

TERMS OF REFERENCE
ONLINE WORKSHOP
“Blue Economy: Modern Challenges and Perspectives
for the Indian Ocean Region”

I. Background

Oceans are the world’s single largest ecosystem, covering nearly three-fourths of the earth’s surface, thereby providing a massive arena for emerging complex and interconnected development issues such as climate change, livelihoods, commerce, and security [[Blue Economy in the Indian Ocean 2019](#)]. In accordance with the UN Ocean Forum data, in 2020 trade in ocean-based goods and services estimated to be worth at least \$2.5 trillion per year – about 3% of global GDP. The ocean’s resources provide food, jobs and income for almost 3 billion people, most of whom live in developing countries [[UNCTAD 2022](#)].

Interest to the “Blue economy” concept is steadily growing: today it is on the agenda of many international organizations, the concept is embedded into a number of national development strategies. UN SDG 14 “Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources” is devoted to the development of the Blue economy. The UN announced a Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainability (2021-2030) to acknowledge the importance of sustainable development in order to improve the overall ocean health and create awareness for the sustainable development of oceans, seas, and the coast,

The specificity of the “Blue economy” concept is the emphasis on the system and sustainable development of the economic sectors related to the use of the oceans’ and seas’ resources. The benefits of developing the Blue economy strategies go beyond direct ones and provide humans with a number of spillover opportunities. For instance, renewable ocean energy has enormous potential: wave energy, tidal energy, offshore wind energy, marine solar energy, and marine bioenergy. The ocean floor contains the minerals that humanity needs for the “green transition”, marine biotechnology allows the development of new pharmaceuticals, medicines, cosmetics, feed additives for animal husbandry, which reduce methane emissions into the atmosphere.

At the same time, the development of this concept faces a number of challenges: climate change, pollution of the oceans, overexploitation of living resources of the ocean and biodiversity losses. The rapid degradation of the world’s ocean ecosystems and the depletion of its resource base due to increased environmental and economic pressure inevitably affect the well-being and health of people living in the countries that depend on the oceans and seas, it also brings huge financial losses.

In spite of the rising Blue economy popularity, it is difficult to make international comparisons of the level of its development, as there is no terminology and sectoral unity in understanding what the “Blue economy” is. The analysis of national strategies of the Blue economy development showed a difference in approaches not only in terms of the “blue taxonomy”, but also in governance mechanisms and measurement. Similarly differing, in terms of priorities, appear to be goal-setting (sustainable development, decarbonisation, conservation of biodiversity, food security, social well-being), description of key policy approaches (spatial development, investment in science), priority areas of development (skills, innovation, emerging markets and technologies, clusters and coastal territories) and regulation (illegal trade).

As a result the Blue economy was put high on both IORA’s and Russia’s agenda. For IORA the interest was specifically emphasized at the 14th IORA Ministerial Meeting in Perth on 9 October 2014. Since that time, IORA implemented several capacity building programs covering a wide range of related areas as well as launched the IORA Working Group on the Blue Economy (WGBE). Among the guiding documents adopted by IORA are Declaration on enhancing Blue Economy Cooperation for Sustainable Development in the Indian Ocean Region (2015), Jakarta Declaration on Blue Economy (2017) and the Dhaka Declaration on the Blue Economy (2019).

For Russia, it was 2022 when the country first released a glossary of terms and definitions related to the Blue economy. However, even beforehand the country dealt with sustainable management of economic sectors related to marine and coastal ecosystems under respective strategies on maritime activity development, and has gained substantial experience in terms of unlocking the potential of Blue economy.

II. Proposal

The project currently proposed thus takes into account the surge of interest to the “Blue economy” concept by both sides and aims at analysing and preparing an overview of respective national and regional approaches on behalf of Russia, IORA Member States and IORA Dialogue Partners. The Workshop will help parties get acquainted with each other’s definitions, regulatory approaches, government measures and consequently identify potential areas for further cooperation in the field of Blue economy.

III. Vision

This project consists of the following stages:

- Conduct workshop with IORA Member States and IORA Dialogue Partners;
- Prepare a summary report on challenges and opportunities for further cooperation;
- Provide recommendations on the follow-up cooperation or next steps.

IV. Implementation

The workshop will be divided into two sessions on the following priority areas:

1st Session (up to 5 speakers)

- Provide an understanding of the Blue economy (taxonomies, metrics, etc.)
- Share national approaches and best practices towards managing Blue economy

2nd Session (up to 5 speakers)

- Reveal barriers and risks to implementing the Blue economy strategies
- Give an overview of opportunities emerging from the Blue economy concept
- Consider opportunities for regional cooperation to unlock the hidden potential of the Blue economy

The list of speakers will be finalised after consultations with the IORA Secretariat and Chair of the IORA WGBE.

V. Participation to the Workshop

It is recommended that the participants of the workshop from Russia, the IORA Member States and the IORA Dialogue Partners be representatives of:

- government agencies
- business circles, including MSMEs
- academia, NGO experts

The workshop will be considered successful if it gathers more than 50 representatives from Russia and IORA as participants.

VI. Arrangements

1. The IORA Secretariat will request Member States and Dialogue Partners to nominate their participants, through the National Focal Point (the Ministry of Foreign Affairs).
2. The Ministry of Economic Development of the Russian Federation will determine participants of the workshop from Russia.
3. The IORA Secretariat and the Russian side will finalise the agenda of the workshop jointly.

4. The Ministry of Economic Development of the Russian Federation will organize the workshop jointly with the IORA Secretariat.
5. The workshop will take place on **June 8, 2023**.
6. The workshop will be conducted virtually through the platform for holding videoconferences and online-events – *Zoom*. The Workshop will be broadcasted on the special page devoted to the event on VK.