

**Ministry of External Affairs
(Indo-Pacific Division)**

**Statement by High Commissioner, Port Louis at the
38th Council of Ministers Meeting of the
Indian Ocean Commission**

**Session 1: Dialogue with Presidency guests, observers and other
development partners: opportunities for collaboration**

Hon'ble Ministers,

Excellencies and

Distinguished Delegates

It is an honour to address this esteemed gathering at the IOC's Council of Ministers. I am honoured to represent India in this Council of Ministers Meeting for the 3rd time.

Excellencies,

India joined IOC as an Observer in March 2020 and participated in the 35th IOC Council of Ministers meeting held in May 2021 for the first time. We once again thank all IOC Member States for welcoming India in the IOC as an Observer as well as for their full support and cooperation. India's engagement is dedicated to fostering cooperation and sustainable contribution to the Indian Ocean Region.

The Indian Ocean is not just a body of water; with its rich natural resources and bio-diversity it is a vital conduit that unites us. India, being strategically located in the Indian Ocean Region with an extensive coastline and presence of several islands, has a long maritime tradition; and with this rich heritage, we share an intrinsic bond with the Indian Ocean. Today, more than ever, our collective efforts towards collaboration and mutual growth are paramount. From our historical cultural connect to today's increasing security dynamics, one of the cornerstones of our collective prosperity is

Maritime Safety and Security. India's vision of SAGAR or "Security and Growth for All in the Region", as outlined by our Prime Minister, encompasses political, security, economic, and socio-cultural spheres and envisions the Indian Ocean region and the greater Indo-Pacific as a region of peace & prosperity, based on a climate of trust and transparency, respect for international maritime rules, equal access as a right under international law, sensitivity to each other's interests, peaceful resolution of disputes, and enhanced maritime cooperation.

India attaches great importance to all the four Strategic Areas of IOC, called *Axes Strategique*, namely Peace & Security; Economic Growth & Connectivity; Environment & Climate; and Human Development. As this session explores opportunities for collaboration, I want to emphasise that we are ready for collaboration with IOC and share complementarities, bilaterally as well as with regional initiatives in the Indian Ocean Region. This includes greater cooperation with RMIFC in Madagascar and RCOC in Seychelles and we look forward to deeper cooperation with our Information Fusion Centre in India.

With India's commitment to being a first responder in providing disaster relief to countries in the region, we have striven to live up to it despite domestic challenges, as demonstrated during the Covid-19 Pandemic. Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief is a priority and an area we wish to explore for cooperation with IOC. We may also explore opportunities for collaboration in the Coalition for Disaster Resilient Infrastructure (CDRI), Blue Economy and enhancing connectivity.

We look forward to enhancing people to people exchanges which is already a testament to the deep-rooted connections among our people. Training & capacity building also play a vital role in strengthening ties.

IOC has an MoU with IORA, of which India was a strong proponent. We are leading the Working Groups on Maritime Safety and Security, and Blue Economy in the IORA and envisage several opportunities of collaboration through this route too.

Besides, India is actively involved in various regional organizations in the Indian Ocean Region and the wider Indo-Pacific, including the Indian Ocean Naval Symposium (IONS), BIMSTEC and ASEAN. We would be glad to broaden IOC's cooperation with various regional mechanisms in the Indo-Pacific to ensure security and growth for all in the region.

Excellencies,

The Indo-Pacific Oceans' Initiative (IPOI), announced by India in 2019, as a practical implementation of its Indo-Pacific vision and in line with its SAGAR doctrine, envisages a free, open, inclusive and rules-based Indo-Pacific. The IPOI is a collaborative endeavour for countries to work together towards cooperative solutions to common challenges in the Indo-Pacific region, of which the Indian Ocean is an intrinsic part.

As we navigate the challenges of the 21st century, we reaffirm India's commitment towards keeping the seas, space and airways free and open; nations secure from terrorism and piracy; ensuring access to and responsible use of the global commons.

India stands ready to work hand in hand with each member of the IOC in all areas of potential collaboration to ensure a prosperous, secure and sustainable future for everyone.

Thank you.
