



## EDITORIAL: THE HINDU

**GENERAL STUDIES 2: INTERNATIONAL RELATION**

**DATE: 22.03.2025**

**TOPIC:** Important International institutions, agencies and fora - their structure, mandate.

### Charting a route for IORA under India's chairship

#### Introduction to IORA

- The **Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA)** is a regional organization that fosters cooperation among countries in **Asia, Africa, and Australia**, all of which are connected through the **Indian Ocean**.
- IORA's primary focus areas include **economic growth, regional security, and environmental sustainability** within the Indian Ocean region.
- **India** is currently serving as the **Vice-Chair** and is set to assume the **Chairmanship** in **November 2025**, for a period of two years.
- India's vision for its upcoming leadership includes **strengthening IORA's governance, increasing funding, and integrating technology for enhanced maritime collaboration**.

#### Significance of the Indian Ocean Region (IOR)

- The **Indian Ocean Region (IOR)** is a critical part of the **Indo-Pacific**, but it possesses its own distinct characteristics in terms of geography, economics, and geopolitics.
- The region is home to **two-thirds of the world's population**, making it a key area for global economic and security dynamics.
- The IOR plays a major role in global **trade and energy consumption**:
  - **75% of global shipments** pass through the region.
  - It accounts for **50% of daily oil consumption** worldwide.
- The region also contributes **\$1 trillion in goods and services**, and intra-IORA trade reached **\$800 billion** in **2023**.
- Despite its economic significance, the IOR faces significant challenges such as **poverty, political instability, climate change threats, and security concerns** like **piracy, terrorism, and trafficking**.

#### Challenges Faced by IORA

##### 1. Limited Budget

- IORA's budget is highly dependent on its member states, most of which are **developing economies**.



- The **annual budget** for IORA is very small compared to other regional organizations. For instance, the **Indian Ocean Commission** has a much larger budget of **\$1.3 billion for 2020-2025**.
- Sectors that are crucial to the region's development, such as **maritime security, fisheries, disaster risk management**, and the **blue economy**, require **significant financial investment** to be effectively addressed.

## 2. Lack of Private Sector Participation

- Despite the critical role of private industries in areas like **shipping, oil and gas, and marine tourism**, IORA lacks sufficient **private sector engagement**.
- **Private companies** could contribute greatly to **funding and strategic direction**, but their participation in **policy-making** remains minimal.

## 3. Technological Limitations

- The **IORA Secretariat**, based in **Mauritius**, has **limited staff** and resources, which impacts its ability to carry out essential operations efficiently.
- The current reliance on **manual data processing** leads to **inefficiencies and errors** in managing complex regional issues.
- A **digital transformation** is needed for **better policy analysis** and improved **governance**.

## India's Role and Recommendations

- India's **Security and Growth for All (SAGAR)** vision aligns with IORA's goals, providing an opportunity for India to drive impactful initiatives in the region.
- India's **strong ties** with IORA member countries enable it to develop **solutions for regional challenges** and foster **greater cooperation**.

### 1. Leveraging Expertise from IORA Members

- Some IORA member states possess advanced **marine science** and **technology** capabilities, which India can tap into for the region's development.
- Countries with strengths in **marine industries, investment potential**, and **traditional knowledge** can contribute significantly to the development of IORA's initiatives.

### 2. Promoting Sustainable Marine Governance

- Traditional **coastal knowledge** from **small island nations** should be integrated into the management of marine resources to create **sustainable practices**.
- Encouraging **cooperation** and **knowledge-sharing** among member states will lead to **more effective governance** and the preservation of the region's marine resources.



### 3. Enhancing Maritime Education and Research

- IORA should focus on **collaborating with research institutions and industries** to create **maritime-focused academic courses** that address the growing demand for skilled professionals in the **blue economy**.
- Specialized courses, such as **marine accounting**, will help build expertise in managing the economic, social, and environmental aspects of the marine sector.

### Conclusion

- IORA has the potential to drive **economic and strategic cooperation** in the Indian Ocean Region, creating a platform for greater collaboration among member states.
- To become a more effective and impactful organization, **India's leadership** will need to overcome challenges such as **funding gaps, limited institutional frameworks, and lack of private sector involvement**.
- By implementing reforms such as **increasing funding, strengthening institutional frameworks, and encouraging private sector participation**, IORA can become a stronger and more **effective organization** that fosters **regional prosperity, better governance, and greater transparency** in financial and environmental policies.

Source: <https://www.thehindu.com/opinion/op-ed/charting-a-route-for-iora-under-indias-chairship/article69359008.ece>