

Launch Forum: IORA Indian Ocean University Network (UNIOR)

Friday 15 November 2024
Curtin Mauritius Campus, Moka, Mauritius

TIME	SESSION THEME & SPEAKERS
9:00-12:00	Project Presentations on ‘International Relations in the Indian Ocean Region’ by Postgraduate Student Groups <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Mixed student groups from collaborative IOR regional short course</i>
12:00-13:00	<i>Lunch break</i>
13:00-14:00	Collaborative Education and Training Programs in the IOR <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>IRIOR Course; UoM COMESA Course; UP Global Classroom; INTERREG Mobility Scheme; MIOR initiative, Australia Awards</i>
14:00-15:30	Research Partnerships for Sustainability, Transformation and Impact in the IOR <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Research centres, think tanks, government, industry, communities</i>
15:30-16:00	<i>Afternoon tea break</i>
16:00-17:00	Building IOR Networks for Early Career Researchers and Professionals <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Launch of the IORA Early Career Professionals (ECP) Network</i> • <i>IORA Nelson Mandela ‘Be the Legacy’ Internship Program</i> • <i>IORA Blue Carbon Hub Early Career Ocean Professionals (ECOP)</i>
17:00-17:45	<i>Arrival of dignitaries and evening speakers, welcome refreshments</i>
17:45-18:00	Formal welcome and introduction by host
18:00-18:30	Keynote: “Sustainable Transformations: Implications for the IOR” <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Prof. Maano Ramutsindela, Future Africa Research Chair in Sustainability Transformations, University of Pretoria/Cape Town</i>
18:30-19:30	High-Level Panel Discussion: “Building University Collaboration for Sustainable Transformation in the Indian Ocean Region” <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Ministers; Vice-Chancellors; Ambassadors</i>
19:30-19:45	Partnership highlight: University of Mauritius-Curtin University
19:45-20:00	Launch of IORA Indian Ocean University Network (UNIOR) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>IORA Secretary-General H.E. Mr Salman Al Farisi</i> • <i>UNIOR Co-Chairs Prof. Lina Pelliccione (President, Curtin Mauritius) & Prof. Sanjeev Sobhee (VC, University of Mauritius)</i>
20:00-21:00	<i>Reception and networking</i>

IORA Indian Ocean University Network (UNIOR)

Vision of the Network

A dynamic regional academic platform delivering higher education and research collaboration to address sustainable development and transformation priorities, build leadership and institutional capacity, and promote regional cooperation across the Indian Ocean.

Objectives of the Network

1. Regional university collaboration for sustainable transformation:

- to be a flagship IORA platform delivering impactful research and education collaboration to advance knowledge and serve the particular sustainable development and transformation needs of the Indian Ocean region, as identified in the IORA Priority Areas and UN Sustainable Development Goals;

2. Growing regional leaders and education institutions:

- to facilitate and support regular regional exchanges between academics, students, university leaders and partners to share expertise, build capacity in the next generation of leaders and institutions, and enhance the 'IOR literacy' of the Indian Ocean Rim academic community;

3. Supporting IORA's region-building:

- to help build a transnational Indian Ocean community and regional identity among the diverse peoples of IORA and enhance the capacity of IORA and its Member States to promote regional cooperation.

Membership of the Network

Membership of the Network is open to universities based in IORA Member States and Dialogue Partners. To ensure both equity and manageable size, Network membership will be restricted to a maximum of 3 Universities per IORA Member State, and 1 University per Dialogue Partner, in the establishment phase of operations (2024-27).

A Core Group of nine universities has led the establishment of the Network and will serve among the founding membership. These are: Curtin University (Australia & Mauritius), University of Mauritius (Mauritius), Universitas Paramadina (Indonesia), University of Pretoria (South Africa), Jawaharlal Nehru University (India), University of Dhaka (Bangladesh), University of Nairobi (Kenya), Université de La Réunion (Reunion/France) and University of Seychelles (Seychelles).

Founding membership status will apply to universities that formally join the network on or before 30 June 2025. Thereafter membership will be considered as regular.

Membership applications shall be formally considered by a group consisting of: the UNIOR Co-Chairs; IORA Director Academic, Science and Technology Cooperation;

Chair, IORA Academic Group; and the National Focal Point of the relevant Member State. Network membership shall be formally approved when the payment of the annual membership fee has been completed. Full criteria for membership will be developed by 30 June 2025.

Membership Fees

There shall be an annual membership fee of between USD 2,500 and USD 10,000, based on OECD DAC category (sliding scale). The membership fees will be pooled and managed transparently by the Network Secretariat. The pooled funding will be used to support annual Network activities, including the High-Level Annual Forum, collaborative research seed-funding grants, and short courses. The fund will also be used to cover the basic costs of the Secretariat. Co-funding from the IORA Special Fund will be applied for to support eligible activities of the Network, in addition to any other external contributions.

OECD DAC category	IORA Member State	Membership Fee
N/A	<i>Australia, France, Oman, Seychelles, Singapore, UAE + Dialogue Partners</i>	USD 10,000
Upper Middle Income Countries (6)	Indonesia, Malaysia, Maldives, Mauritius, South Africa, Thailand	USD 7,500
Lower Middle Income Countries (4)	India, Iran, Kenya, Sri Lanka,	USD 5,000
Least Developed Countries (7)	Bangladesh, Comoros, Madagascar, Mozambique, Somalia, Tanzania, Yemen	USD 2,500

IORA Member States grouped by OECD Development Assistance Committee (DAC) category (2024-25)

Leadership of the Network

The Network shall be led through a Co-Chair arrangement formed by two Network university members. The Inaugural Co-Chairs of the Network during its establishment phase (2024-27) are Professor Lina Pelliccione, President of Curtin University Mauritius (Australia & Mauritius), and Professor Sanjeev Sobhee, Vice-Chancellor of the University of Mauritius (Mauritius).

Each Co-Chair shall appoint a Deputy Co-Chair from their institution. The Deputy Co-Chairs for the establishment phase 2024-27 are Associate Professor David Mickler (Dean Global, Africa, Curtin University) and Associate Professor Verena Tandrayen-Ragoobur (Dean, Faculty of Social Science and Humanities, University of Mauritius).

A Steering Committee shall be established, including the Co-Chairs, Deputy Co-Chairs, and one representative of each member university. The IORA Director Academic, Science and Technology Cooperation, and the Chair, IORA Academic Group (IORAG), shall be ex officio members. The Steering Committee shall meet three times per year (twice virtually, and once in-person during the Annual Network Summit).

A small Secretariat will be established to help manage the regular business of the Network including meetings, events and financial arrangements. The Secretariat shall be based at one of the Co-Chairs' home institutions.

Main activities of the Network

1. Annual UNIOR High-Level Forum

As the main annual activity, the High-Level Forum brings together Vice-Chancellors and other senior leaders from UNIOR members, Member State policy-makers and practitioners, the IORA Secretariat, funding bodies, industry partners, and selected UNIOR member researchers and students. This high-level engagement ensures buy-in and profiling from university leaders, governments, partners and funders (all key Network resources) while enhancing the impact of research and education on regional policy-making and industry. The three-day annual Forum follows a regional rotation model to be hosted by a different UNIOR member university each year (perhaps in alignment with other planned major IORA activities). More substantive Network research workshops and education programs, including annual IORAG meetings, could be delivered in the week prior to the three-day Forum to enhance the value of the annual meeting; workshops and education programs can report on activities during the Forum to highlight the value and impact of the Network. Each annual Forum could focus on a particular overarching theme relevant to IORA, with prominent keynote speakers.

DAY	ACTIVITY	SPEAKERS
Pre-Forum	UNIOR research and education programs	Research project leaders and collaborators; educators and students; related government agencies, industry partners and donors
1	UNIOR Education Forum	Student and educator representatives from IORA University Network members
2	UNIOR Research Forum <i>UNIOR Forum Dinner and Host Cultural Event</i>	UNIOR research project leaders, IORA Academic Group (IORAG) representatives, Indian Ocean Research Group (IORG) members. Prominent keynote speaker
3	UNIOR High-Level Forum	UNIOR Co-Chairs; Vice-Chancellors; IORA Secretariat; IORAG Chair; Leaders and policy-makers from IORA Member States and Dialogue Partners; Major funders.

Example of UNIOR Annual High-Level Forum Program

2. UNIOR annual collaborative research seed-funding grants

The Network will seed-fund 5 collaborative research projects per year. The projects would be assessed on a competitive basis with up to USD \$10,000 to be granted to each of the 5 successful projects. The projects would need to meet the following criteria: (i) at least 3 IORA University Network member universities are included on the project; (ii) the project identifies its direct relevance to at least one of the IORA Priority/Focus Areas (see below) and one of the UN Sustainable Development Goals; (iii) inclusion of at least one PhD student/Early Career Researcher on each project for

mentoring; (iv) achievement of gender balance on the program team. The scheme could also prioritise projects that address issues falling under the remit of the IORA Sustainable Development Program (ISDP). Successful projects would need to build in a clear plan and process for obtaining follow-on funding from external sources, and project leaders would present their projects and results at the next Forum.

IORA Priority Areas
Maritime Safety & Security
Trade & Investment Facilitation
Fisheries Management
Disaster Risk Management
Tourism & Cultural Exchanges
Academic, Science & Technology
IORA Focus Areas (cross-cutting)
Blue Economy
Women's Economic Empowerment

THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS



3. UNIOR annual regional short courses

The Network will support an annual collaborative regional short course, such as the existing Master's student short course convened annually by Curtin University (Australia) and partners on *International Relations in the Indian Ocean Region*. Different combinations of UNIOR members could be involved in different short courses so that a range of students have the opportunity to participate in one of the collaborative courses during their studies (these could also be linked to the IORA Priority Themes and/or SDGs). Each course might have a maximum of 25 students, as well as teaching staff from the universities involved. The courses may run for 10-14 days and annual delivery could rotate around the Network. Funding for the short courses would need to be factored into Network budgeting.

4. UNIOR staff and student exchanges, internships, scholarships

The Network will help to facilitate regular staff and student exchanges between member universities. This may include visiting research and teaching fellowships (up to 6 months) for academic staff and postgraduate research students, professional staff exchanges for professional development and institutional capacity building (up to 6 months), and student study exchanges for up to one semester. The Network could explore the development of special travel scholarships to support student exchanges between members, as well as draw on other external funding sources and regional mobility programs. The Network could also link directly to the IORA-Nelson Mandela 'Be the Legacy' Internship Programme, for which the 'long-term objective [is] to create a strong and growing base of young people in the Indian Ocean Region that understand and support the need to safeguard an Indian Ocean that is safe, secure and develops sustainably.' Network member universities may create other incentives and support structures within their respective institutions to facilitate such regional exchanges. Selected exchange staff and students and interns could report on their experiences and outcomes at the next Forum.