



**United Nations Conference
on Trade and Development**

Distr.: Restricted
4 July 2014

Original: English

Trade and Development Board

Sixty-first session

Geneva, 15–26 September 2014

Item 15(b) of the provisional agenda

**Designation of intergovernmental bodies for the purposes of
rule 76 of the rules of procedure of the Board**

Application from the Indian Ocean Rim Association

Note by the UNCTAD secretariat

Executive summary

The UNCTAD secretariat has received an application from the Indian Ocean Rim Association requesting the Trade and Development Board to grant it observer status under rule 76 of the rules of procedure of the Board.

Information concerning the Indian Ocean Rim Association is annexed to this note.

GE.14-07460 (E)



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Annex

Background information on the Indian Ocean Rim Association

History

1. The Government of Mauritius convened a meeting from 29 to 31 March 1995 to discuss the enhancement of economic cooperation among countries of the Indian Ocean rim. Representatives from the Government, business sectors and academia, from Australia, India, Kenya, Mauritius, Oman, Singapore and South Africa, known as the “core group States”, attended the meeting. In a joint statement issued at the end of the meeting, the participants declared that they had agreed on “principles of open regionalism and inclusivity of membership, with the objectives of trade liberalization and promoting trade cooperation. Activities would focus on trade facilitation, investment promotion and economic cooperation”.

2. A tripartite working group – Government, academic and private sector – then met in Mauritius from 15 to 17 August 1995. This meeting decided to create a “second track” process complementary to an intergovernmental organization. A further meeting in September 1996 in Mauritius finalized a charter for the creation of the Indian Ocean Rim Association and expanded the membership to include Indonesia, Madagascar, Malaysia Mozambique, Sri Lanka, the United Republic of Tanzania and Yemen.

3. The Indian Ocean Rim Association was formally launched in March 1997 in Mauritius when the ministers of the Association’s member States adopted by acclamation the charter establishing the Indian Ocean Rim Association.

Aims and objectives

4. The aim of the Indian Ocean Rim Association is to promote the sustainable growth and balanced development of the region and member States and create common ground for regional economic cooperation.

5. The objectives of the Association are to:

(a) Promote the sustainable growth and balanced development of the region and member States;

(b) Focus on those areas of economic cooperation that provide maximum opportunities for development, shared interests and mutual benefits;

(c) Promote trade liberalization, remove impediments and lower barriers towards a freer and more enhanced flow of goods, services, investment and technology among the Association’s member States.

6. At the eleventh meeting of the Council of Ministers of the Association, in Bengaluru, India in 2011, the Association’s member countries agreed on the following six broad themes of contemporary relevance for the Association to focus on in the coming years: maritime safety and security; trade and investment facilitation; fisheries management; disaster risk reduction; academic and science and technology cooperation; and tourism and cultural exchanges.

7. Recently undertaken and future activities that fall under the six priority areas are as follows:

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- (a) Maritime safety and security. Recently undertaken activities:
 - (i) Indian Ocean dialogue, held in January 2014 in Thiruvananthapuram, Kerala, India;
 - (ii) Conference on the political economy of maritime Africa in the Indian Ocean region, held in March 2014 in Nairobi, Kenya;
 - (b) Trade and investment facilitation:
 - (i) Recently undertaken activities:
 - a. Trade policy workshop, held in Canberra, Australia in May 2012;
 - b. Workshop on trade facilitation and customs harmonization;
 - c. First economic and business conference, held on 4 and 5 July 2013 in Mauritius, as a platform for policymakers, trade officials, businesspersons and entrepreneurs to discuss avenues for expanding cooperation in key economic and industrial sectors;
 - (ii) Future activities:
 - a. Feasibility study on preferential trade agreements for the Association's member States, intended to be conducted by certain member countries;
 - b. Workshop on trade facilitation and customs harmonization, to be held in 2014;
 - c. Feasibility study to be conducted on the Association "business travel card";
 - d. Workshop on business facilitation;
 - (c) Fisheries management:
 - (i) Recently undertaken activity: Workshop on fishes' otolith-based ageing and stock assessment;
 - (ii) Future activities:
 - a. Workshop on sustainable aquaculture and artisanal fisheries development;
 - b. Workshop on fisheries management;
 - (d) Disaster risk reduction:
 - (i) Recently undertaken activities:
 - a. Workshop on multidisciplinary oceanographic observations for coastal zone management;
 - b. Meeting of expert officials on ocean forecasting;
 - (ii) Future activities:
 - a. Workshop on climate change adaptation, to be held from 9 to 12 December 2013 in Chennai, India;
 - b. Seasonal climate forecasting: Workshop on climate risk management;
 - (e) Academic and science and technology cooperation:

- (i) Recently undertaken activity: Special training course for Association diplomats;
- (ii) Future activities:
 - a. University mobility in the Indian Ocean;
 - b. Indian Ocean Rim University;
- (f) Tourism and cultural exchanges:
- (i) Recently undertaken activities:
 - a. Meeting of the heads of national archives of the Association's member States and archives exhibition;
 - b. Meeting of the core group on promoting cultural cooperation;
 - c. Feasibility study on tourism, first phase;
- (ii) Future activities:
 - a. Feasibility study on tourism, second phase;
 - b. Meeting of stakeholders of the tourism and travel trade of the Association's member States;
 - c. Second meeting of the heads of national archives of the Association's member States and archives exhibition;
 - d. Workshop on heritage management.

Structure

1. Overview

8. The main organization of the Indian Ocean Rim Association is the Council of Ministers, which meets annually for the formulation of policies, the review of progress on cooperation, decision-making on new areas of cooperation, the establishment of additional mechanisms and specialized agencies as deemed necessary and decision-making on other matters of general interest. The Council of Ministers elects a Chair and Vice-Chair of the Association for a period of two years.

9. The Committee of Senior Officials of the Association, composed of senior government officials of member States, meets twice annually to review the implementation of the decisions taken by the Council of Ministers and, in cooperation with the Indian Ocean Rim Academic Group, Indian Ocean Rim Business Forum and Working Group on Trade and Investment, mobilizes resources for financing work programmes.

10. The Association includes the following bodies: Indian Ocean Rim Academic Group; Indian Ocean Rim Business Forum; Working Group on Trade and Investment. These bodies may meet during the Council of Ministers and Committee of Senior Officials meeting or as mutually decided.

11. The last meeting of the Council of Ministers was held on 1 November 2013 in Perth, Australia, and attended by the 20 member States of the Association and six dialogue partner States.

12. The last meeting of the Committee of Senior Officials was held on 31 October 2013 in Perth, Australia.

13. The Indian Ocean Rim Academic Group, Indian Ocean Rim Business Forum and Working Group on Trade and Investment hold annual meetings. The last meeting was held on 30 October 2013 in Perth, Australia, and attended by the 20 member States of the Association and six dialogue partner States.

2. Indian Ocean Rim Academic Group

14. The Indian Ocean Rim Academic Group was established in recognition of the importance, role and identity of academia in regional organizations. During the creation of the Indian Ocean Rim Association, the role set out for the Academic Group was both advisory and catalytic, with the following objectives: "Service the needs of Government and business; promote intellectual dialogue between the participating member States; serve as a vehicle for the development and dissemination of the Indian Ocean rim concept; serve the region by providing coordinated research."

15. The Indian Ocean Rim Academic Group may meet during the Council of Ministers and Committee of Senior Officials meeting, or as mutually decided. The Academic Group interacts with the Committee of Senior Officials and the secretariat in the consideration, formulation and implementation of the policy and work programmes of the Association. The Academic Group may draw upon other non-governmental regional academic networks, as necessary.

3. Indian Ocean Rim Business Forum

16. The Indian Ocean Rim Business Forum was set up in view of the growing trend towards open regionalism and the increasing implementation of market-friendly policies, and in acknowledgement of the importance of more liberal information trading systems. The main objectives of the Business Forum are to:

(a) Promote the welfare of the people of the member States through carefully designed programmes to improve their standards of living and quality of life;

(b) Promote the sustainable growth and balanced development of the region and member States;

(c) Formulate and implement programmes for economic cooperation including, inter alia, the expansion of trade, tourism, direct investments, scientific and technological exchanges, and human resources development;

(d) Reduce impediments and lower barriers towards a freer and enhanced flow of goods, services, investment and technology within the region;

(e) Encourage the close interaction of trade and industry, academic institutions, scholars and the people of the member States.

17. The Business Forum, comprising participants from the private sector and chambers of commerce may meet during the Council of Ministers and Committee of Senior Officials meeting, or as mutually decided.

4. Working Group on Trade and Investment

18. The Working Group on Trade and Investment was set up to focus on a trade and investment agenda based on trade facilitation, trade liberalization and economic and technical cooperation. The main objectives of the Working Group are to:

(a) Promote the welfare of the people of the member States through carefully designed programmes to improve their standards of living and quality of life;

(b) Promote the sustainable growth and balanced development of the region and member States;

(c) Formulate and implement programmes for economic cooperation including, inter alia, the expansion of trade, tourism, direct investments, scientific and technological exchanges, and human resources development;

(d) Reduce impediments and lower barriers towards a freer and enhanced flow of goods, services, investment and technology within the region;

(e) Encourage the close interaction of trade and industry, academic institutions, scholars and the people of the member States.

19. Similar to the other working groups, the Working Group on Trade and Investment, composed of trade officials, may meet during the Council of Ministers and Committee of Senior Officials meeting or as mutually decided.

5. Working Group of Heads of Mission

20. The Working Group of Heads of Mission, consisting of the heads of diplomatic missions of Indian Ocean Rim Association member States based in Pretoria, South Africa, meets to review the periodic work programme presented by the Chair of the Council of Ministers and acts as a follow-up mechanism to focus on issues directly referred to it by the Council of Ministers and Committee of Senior Officials.

6. Specialized agencies

21. The Association has the following two specialized agencies:

(a) Regional Centre for Science and Technology Transfer. The Centre is hosted by the Islamic Republic of Iran. A few objectives of the Centre are as follows:

i) Assist member States in the acquisition, dissemination, assimilation and promotion of technologies;

(ii) Undertake research, policy reviews and analyses of trends and conditions;

(iii) Network and create partnerships with international organizations and other key stakeholders;

(iv) Facilitate the establishment of technology hubs to accelerate advanced technology development through joint efforts.

(b) Fisheries Support Unit. The Unit is hosted by Oman. The main objective of the Unit is to establish effective networking and coordination among member States for the purpose of developing mutual cooperation on fisheries-related activities.

7. Troika

22. A Troika consisting of the Chair, Vice-Chair and previous Chair has also been established. The Troika reports to the Council of Ministers and member States on any important matters relating to the Indian Ocean Rim Association, including a review of progress, the establishment of additional mechanisms, policy direction for Association institutions and the appointment and term of office, mandate, duties and termination of the services of the Secretary-General.

8. Other

23. The Indian Ocean Rim Association explicitly excludes bilateral relations and other issues likely to generate controversy and be an impediment to regional cooperation.

24. The work programme of the Association is undertaken by member States on a voluntary basis.

25. Decisions on all matters and issues at all levels are taken on the basis of consensus.

Membership

26. Indian Ocean Rim Association criteria determining eligibility for membership state that any sovereign State of the Indian Ocean rim willing to subscribe to the principles and objectives of the Association charter may become a member of the Association.

27. The 20 member States of the Association are Australia, Bangladesh, the Comoros, India, Indonesia, the Islamic Republic of Iran, Kenya, Madagascar, Malaysia, Mauritius, Mozambique, Oman, Seychelles, Singapore, South Africa, Sri Lanka, Thailand, the United Arab Emirates, the United Republic of Tanzania and Yemen.

28. In addition to its members, the Association has the following six dialogue partners: China, Egypt, France, Japan, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and the United States of America. The Indian Ocean Tourism Organization and the Indian Ocean Research Group are observers.

Financial resources

29. Sources of revenue include the annual membership contribution of the 20 member States and are determined on the principle of the formula of equal contributions, i.e. all member States pay an equal annual share of the budget of the Secretariat.

30. The dialogue partners contribute voluntarily on specific occasions.

31. Voluntary contributions are also provided by certain member States for the Association's special fund for specific projects.

32. The annual budget was US\$291,800 in 2010, US\$297,000 in 2011 and US\$401,500 in 2012.

Relations with other international organizations

33. The Indian Ocean Rim Association has no constitutional, administrative or financial relations with other organizations.

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Working languages

36. The working language of the Association is English.
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