



**Speech by Australian High Commissioner to South Africa**

**HE Mr Graeme Wilson**

**'Strengthening Maritime Security Cooperation in the Indian Ocean region'  
Seminar jointly hosted by the Australian High Commission and the Durban  
University of Technology**

**30 June 2014**

The Australian High Commission welcomes the opportunity to jointly host today's seminar on 'Strengthening maritime security cooperation in the Indian Ocean Region' in partnership with the Durban University of Technology. In its term as Chair of the Indian Ocean Rim Association, Australia is committed to revitalising relations with and between Indian Ocean littoral states and refocusing our joint efforts on priority areas.

The High Commission values the opportunity to promote Australia's multilateral agenda in what continues to be a busy year for its international engagement. As many of you will be aware, in 2014 Australia is the Chair of the G20 and our Presidency will culminate in the leaders' summit in Brisbane in November of this year. 2014 also marks Australia's final year as a temporary member of the UNSC.

In my remarks this morning, I will talk a little about what IORA is, before briefly expanding on Australia's priorities for the organisation during its time as Chair.

Australia commenced its two year term as Chair - for 2013 to 2015 - in Perth, Western Australia in November of last year during the Council of Ministers' Meeting. And as many in the room might know, Perth is one of Australia's state's capital cities but it has the distinction of being our only capital city on the Indian Ocean. And so, it is only fitting that we meet here today in Durban, on the other side of the Indian Ocean, to discuss opportunities to strengthen

maritime security cooperation in the Indian Ocean Region.

Australia is building on the work of India as immediate past-Chair and fellow Troika member, and is pleased that South Africa will become IORA Vice-Chair at the end of next year when Indonesia replaces Australia as Chair, as already mentioned by Amb Sooklal.

Australia looks to the Indian Ocean as a region of growing strategic and economic importance. We share with all Indian Ocean littoral states, and key extra-regional countries, an interest in addressing the ongoing challenges that face the region, including for example, sustainable economic growth and development.

The stability and prosperity of the Indian Ocean region is increasingly important globally.

The IORA membership represents a broad cross section of the world's nations. While we are a diverse group, we have much in common, including a shared commitment to the peaceful, sustainable use of the Indian Ocean.

There are 20 IORA Members States. They are Australia, Bangladesh, Comoros, India, Indonesia, Iran, Kenya, Madagascar, Malaysia, Mauritius, Mozambique, Oman, Seychelles, Singapore, South Africa, Sri Lanka, Tanzania, Thailand, UAE and Yemen. Its six dialogue partners are China, Egypt, France, Japan, UK and the US.

IORA is the only Ministerial-level grouping with a broad-based mandate that spans the Indian Ocean region.

At the Perth Council of Ministers' Meeting, Ministers agreed to the 'Perth Principles' Declaration. The Declaration outlines IORA's six agreed priority areas. These are: maritime safety and security, trade and investment facilitation, fisheries management, disaster risk management, academic and science and technology cooperation; and tourism and cultural exchanges.

At the Council of Ministers' Meeting in Perth, Australia's Foreign Minister Bishop said "IORA must play its part in developing better maritime security across the region, fostering economic growth and sustainable development." At this meeting, the organisation was re-branded the Indian Ocean Rim Association and a new logo was subsequently agreed upon. Ministers issued a forward-looking communique and Declaration on the Indian Ocean and the sustainable management of its resources.

With fellow Troika members India and Indonesia, Australia is working to build IORA's capacity, impact and influence. We are working to revitalise IORA and sharpen its focus so that it is better placed to deliver practical outcomes. We are encouraging collaborative work to ensure well-targeted and high quality projects that will be of real benefit to a wide range of Member States.

At Perth, Australia announced \$1.175m for IORA and Indian Ocean initiatives to build cooperation and capacity in areas such as disaster risk management, water safety, climate forecasting, sustainability of fisheries, and oil-spills monitoring.

The recent opening of the University of Western Australia's Indian Ocean Marine Research Centre sends another strong signal of Australia's commitment to contribute to the scientific understanding and sustainability of the Indian Ocean.

We are seeking to mainstream gender empowerment and youth education across IORA's work areas, in addition to working to streamline internal working practices and meetings.

Australia is pleased with the forward looking outcomes delivered at Perth that has seen the growth of IORA's international profile. The organisation's efforts to bolster maritime security were recognised in UNSC Resolution 2125 (18 November 2013) on Piracy off the coast of Somalia.

During Australia's time as Chair we have already seen a busy schedule of activities. These have included the first IORA Ministerial forum on renewable energy in Abu Dhabi; a workshop on strategic stability in the Indian Ocean held in Singapore; a conference on the political economy of maritime Africa in Kenya that was supported by Australia and lastly, a very successful Senior Officials Meeting in Phuket last week.

Australia is also on track to deliver a suite of capacity building and networking events pledged at Perth in support of IORA's priority areas and the cross-cutting issues of gender empowerment and youth education. As a practical example of this, Australia's Ambassador for Women and Girls is hosting an IORA event on women's economic empowerment, with a focus on tourism and textiles, in Kuala Lumpur in August.

In conjunction with fellow Troika members and Member States, it is through these initiatives that Australia is seeking to provide fresh momentum to IORA.

I recall meeting Vice Admiral Mudimu last year, when he was Chief of the South

African Navy. Vice Admiral Mudimu, your participation in today's event is warmly welcomed. I look forward to meeting with your successor shortly to discuss options to develop Defence cooperation in the Indian Ocean between our respective navies, where resources permit.

As a final word, the Australian High Commission is grateful to Ambassador Sooklal and his IORA team at DIRCO for their close cooperation on IORA issues. Earlier this year, DIRCO generously hosted the annual meeting of the IORA Working Group of Heads of Mission. Pretoria is home to this forum as all IORA member states and dialogue partners are resident in the Jacaranda city.

Thank you.