



science & innovation

Department:
Science and Innovation
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA



South African Chapter of the Indian Ocean Rim Association Academic Group

Terms of Reference

Drafted by SA IORAG Secretariat Egagasini Node National Research Foundation - South African Environmental Observation Network (SAEON) Version 1: November 2018
Revised with Inputs by the SA IORAG Chair, North West University, Mafikeng Campus Version 2: January 2024
Revised by the SA IORAG Secretariat Egagasini Node Version 3: March 2024
Revised by the SA IORAG Steering Committee Version 4: March 2024

Terms of Reference Approved:
Approved by the SA IORAG Steering Committee – 14 March 2024

Introduction

The Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA) was formally launched by a Ministerial Meeting in Mauritius in March 1997. The vision for IORA originated during a visit by the late South African President Nelson Mandela to India in 1995, at which he said, “the natural urge of the facts of history and geography should broaden itself to include the concept of an Indian Ocean Rim for socio-economic co-operation...”¹. The Association’s stated broad objective is “to promote the sustained growth and balanced development of the Region and of the Member States, and to create common ground for Regional Economic Co-operation”. Currently there are 23 Member States - South Africa (a founding member; IORA Chair 2017-2019), India, Australia, Mauritius, France (on the basis of Reunion), Indonesia, Comoros, Iran, Madagascar, Maldives, Oman, Tanzania, United Arab Emirates, Kenya, Bangladesh, Seychelles, Malaysia, Mozambique, Singapore, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Yemen and Somalia. The Association also has 12 Dialogue Partners (DPs) – People’s Republic of China, Arab Republic of Egypt, European Union, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, Republic of Germany, Republic of Italy, Japan, Republic of Korea, Russian Federation, Republic of Türkiye, United Kingdom and United States of America.

The Fisheries Support Unit (FSU; based in Oman) and the Regional Centre for Science and Transfer of Technology (RCSTT; based in Iran) are specialised agencies of IORA, established to assist with research, technology transfer, and cooperation among Member States.

Observer organisations 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). The Association is also affiliated to the Journal of the Indian Ocean Region (JIOR).

IORA has adopted the following priority areas and cross-cutting areas:

- Maritime Safety and Security,
- Trade and Investment Facilitation,
- Fisheries Management,
- Disaster and Risk Management,
- Academic cooperation, Science and Technology,
- Tourism and Cultural Exchanges,
- Women’s Economic Empowerment (cross-cutting); and
- Blue Economy (cross-cutting).

In the course of its evolution, IORA has established the following institutional mechanisms (or Functional Bodies) to bolster support for its structures and mechanism: the Academic Group; the Trade and Investment Working Group; the Business Forum; the Working Group on the Blue Economy; the Working Group on Women’s Economic Empowerment; the Working Group on Science, Technology and Innovation; the Working Group on Maritime Safety and Security; the Working Group in Disaster Risk Management; the Core Group on Fisheries; and the Core Group on Tourism. These groups report to the Council of Senior Officials (CSO) which then advises the highest decision-making authority of the Association, the Council of (Foreign) Ministers (COM).

¹ About IORA. <http://www.iora.int/en/about/about-iora>. Accessed 26 September 2018.

Nationally, each Working Group has a relevant government department allocated to it, responsible for representing South Africa at IORA meetings. The exceptions to this are the IORAG (represented by NRF-SAEON and/or the chair of the national chapter of IORAG, or a delegated academic), the Business Forum (represented by a delegated business chamber), and the Working Group on Disaster Risk Management (represented by the National Disaster Management Centre).

Terms of Reference (ToR) have been drafted for all the IORA Functional Bodies to guide the activities in support of the IORA Action Plan². However, these structures were found to operate silos with little to no alignment of programmes and activities with adverse impact on IORA footprint as a regional body. Hence, IORA has implemented regular meetings for 'IORA Functional Bodies' Chairs and the Coordinating Countries (FBC-CC)' (lead by the incumbent IORA Chair) to assist in identifying overlap, areas of complementarity, and challenges.

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

- to address the priorities of Government and Business;
- 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; and
- to serve the region through coordinated and rigorous research.

Furthermore, in recognition of the importance of academic cooperation, IORA Member State identified the strengthening of IORAG as one of the short-term goals in the IORA Action Plan 2017-2021, and SA as Chair during this period tried to facilitate greater engagement among MS academics. This was again a priority during the SA chair period of the IORAG in 2021-2023, with SA hosting the first physical IORAG meeting in Cape Town in 2023, since the meeting in India in 2019³.

In order to achieve its broad strategy for IORA in the first period of SA as chair of the Association (October 2017-October/November 2019), the South African Government requested the Department of Science and Innovation (DSI; then the Department of Technology) to anchor, and undertake support for the establishment of a national Chapter of the Indian Ocean Rim Academic Group (SA IORAG) during, and post, the chairship period. The SA IORAG Steering Committee (SC) was established in 2016 and constituted by the DSI, the Department of International Relations and Cooperation (DIRCO) as the National IORA Focal Point, the National Research Foundation (NRF) as a funding and reporting agency), the NRF-South African Environmental Observation Network (SAEON) as the seat of the Secretariat, and the Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC) then representing SA as Vice –Chair of IORA, and later as Chair for 2017-2019. The Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET)⁴ joined the SC in 2017 with the Water Research Commission (WRC) invited onto the SC in 2018⁵.

² Currently for 2022-2027

³ Post-Covid-19

⁴ After the merging of the Ministries, the SC is again represented only by DSI.

⁵ The WRC has signed an MoU with the RCSTT.

The first meeting of the SA IORAG was held in November 2016 and served to introduce the participating academics to IORA and the purpose of the SA IORAG. This document outlines the roles and responsibilities for the various structures of the SA IORAG, with reference to Figure 1.

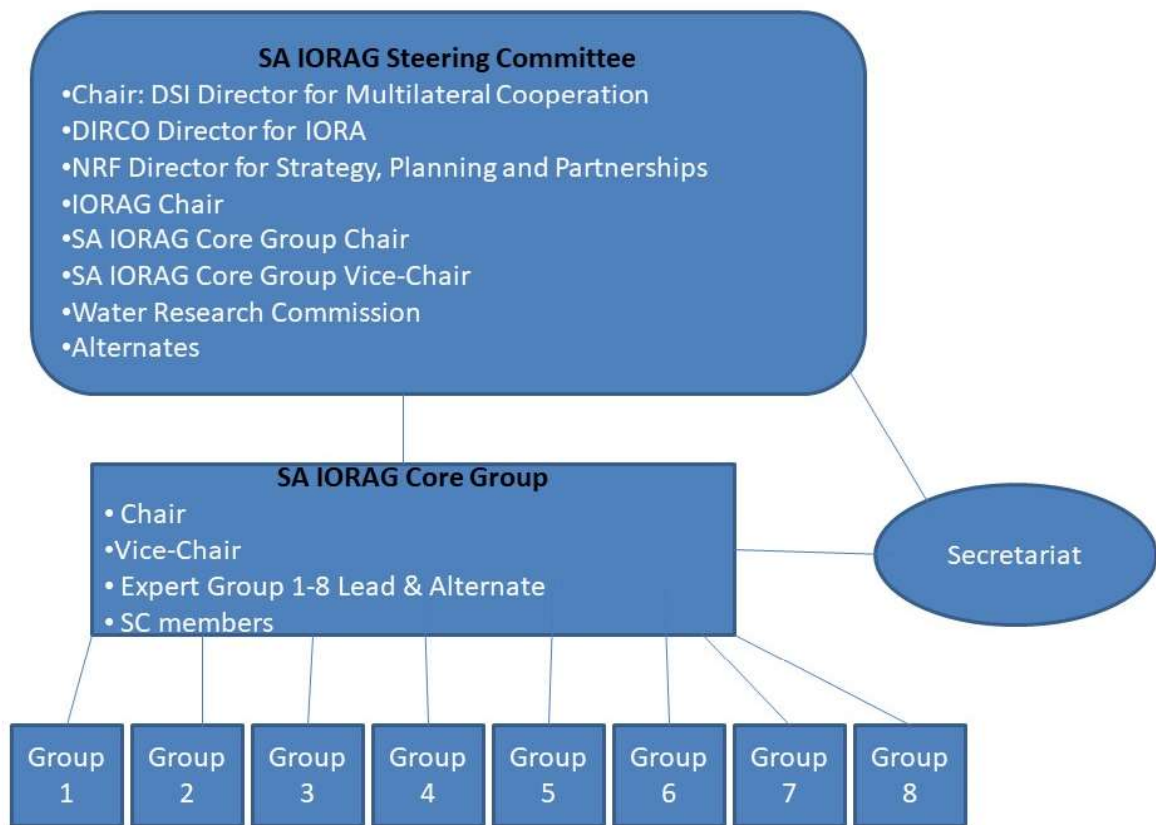


Figure 1: Structure of the SA IORAG, as updated March 2023. Each group is envisaged to undertake research within one of the eight IORA priority areas.

Terms of Reference

I. The SA IORAG Core Group

The SA IORAG Core Group membership will comprise of SA IORAG Chair, the IORAG National Focal Point (when SA is chair), Secretariat and Expert Groups Co-Lead experts, in each of the eight IORA priority areas. The Core Group will also include representatives from the national government departments on an advisory basis. The group will meet at least once a year⁶ or as decided by the Steering Committee. The role of the Core Group will be to,

1. support the research needs of government and business related to IORA;
2. promote intellectual dialogue to national Working Group Focal Departments in the priority areas of IORA;
3. assist national Working Group Focal Departments in the respective research agenda in IORA;
4. serve as a vehicle for development and dissemination of the Indian Ocean Rim concept, and research agenda in South Africa and internationally;
5. provide support to academics and researchers doing IORA work to source financial support with IORA funding mechanism, locally and internationally;
6. promote interaction among all academic, science, and research stakeholders in South Africa in the work of IORA in accordance with the broader South African IORA Programme in the consideration, formulation and implementation of policy and work programmes contributing to the work of the national Focal Point in the Association;
7. develop and sustain academic networks with local and international partners;
8. promote the sharing of information and best practices emanating from research in IORA;
9. infuse, establish and maintain academic, science and research stakeholder engagement among African academics and researchers to develop projects and programmes relevant to African Member States;
10. promote outreach programmes to increase the visibility of IORA South Africa and the IORA through public lectures, especially at institutions of higher learning;
11. facilitate, enhance and ensure participation by South African academics in ad hoc IORA programmes, activities and events in their respective fields;
12. identify research needs in IORA and suggest possible areas of collaboration; and
13. where relevant, apply for bilateral and multilateral calls involving IORA countries, as disseminated by the NRF or international funding agencies.

II. The SA IORAG Focus Groups (or Sub-groups)

The number of SA IORAG Focus Groups was determined by the Steering Committee. The decision was made to establish academic Focus Groups in each of the eight IORA Priority Areas. As IORA evolves, the SC may decide to accommodate additional groups, or retire groups, in line with the changing priorities of South Africa and IORA. The number of academics in the Focus Group will be determined by the Focus Group Lead/s but the SC may also nominate academics to participate in the groups. The Focus Groups may meet alongside the SA IORAG meetings or hold separate meetings⁷ as required. Focus Group members may participate in more than one group as their interest dictate – this will also foster collaboration among the various groups.

⁶ Additional stakeholders may be invited to attend the meeting to increase visibility of the SA IORAG and IORA.

⁷ Funding may be requested from the SA IORAG Secretariat based on budget availability; other funding sources may also be used.

The SC may decide to rotate the Focus Group Leads every 5 years. Focus Group leads may inform the SA IORAG Secretariat in writing of their withdrawal from the position at any time.

The Focus Groups will meet as decided by the Focus Group Lead/s. The role of the Focus Groups Lead/s will be to,

1. coordinate the work of the Focus Group in support of the work of the SA IORAG;
2. disseminate the work of Focus Groups and invite relevant academics, based in South Africa, to participate in the Focus Group, noting Groups must be representative and facilitate capacity building;
3. promote output-oriented engagement in the Focus Group that contributes to the work of IORA;
4. communicate relevant SA IORAG and IORA information to the Focus Group members;
5. liaise with other Focus Group Leads to determine mutual areas of interest for collaboration;
6. nominate relevant academics/researchers to attend IORA workshops, training and meetings on request of the SA IORAG Secretariat; and
7. liaise with the Focus Group members to provide policy inputs to IORA as needed, or on request of SC members.

The role of the Focus Groups will be to,

1. develop a short-term theme, or themes, which will set the groups research agenda in keeping with IORA priority areas and set out in the SA IORAG research agenda;
2. identify research gaps in the priority areas and suggest possible areas of collaboration in and through SA IORAG;
3. undertake research within the IORA priority areas, either with national collaborators or in collaboration with international partners, especially within other African States as set out in the SA IORAG research agenda;
4. where relevant, apply for bilateral and multilateral calls in IORA by member countries and dialogue partners, NRF and/or international funding agencies;
5. where relevant, disseminate research calls by their institution;
6. identify cross-cutting research topics to collaborate on in South Africa and internationally;
7. develop capacity of young researchers and students within the framework of IORA; and
8. build networks of academics in their research interests within other IORA Member States.

III. The SA IORAG Steering Committee

The primary purpose of the Steering Committee (SC) is to oversee the performance of the Secretariat, through which the programme is operationalised. The SC will support the Core Group, with an executive function, and consist of,

- the Department of Science and Innovation – Chair
- the Department of International Relations and Cooperation - National IORA Focal Point
- the National Research Foundation – Funding and reporting
- NRF-SAEON - Host of the SA IORAG Secretariat
- the IORAG Regional Chair – This position will only be relevant when SA is Chair of the IORAG. The former chair may also be on the SC to ensure knowledge retention. The Chair will provide the link between the IORAG and the SC
- the SA IORAG Chair - Providing the link between SC and the SA IORAG
- the Secretariat – managing the meeting logistics, and providing the link between the different structures

- Other government departments and research institutions, as invited by the Chair⁸

The role of the SC will be to,

1. advise on the objectives of the SA IORAG;
2. advise on revisions to the Framework and Strategic Plan for the SA IORAG, as needed;
3. discuss and resolve operational matters of the Secretariat;
4. approve the annual Business Plans including the budgets, work plans and performance targets;
5. monitor, evaluate and comment on performance of the SA IORAG; and
6. assist in the promotion of, and lobbying for support for the SA IORAG to facilitate achievement of the objectives of the SA IORAG.

IV. The SA IORAG Secretariat

The Secretariat will consist of a suitably qualified individual to manage the daily activities of the SA IORAG Secretariat, and any additional capacity as decided by the Steering Committee.

The main responsibilities of the Secretariat are outlined below:

1. administer the daily operations of the SA IORAG;
2. coordinate and support the SA IORAG Chair, the Steering Committee, and IORAG Regional Chair (when SA is Chair of IORAG) in pursuit of the objectives of the South Africa's IORA priorities;
3. collate and disseminate all information around the SA IORAG as necessary (either through the stakeholder email list or SA IORAG website);
4. In consultation with the SA-IORAG Chair be a liaison between SA IORAG and the IORA Secretariat to ensure South Africa's effective participation in the work of IORAG;
5. establishing and maintaining a stakeholder database and engagement in SA IORAG;
6. maintaining a record of meetings, activities, reports and other relevant documents on the work of SA IORAG;
7. facilitate participation of SA IORAG stakeholder engagement in workshops, seminars and other research engagements, both national and international;
8. attend relevant national and international meetings and workshops in support of the SA IORAG objectives, as needed;
9. provide support with logistics/travel arrangements to SA IORAG stakeholders to relevant meetings (as approved by the SC)- nationally and internationally⁹;
10. organise, keep record of SA Academic Group, and Steering Committee Meetings; and circulate meeting outcome documents to relevant stakeholders;
11. develop, update and maintain the SA IORAG website;
12. write reports in line with the work of SA IORAG;
13. provide support to researchers and academics with research funding proposals and forms to complete;
14. pro-actively researching information around IORA;
15. developing a full understanding of IORA activities;
16. assisting with writing journal and popular articles;

⁸ The WRC is a member of the SC due to the MoU with the RCSTT.

⁹ As per the NRF travel policy, a minimum of 3 weeks' notice is needed for all international travel and this must include all of the relevant documents. A minimum of seven (7) days is required for national travel. Late applications will not be considered.

17. In consultation with the SA-IORAG Chair, draft and manage the budget for the Academic Group;
18. promote engagement between the SA IORAG and other IORA Member State's national Academic Groups; and
19. support other IORA Functional Bodies as delegated by the SC Chair.

The Secretariat will report primarily to the SA IORAG Steering Committee.

V. The National SA IORAG Chairperson

The Chairperson of the SA IORAG will be selected by the SC, with final approval and appointment by the DSI. This will be a two-year term, with the option for a once-off renewal upon review of the SC of an additional two years. An open nomination process will be facilitated by the SA IORAG Secretariat. The role of the Chairperson will be to:

1. Coordinate the Core Group's activities to achieve the IORAG priorities, as decided by the SC;
2. Facilitate engagement of researchers interested in the Indian Ocean Region within the SA IORAG and the various focus groups;
3. Promote and enhance intellectual dialogue, information and knowledge sharing in IORA work programmes;
4. Promote the SA IORAG nationally and internationally;
5. Represent the SA IORAG at national and international events;
6. Provide oversight and guidance on the daily operations of the SA IORAG Secretariat;
7. Report to the steering committee on the activities of SA IORAG and its stakeholders;
8. Report to stakeholders on internal and engagements; and
9. In liaison with the Steering Committee, consider and make recommendations on stakeholder participation in national and international engagements.

VI. The Regional Academic Group Chairperson/ Regional SA IORAG Representative

The position of Regional Chair of the Indian Ocean Region Academic Group is on rotational basis. A member state that takes up the position of Regional Chair, will serve as Chair of the Academic Group. South Africa was the Chair from 2017-2019, and again from 2022-2023. The current SA-IORAG Chairperson automatically becomes the regional IORAG Chair in the event that South Africa takes over the position. A new SA-IORAG Chair is appointed to manage the national affairs. Upon completion of the IORAG Chair period, the outgoing regional chair will be re-integrated within the SA IORAG. The role of the Regional Representative will be to:

1. Represent South Africa as the Chair of the IORAG during the regional chair period;
2. Attend all required IORA meetings in the capacity as Regional Chair, i.e., IORAG meeting and CSO meeting;
3. In liaison with the SA Chairperson of IORAG drive South Africa's agenda internationally as set out by the SC and the National Focal Point;
4. Engage with the incoming chair to ensure continuity with the programmes started under South Africa's tenure as chair.

VII. Composition and Format of the Academic Group Meeting

Composition of the Academic Group Meeting

The Academic Group Meeting must meet at least once a year. The composition of the group should include,

1. The SA IORAG Chairperson
2. Members of the Steering Committee
3. The Focus Group Leads
4. Members of the Focus Groups as nominated by the Focus Group leads and the Steering Committee
5. Other academics as nominated by the Focus Group leads and the Steering Committee
6. Students and interns as nominated by the Focus Group leads and the Steering Committee

Format of the Academic Group Meeting

The meeting may be held over one (1) or two (2) days and allow for:

1. A half-day session (maximum four (4) hours) with all attendees to provide updates on previous meeting action items; feedback on any IORA meetings or workshops attended; feedback on any meetings or workshops that are relevant to the work of the SA IORAG; updates on any new IORA policy discussions; information on any future IORA meetings; any new projects for consideration by members; any other topics as put forward by participants.
2. A session for the Focus Groups to workshop and discuss new projects to be undertaken and/or projects that may already be in process. Collaboration on projects between the various groups and collaboration with regional academics must be encouraged.
3. Special sessions may be proposed by participants for approval by the SA IORAG Chair.

VIII. Flexibility of the Academic Group to adapt to the changing needs of IORA

The SC took the decision to establish the eight (8) Focus Groups in line with the six (6) IORA priority areas and two (2) cross-cutting priority areas. As this is a long-term commitment, the priorities may change over time - either within IORA or as the priorities of SA change. The Focus Groups should therefore be adaptable.

The decision to dissolve a Focus Group will be determined by the SC, in consultation with the Chair and in line with the National Focal Point as determined by the South African Government' Strategy for IORA.

Academics in the affected Focus Group/s may then continue to be active in any other Focus Group/s and/or any new Focus Group/s that may be constituted.

IX. Process for Selection of SA IORAG Chair

- i. The SA IORAG Chair will serve for a two-year period April-March, with the option of one renewal period (total of four years).
- ii. The SA IORAG Secretariat will circulate an open call for nominations in January of the year the incumbent chair period will end.
- iii. The call for nomination should be open for a minimum of four weeks.
- iv. The Secretariat will collate and circulate the nominations to the SC¹⁰
- v. The SC will meet within two weeks of the closing date for nominations to decide the incoming chair.
- vi. The Secretariat will circulate the decision letters within one week of the meeting.

¹⁰ DSI, DIRCO, NRF, NRF-SAEON, WRC.

X. Compensation

- i. All roles within the Steering Committee and Core Group are voluntary and no monetary compensation will be provided for participation.

XI. Travel and Subsistence Support

- i. The SA IORAG Secretariat may consider providing travel and subsistence support for international activities, on request, where such costs are not covered by IORA activities, depending on the budget and priority of the meeting to facilitate the objectives of the SA IORAG programme.
- ii. The SA IORAG Secretariat may consider providing travel and subsistence support for national activities, on request, where such costs are not covered by their institutions, depending on the budget and priority of the meeting to facilitate the objectives of the SA IORAG programme.

XII. Review of the Term of Reference

- i. The ToR will be reviewed on request of the SC.

Acronyms

AG – Academic Group

COM – Council of (Foreign) Ministers

CSO – Council of Senior Officials

DIRCO – Department of International Relations and Cooperation

DPs – Dialogue Partners

DSI – Department of Science and Innovation

HSRC – Human Sciences Research Council

IORA – Indian Ocean Rim Association

IORAG – Indian Ocean Rim Association Academic Group

IORG- Indian Ocean Research Group

JIOR - Journal of the Indian Ocean Region

NRF – National Research Foundation

SADC – Southern African Development Community



SAEON – South African Environmental Observation Network

SA IORAG – South African Chapter of the Indian Ocean Rim Association Academic Group

SC – Steering Committee

ToR – Terms of Reference

Signatories

Department of Science and Innovation	<small>Signed by NKONI THABISO SELBY MO Signed at 2024-03-15 10:22:29 +02:00 Reason Witnessing NKONI THABISO SE</small> 
Name: NKONI THABISO SELBY MODIBA	Date: 15/03/24
Department of International Relations & Cooperation	<small>Signed by Ben Joubert Signed at 2024-03-15 13:13:28 +02:00 Reason Witnessing Ben Joubert</small> 
Name: Ben Joubert	Date: 15/03/24
National Research Foundation	Nokuthula Mchunu <small>Digitally signed by Nokuthula Mchunu Date: 2024.04.09 09:02:09 +02'00'</small>
Name: Nokuthula Mchunu	Date: 09/04/24
National Research Foundation – South African Environmental Observation Network	<small>Signed by Nicole du Plessis Signed at 2024-03-15 15:10:17 +02:00 Reason Witnessing Nicole du Plessis</small> <i>Nicole du Plessis</i>
Name: Nicole du Plessis	Date: 15/03/24
Water Research Commission	<small>Signed by Tiyani Chauke Signed at 2024-04-04 10:30:32 +02:00 Reason Witnessing Tiyani Chauke</small> <i>Tiyani Chauke</i>
Name: Tiyani Chauke	Date: 04/04/24
North West University	<small>Signed by Kgame Molope Signed at 2024-04-04 10:00:55 +02:00 Reason Witnessing Kgame Molope</small> <i>Kgame Molope</i>
Name: Kgame Molope	Date: 04/04/24