

South Africa to take over as Chair of Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA) in 2017

Narnia Bohler-Muller (HSRC), Juliet Hermes and Nicole du Plessis (SAEON)

The Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA), of which SA is a founding member, was formally launched by a Ministerial Meeting in Mauritius in March 1997. The Association's 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.

There are 3 arms within IORA, the AG (Academic Group, the focus here); Trade and Industry and the business forum. These groups report to the Meeting of Senior Officials who then advise the Ministerial delegation. IORA has adopted the following priority areas:

- Maritime Safety and Security,
- Trade and Investment Facilitation,
- Fisheries Management,
- Disaster and Risk Management,
- Academic cooperation, Science and Technology, and
- Tourism and Cultural Exchanges

Cross cutting issues include women's empowerment and the Blue economy.

Currently SA serves on the IORA-AG as the Vice Chair to Indonesia (with Australia as the outgoing Chair) until October 2017 when SA will take over as Chair until 2019 with the United Arab Emirates as the Vice Chair.

Preliminary priorities for South Africa's Chairship will potentially include the following (although the final priorities will be determined in 2017):

- The Ocean or Blue Economy;
- Research Development and Innovation;
- The engagement with Dialogue Partners;
- Maritime Security;
- The advancement of the African Maritime Agenda and,
- The participation of civil society in IORA.
- Woman's economic empowerment will remain as a cross cutting theme

To help realise these priorities SA has established the IORA South African Academic Chapter which is intended to serve as an advisory body to guide South Africa as Vice Chair and later as Chair. The South African Academic Chapter will also assist the South African government in consolidating multilateral engagements that relate to topics covered under IORA and associated areas; post the IORA chair.

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

with the view of underpinning policy formulation, design, development and implementation with research in the IORA context.

There are currently a number of sub-themes *for discussion* within the IORA AG, these are:

- Ecosystem, biodiversity and biodiscovery;
- Environment and global change;
- Renewable energy;
- Estuarine, coastal and marine resources, society and development ;
- Fisheries and aquaculture ;
- Geo-strategic issues and non-traditional security threats.

There are also the cross-cutting themes of:

- Operation Phakisa and Blue economy;
- Transformation;
- Science, Technology, Innovation and capacity development.

South Africa has appointed Prof Narnia Bohler-Muller (HSRC) as the Chairperson for the South African Chapter of the Academic Group (and hence Vice-chair of the IORA Academic Group and will take over as Chair in 2017) and Dr Juliet Hermes (SAEON) as the Vice-chair. The Chair will coordinate the group's activities aimed at achieving the outlined priorities.

Formal communications will be sent out via the SANCOR mailing list, but for any further information please contact nbohlermuller@hsrc.ac.za or juliet@saeon.ac.za or please see: <http://www.iora.net>



The SA delegation at the 3rd Indian Ocean Dialogue, "Addressing Maritime Security Challenges in the Indian Ocean through Enhanced Regionalism", held from the 12th to 15th April in Padang, Indonesia, from left: Dr Juliet Hermes (SAEON and SA IORA-AG Vice Chair); Aditi Lalbahadur (SAIIA); Mr KGame Molohe (DIRCO); and Prof Narnia Bohler-Muller (HSRC and SA IORA-AG Chair).