

Promoting Operation Phakisa and the Blue Economy under IORA through DIRCO, Chinese Foreign Ministry, HSRC and the Ocean University of China

On 13-14 July, 2016, the Human Science Research Council along with the Ocean University of China, the Department of International Relations and Cooperation (DIRCO) and the Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs hosted *the Blue Economy Workshop on Maritime Connectivity and Financing for Development in the Indian Ocean Rim*. This is the second workshop of its kind, with the first co-hosted by the HSRC and DIRCO in Durban, South Africa in May 2015. The focus of the latter workshop was on food security (fisheries and aquaculture) and traditional security within the Indian Ocean region.

Growth through the Blue Economy is a long term strategy to support sustainable and inclusive growth in the marine and maritime sectors. The Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA) is a dynamic organisation of 21 Member States such as Australia, Kenya, Singapore, Indonesia, Mauritius, South Africa, and 7 Dialogue Partners which include China and the United States.

According to IORA, the Blue Economy is envisaged as the integration of Ocean Economy development with the principles of social inclusion, environmental sustainability and innovative, dynamic business models. In South Africa, the ocean has the potential to contribute up to R177 billion to GDP and between 800 000 and 1 million jobs. The current IORA blue economy approach is in line with the priorities of the Presidency as articulated in *Operation Phakisa*. According to President Jacob Zuma, Operation Phakisa is a fast results delivery Ocean Economy program launched in July 2014 to help South Africa implement the National Development Plan, with the ultimate goal of boosting economic growth and create jobs.

South African Ambassador Sooklal, DDG, DIRCO stated at the opening that South Africa was pleased to be partnering with China in this initiative as it is the first time that a Dialogue Partner of IORA has hosted such an event. He hoped that such initiatives would continue as the relationship with Dialogue Partners is further strengthened. The Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of China opened the event by stating that China was keen to work more closely members of IORA in skills building and technology transfer. Professor Narnia Bohler-Muller, who also opened the event as the IORA Chair of the Blue Economy Core Group as well as the South African IORA Academic Group, indicated how the HSRC in partnership with the DIRCO, and IORA, sought to coordinate the development of the *IORA Blue Economy Core Group*, which entails a framework for academic cooperation and networks in the form of several workshops to promote joint activities related to the blue economy.

She also discussed the significance of the blue ocean economy in the Indian Ocean Rim, along with the status of South Africa's Operation Phakisa which has already completed the Oceans Economy Lab, focussing on job creation in the marine and maritime sectors. Professor Bohler-Muller also emphasized the aim of the workshop which was to effectively conceptualise on the Blue Economy (also known as blue/ ocean growth) within the context of IORA. Ms Funeka Yazini April, from AISA-HSRC who accompanied the South African delegation emphasized issues such as value-add, and ship building in the marine industry in her presentation entitled *Blue Economy Development Zones: Lessons from Kwa Zulu Natal, South Africa and Shandong, China*. She pointed out that South Africa has lessons to share with the rest of the region on good practice.

There were also excellent recommendations at the workshop which provided a way forward for IORA. One of these included the creation of an IORA Development Fund through which the wealthier Dialogue Partners (China, USA, UK, Germany, France, Japan and Egypt) could provide financial support to the least Developed Countries in IORA, such as Somalia that recently joined, so as to ensure the sharing of knowledge and skills as well as the funding of maritime infrastructure projects. Other recommendations included setting up a regional database of expertise and needs so that these could be matched up to ensure that assistance is provided where it is required, as well as close cooperation between IORA and the Chinese Maritime Silk Road.

Needless to say, the IORA event was a proudly South African, China, and IORA moment as demonstrated through the banner featured in the pictures attached.



