



**Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA)**  
**Ministerial Conference on Women's Economic Empowerment: A Pre-**  
**requisite for Sustainable Development**  
**The Ravenala Attitude Hotel, Balaclava, Mauritius**  
**28-29 August 2018**

**TERMS OF REFERENCE FOR THE IORA WORKING GROUP  
ON WOMEN'S ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT (WGWEE)**

IORA is committed to promoting Women's Economic Empowerment (WEE). WEE was recognized as a cross-cutting issue at the 13th Council of Ministers Meeting in Perth, Australia in November 2013. Several subsequent thematics and high-level declarations have advocated for women's empowerment such as the Jakarta Concord (2017), the Padang Communiqué (2015) and Ministerial Economic Declaration (2014). Notably, on 27 October 2016 in Bali, Indonesia at the 16th Council of Ministers Meeting, the Declaration on Gender Equality and Women's Economic Empowerment was adopted. This declaration upholds important principles which recognise the empowerment of women and girls as being essential to the economic and social prosperity of IORA and crucial to the attainment of Sustainable Development Goal 5 on Gender Equality.

The IORA Action Plan sought to promote gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls by:

- i. Establishing an IORA Working Group on Women's Economic Empowerment;
- ii. Establishing a Women's Business Forum in the Indian Ocean Rim Business Forum (IORBF);
- iii. Establish cooperation with UN-Women and relevant organisations for capacity building and information exchange;
- iv. Champion initiatives to increase women's economic empowerment such as the Women's Empowerment Principles;
- v. Implement training and capacity building programs; and
- vi. Organise activities and to strengthen women's economic capacity and participation in business.

**Objectives of the WGWEE**

- i. Contribute to the promotion of gender equality in the IORA region and integrate gender as a cross-cutting issue in all the priority areas of the IORA with a particular focus on the Blue Economy;
- ii. Enhance awareness and understanding of the role and contribution of women entrepreneurs, innovators and leaders to economic development in the IORA region;
- iii. Create an enabling environment in which women and girls can reach their full economic potential through increased social awareness, quality education and provision of economic opportunities; Promote dialogue, the exchange of good practices, policies and programs that provide support to women;
- iv. Link up with other Working Groups with a view to create a coherent platform for mainstreaming gender in IORA programs and activities;
- v. Engage with international, regional, national and specialized organizations for research and gender disaggregated data collection;

- vi. Strengthen partnerships with regional and international organisations such as UN Women, UN Development Program, International Trade Center, International Labour Organisation, other organisations and the private sector; and
- vii. Report on the progress of our work at each annual IORA Council of Ministers Meeting.

### **Membership**

It is proposed that the lead representative is a senior official preferably from the Gender/Women's Ministries with other participants coming from civil society, business and other areas. Participation by men and women alike is encouraged. Engagement with the other IORA Working Groups will also enable women's empowerment to be integrated across IORA's priority areas.

## **Structure and Operation of the WGWE**

### **Chair**

- i. Any Member State can volunteer to coordinate and/or host (or co-coordinate/co-host) an IORA body for two years. Dialogue partners should be encouraged to co-host meetings of the working groups.
- ii. The Coordinator and/or Host of each body will be responsible for arranging, coordinating, and hosting its meetings.
- iii. Close consultation between the Coordinator and/or Host and the IORA Chair will be required to consult on the agendas and activities. The IORA Chair and Coordinator and/or Host of the Body will be designated as Co-Chairs of the body.
- iv. Selection of the Coordinator and/or Host will be selected on a consensus basis following IORA norms and traditions. Where more than one Member State offers to coordinate and/or host the body, the body will deliberate through consensus processes and make a recommendation – including that more than one country can coordinate/host/chair. This in turn will be endorsed by the CSO for approved by the Council of Ministers, as the apex body of the Association.

### **Agendas and Reporting**

- i. The Coordinator and/or Host of the body, in collaboration with the Secretariat and IORA Chair, will prepare an agenda for each meeting.
- ii. Additionally, all Member States can propose agenda items through the IORA Secretariat at least two months before each scheduled meeting.
- iii. A clear demarcation on the agendas and activities of **each body** should be clearly understood to reduce duplication.
- iv. The IORA Chair will review the agenda before the Secretariat circulates the meeting documents to all Member States at least four weeks prior to the scheduled meeting.
- v. The Coordinator and/or Host of the body and the IORA Secretariat will prepare a record (report) of the meeting and its recommendations and circulate via email within one month of the conclusion of the meeting.

### **Meeting Procedures**

- i. IORA rules of procedure will apply for the functioning of each body.
- ii. **Each body is encouraged to set realistic objectives and strategic implementation** through a work plan or narrowed sectoral priorities to achieve better focus and outcomes.
- iii. Member States will nominate their representatives through their respective National Focal Point.
- iv. Significant efforts should be made to ensure qualified and influential participants attend meetings to enable substantive discussions and actions. A lead representative should be clearly identified for each body, along with up to six additional participants, including as appropriate different line ministries, private sector, academia, and civil society. Member States are encouraged to ensure gender parity in their delegation compositions reflecting the Association's commitment to women's empowerment.

- v. An annual report by each body shall be presented to the annual CSO meeting by its Coordinator and/or Host in consultation with the IORA Chair. The report should include among others a set of actionable recommendations for the future and communicate on achievements.
- vi. Each body will hold at least one meeting annually. It is recommended this is held at least eight weeks before a CSO meeting to enable its outcomes report to be circulated to all Member States in time for the Council of Ministers (COM) meeting.
- vii. Dialogue Partners will be encouraged to participate actively in the meetings as well as on specific projects and activities. Following IORA practices, Dialogue Partners can participate in the discussions of meetings, but not in the decision-making processes.
- viii. Other observers, experts and special invitees could be invited by the IORA Secretary General, in consultation with the IORA Chair, to attend meetings as determined by Member States to provide diverse viewpoints and share expert knowledge.
- ix. IORA's institutions and agencies will share information to facilitate synergies and coordinated regional action to drive forward IORA's priority areas and cross-cutting priorities.
- x. Each body may consider ad hoc sub groups to deal with specific topics when required, upon consensus of all stakeholders.
- xi. Intersessional communication will be through a dedicated email group coordinated by the IORA Secretariat. Wherever possible, to reduce costs, meetings of the body may also be conducted via teleconference or videoconference.

### **Funding arrangements**

- i. All financial implications for administrative and logistical arrangements would be borne by the Chair of each body or through the Special Fund.
- ii. Voluntary commitments and contributions by Member States, Dialogue Partners and Development Agencies and other Partners are also welcome.

### **Venue and Frequency**

Each Coordinator and/or Host will decide on the tentative dates for the meetings, which will take place at least once a year. The venue for meetings may be decided by the Coordinator and/or Host of the body or any other Member State that wishes to host meetings in collaboration with the Chair. Arrangements for each meeting will be the responsibility of the Member State hosting the meeting. The Secretariat may assist the host country with the arrangements as required.

### **Language**

IORA's working language is English.

### **Hospitality**

- i. Accommodation and transportation for delegates and Secretariat officials attending the meeting may be offered at the discretion of the host country.
- ii. All other costs relating to the meeting venue and other administrative arrangements will be borne by the hosting Member State.

### **Responsibilities of IORA Secretariat**

- i. Providing administrative and logistical support including guidance on IORA meetings and maintaining archives and files.
- ii. Preparing agendas and reports of the body in the prescribed formats.
- iii. Creating and maintaining a database of representatives designated by the National Focal Points, a dedicated email group for working communications of the body and a network of subject-specific stakeholders.
- iv. Facilitating information sharing between participants, including circulating agendas and outcome reports to Member States and Dialogue Partners.
- v. Overseeing the implementation of the recommendations by seeking and sharing regular progress reports.