of the Blue Economy, including through policies and strategies that incentivize employment, economic growth and sustainable use of ocean resources.
12. IORA Member States will endeavor to establish an economic database for Blue Economy constituent blocks.
13. Within the Blue Economy framework, IORA Member States will prioritize engagement on various aspects of fisheries and aquaculture: increasing sustainable fishing capacity; promoting sustainable management of small-scale marine fisheries and certification of fishing products; supporting artisanal communities' access to information, enhancing capture fisheries' share in fish production through protecting/restoring critical habitats; encouraging private sector investments in coastal mariculture; collaborating among international community to end overfishing and destructive fishing, effectively ending illegal-unreported-unregulated (IUU) fishing; and strengthening regional governance in Areas Beyond National Jurisdiction (ABNJ) noting the special regime being addressed by UN system for ABNJ through UNCLOS.
14. Being acutely aware of the growing threat of climate change to our planet, in particular to the lives and livelihoods of peoples in the Indian Ocean region, IORA Member States will strengthen cooperation to protect, conserve and preserve the marine environment.
15. Recognizing enormous potential for development of the Blue Economy in the Indian Ocean Rim region, IORA Members States, in collaboration with Dialogue Partners, will explore ways to deepen existing cooperation in areas such as aquaculture (both inland and coastal), hydrography, seabed mineral exploration, coastal shipping, eco-tourism and renewable ocean energy to achieve holistic and ecologically sustainable development of the region.

16. IORA Member States, in collaboration with Dialogue Partners, will promote creation of robust 'maritime domain awareness' of Blue Economy among people-at-large, communities and policymakers.
17. IORA Member States should underscore access to available, contemporary and critical data and knowledge from across-the-world by the developing countries, particularly by coastal and island developing states.

**ADOPTED** by the Ministers/Heads of Delegations of the Member States of the Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA), in the presence of the Secretary General of IORA and Secretary General of International Seabed Authority, on 5 September 2019 in Dhaka, Bangladesh.