

Your Excellencies,
Distinguished Italy- IORA Committee Members,
Distinguished Audience,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a great honour for me to be with you today for the first meeting of the Ambassadors' Group of the Italy- IORA Committee, **standing in for** President Luigi Giannini.

Much to his regret, our proactive President **is still not able** to be with us today due to health reasons linked to the Pandemic Covid-19. However, we have **very comforting news** and let me use this opportunity to address to Luigi, on behalf **of all the Italy - IORA Committee** our best wishes for a speedy recovery.

Two years have passed since ITALY joined the IORA Community as Dialogue Partner **and since the 2019 launch of the dynamic Italy – IORA Committee**, we **showcased** Italy's commitment to enhance cooperation with IORA's Members.

As a maritime nation by history and geography, **Italy has clearly demonstrated** to be devoted to widening relations between the Mediterranean region and IORA Member States, while promoting growth, sustainable development, and regional economic cooperation. **From the start**, the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, **under the inspiring** guidance of the Director General for Global Affairs, Ambassador **Luca Sabbatucci**, has **invested huge** energy to forge political synergies and to achieve this partnership.

Since then, a lot has been achieved, despite challenging times, thanks to the will of our flamboyant and far-sighted National IORA Focal Point, Minister **Mario Vattani**, to whom we simply owe to be **together** today.

The intuition to set up a public-private Italy- IORA committee, as an example of good public-private collaboration, were therefore welcomed and I would say is unique among the partnerships so far created by IORA.

Italian maritime stakeholders have then joined forces together and chose to articulate their participation along the lines covered in [the IORA 6 Blue Economy priority pillars](#), which are a valuable instrument to direct energy and resources.

- Fisheries and Aquaculture
- Renewable Ocean Energy
- Seaports and Shipping
- Offshore Hydrocarbons and Seabed Minerals
- Marine Biotechnology, Research and Development
- Tourism

Italian stakeholders, in particular the Italian Industrial Maritime Cluster (Federazione del Mare), public and private organisations, universities and research institutes, **have played a crucial role in supporting the Italian government's decision to initiate the procedure for acquiring the status of IORA dialogue partner, in the firm belief that a concrete and operational cooperation between Italy and the IORA should also be based on the involvement of private business and the civil society.**

The result is a partnership with the Italian Maritime Cluster with the wide presence of companies and institutions whose expertise ranges from satellite observation to aquaculture, from shipping to shipbuilding, cruise activity to pleasure boats, from research institutes for coastal community development to underwater research, fight for plastic in the sea, for zero emission shipping, clean energies, hydrogen, and many other topics that have contributed to seal and strengthen this dialogue.

To note that recently, the Legal Firm GIANNI&ORIGONI and GREEN ADVANTAGE have decided to join their forces to the Committee to make it stronger and offer their expertise to historical members as (Compagnies) Federazione del Mare, Cluster BIG, Confitarma, Federspesca, Legacoop, Distretto Pesca di Mazzara del Vallo, IGEOS, (Accademia) SIAM Bari, Città della Scienza, CNR, CORILA, ENEA, ENR, IBG, IGS, Università di Siena, Università cattolica del Sacro Cuore, Università di Napoli Federico II.

No doubt that Maritime Clusters are important policy tools to support sustainable blue growth and jobs across coastal regions. They do so by promoting the uptake of innovation, knowledge, skills as well as access to finance – ensuring that the support provided is effective and locally grounded.

For those interested, I invite you to have a look to our website: [://iora-italy.org/the-italy-iora-committee/](http://iora-italy.org/the-italy-iora-committee/)

Let me add, that the website of the Italy- IORA platform can already be defined as a “**one-stop shop/online web portal**” allowing for the **consolidation** and sharing of general, technical and **sectoral** information related to marine and maritime affairs in the IORA and Med regions and this thanks to the valuable work of their architects.

As we are entering the third year of our relationship, we have to further demonstrate that this political will and this governance, **pivotal** and **instrumental** to any further steps, can now be translated into more concrete actions beneficial to our respective maritime business communities, **and that is the reason why** the aim of the meeting today, as strongly advocated by President Luigi Giannini, is **threefold**:

- 1-to create a **stable round table for consultation with the Embassies of the IORA countries**
- 2- to **consolidate the network of relations established in these past months of work** and
- 3- to **identify priorities and objectives for each country** that can guide the planning of future activities of the Italy-IORA Committee.

The attendance to this first Kick-off meeting today by their Excellencies Ambassadors of **16 IORA countries, Australia, Bangladesh, India, Indonesia, Iran, Kenya, Madagascar, Malesia, Mauritius, Mozambico, Oman, Somalia, South Africa, Thailand, Sri Lanka, United Arab Emirates**, stresses, if need be, the firm commitment of those countries to support at the highest political level that strategy and their will to discuss and forge together a workplan for further integration and implementation.

Excellencies, we are here today **to listen to you** and **to offer you our** expertise, but also **to invite you** to consider us as a **reference point** for the Blue Economy, just as we have been the reference point for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs **until now**.

Indeed, the role of our companies and institutions has been fundamental in carrying out the activities carried out in 2020 **referred to by** Ambassador **Luca Sabbatucci related to Sustainable Cruise Tourism, fisheries and aquaculture, Skills and careers development in the Blue Economy, Blue careers in Fisheries in the IORA Countries and we are eager to further contribute** to discuss **new scenarios, opportunities and tools to boost** the future of this ITALY- IORA privileged partnership.

We have **delivered** and we **continue** to do it,

just to cite the latest initiatives some of which have been already **cited by Ambassador Sabbatucci**:

IORA is partnering with Italy to connect seafood companies in the Indian Ocean region with Italian and European markets. This is a key objective of the **world's first ever digital trade event of the seafood industry**, to be hosted online by the Assoittica Italia (National Association of Fish Companies) scheduled on 20-21st May 2021.

Furthermore, **strengthening of the role of women in local economy**, shortening and integration of the logistic chain, recovery of added value for producers, quality and traceability, **incentives for modernisation**: these are the **Community policy chapters** that must be accompanied at national level by a **relaunch of investments** in this field capable of rethinking, reprogramming and innovating all production chains linked **to the sea economy**.

Today it seems clear that the effects of the pandemic have profoundly changed the development scenarios, making it even more urgent to adopt a new vision, new strategies and therefore new skills to revitalise a sector that can be a great development opportunity for **Italy and IORA countries**.

This process can start through the establishment in **Italy of a pole of excellence for research and innovation and skills development in the fisheries and aquaculture sector - Blue Campus** - coordinated by researchers from universities and research centres and stakeholders with experience in the sector.

It is time to maybe engage with renewed conviction to the **climate challenges** we are experiencing and adopt the moto of the G20 Italian Presidency- **People, Planet, Prosperity (PPP)**. It is a joint global problem that requires joint actions that will be addressed at the COP 26, **co-chaired by UK and Italy** later this year and **We together can do our part too**.

For this we need:

- **Political will** to implement sustainable policies based on rigorous scientific work (not only meetings) **to articulate clear recommendations and priorities**

- **Voluntary commitment** from IORA Member States and ITALY key to address the challenges.
- **trans-coastal cooperation** programmes for focused **B2B-SME development and clustering**
- **Integrate in efficient way** local actors **to take the right development decisions with a robust financial and legal assistance.**

Let us move forward with haste and good intention to :

- Continue to hold virtual meetings**, ensure participation to international, regional, national events/ fairs to gain in visibility;
- Articulate clear recommendations** and priorities and take care of them
- Networking with private sector regional organizations** interested in green leadership and green finance,
- Opening doors for all creative entrepreneurs** willing to participate
- Reinforce the training courses** and **skills** focused on blue economy. Indeed, **Educate decision makers** and future workers on this topic **is quite important to get better governance within the next years**. This could be done by encouraging universities, institutes to propose specific courses, sessions or summer schools open for IORA and ITALY (students)- IORA-ITALY Erasmus);
- The ITALY- IORA website **could evolve into a more complex networking platform** for sharing knowledge and supporting the development of the blue economy, **where users play a key role** to improve, disseminate and widen the impact of blue economy activities.

Excellencies, **Let us act together and use the Oceans and seas as a tool for global Economic Recovery, we are eager to hear from you on how best** further cross fertilise that unique and inspiring blue dialogue partnership!

Thank you for your attention.