



# 10<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Working Group on Women’s Economic Empowerment Report

**Date: 21 January 2025**

Venue: Virtual

Time: 11:00 – 12:30 (Tehran Time) / 11:30 – 13:00 (Mauritian time)

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## 1. OPENING SESSION

### 1.1 Welcome Address by the Chair (Islamic Republic of Iran)

The Chair, Dr. Fatemi Haji Agha, International Affairs Advisor in the Vice Presidency for Women and Family Affairs of I.R.I., welcomed the delegates to the 10<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Working Group on Women's Economic Empowerment (WGWEE). She further encouraged Member States to actively participate in the discussions for a constructive outcome and highlighted the need for collaboration.

### 1.2 Remarks by the Secretariat

The Director for Women's Economic Empowerment (WEE), Ms. Zelda Vrolick, referred to the progress made under the WEE workplan, since the 9<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the WGWEE held in April 2024. She commended the efforts of Member States in working towards achieving the goals under the WGWEE and further reiterated the Secretariat's support to assist Member States.

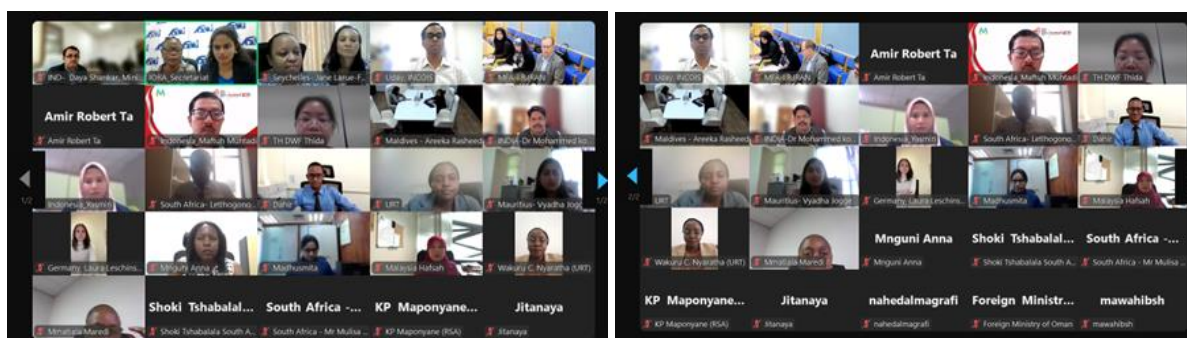
Delegates were further informed about the proposal to establish a Women's Business Forum under the IORA Business Forum (IORBF), which is in accordance with the Terms of Reference of the WGWEE. The proposal was first tabled at the 32<sup>nd</sup> Meeting of the Indian Ocean Business Forum Meeting (IORBF) on 20 January 2025. Accordingly, she informed delegates that the Secretariat will proceed to the draft the Concept Note on the Women Business Forum, to set parameters and timeline for its establishment.

She concluded by inviting delegates to send proposals for new projects and requested MS to update the meeting on the progress made regarding activities under their leadership.

### 1.3 Adoption of the Agenda

The agenda was proposed and adopted without any amendment.

## 1.4 Family Photo



## 2. WORKING GROUP SESSION

### 2.1 Introducing the initiatives of IRI (The chair of WGWE)

The Chair commenced by referring to the activities Iran is planning to implement as the Chair of the WGWE namely:

1. **A Conference on Women and Good Governance:** It was explained that a committee has been put in place in Iran that will work on the content and schedule of the event and that the Concept Notes, once completed, will be shared with Member States for input.
2. **Periodic Meetings with IORA Member States' Diplomatic missions in Tehran:** The Chair highlighted that these meetings take place with a view to promote collaboration within IORA with a focus on WEE. A report of these meetings will be shared with the Secretariat for circulation to Member States (*Attached-Annex 3*).
3. **Exhibition on Women's Achievements: Skills and Products.** It was emphasized that this activity is aimed at displaying women's skills, further promoting women-owned brands, and serving as a platform between producers and potential clients.

Additional information related to the concept, scope, and schedules will be shared with the Secretariat for onward transmission to Member States.

### 2.2 Review of the WGWE Workplan (2024-2025)



### 2.2.1 Update on activities undertaken by Member States

**The Chair** invited Member States to update the meeting regarding activities under the workplan.

No updates were received.

### 2.2.2 Amendment to the Workplan (if any)

**The Chair** invited Member States to update the meeting regarding activities under the Workplan.

Regarding **Activity 4.3**: *“Technical capacity building workshop for Marine Research and Planning with emphasis on Marine Biotechnology as potential avenue for development”*, the meeting was informed that after consultation with the line Ministry, the Indian National Centre for Ocean Information Services will be conducting training in 2025. Accordingly, Dr Udhay Bhaskar explained that the institution has an International Training Centre for Operational Oceanography in Hyderabad, with a unit focussed on Fisheries Management, which hosts national and international training. They will therefore design a tailor-made training programme for women in this area. It was further advised that the Concept Note will be submitted to the Secretariat for circulation to the MS and that the project will be implemented in 2025.

As regards, **Activity 4.1**: *“Identify joint ventures that could be implemented by the two WGs (WGWE and WGBE)”*, South Africa informed the meeting that once the Concept Note has been finalized it will be communicated to the Secretariat for onward transmission to Member States for input.

Regarding **Activity 4.4**: *“Workshop on Scientific and Technological Innovation for Higher Added Value in Food Production Chain and Activity 4.5: Implement ways forward from the research study on women in the Blue Economy undertaken by HSRC”*, **South Africa** informed the meeting that they would like the activity to remain open for further discussions with partners, while they consult national departments on these activities. This will enable them to come forward with a concrete proposal.

**South Africa** enquired about the timeline for the implementation of activities 4.4 and 4.5 and whether it could be rescheduled to 2026/2027.

The **Secretariat** responded that it was preferable that project proposals that were already on the pipeline are implemented within a specific timeline, but if not feasible, to be scheduled in 2026. The participants were reminded to prioritize the submission of Concept Notes that will enable the Secretariat to render assistance where needed.



About **Activity 4.2**: “*Hold in-depth capacity building programme (consideration could be given to a Training of Trainers Programme) on the gender implications of the priority areas of the IORA*”, **Mauritius** informed the meeting that it would like to host the program but lack funding and will request support from the Secretariat.

**Mauritius** highlighted the courtesy call paid by IORA Director for Women’s Economic Empowerment on the Honourable Minister of Gender and Family Welfare of Mauritius and proposed three new projects, namely:

1. The Gender Information System, a digital platform for data and statistics on Gender Mainstreaming and Gender-responsive actions, which will inform gender-responsive policies for a more equitable and just society.
2. Digital Women Empowerment and Entrepreneurship Centers, aimed at empowering women entrepreneurs and foster a culture of empowering women economically.
3. An Information System for Women Entrepreneurs.

**Mauritius** further requested the Secretariat to provide technical and financial support for these projects.

**The Secretariat** took note of the Mauritius proposals and informed that it will extend assistance on receipt of the Concept Notes and will facilitate the Special Fund Application process. Accordingly, the Secretariat invited Mauritius for further discussions in this regard.

**The Chair** invited Member States for further input if any.

### **3. CLOSING SESSION**

#### **3.1 Closing Remarks by the Chair of the WGWE**

**The Chair** thanked all delegates for their participation in the meeting and informed that it will communicate further developments regarding the activities to Member States, through the Secretariat.

**Mr Behzad Azarsa, Iran’s** IORA Senior Official from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, conveyed his appreciation for the large number of delegates present at the meeting and highlighted that it reflected the eagerness of Member States for Women’s Economic Empowerment. He informed that Iran looks forward to hosting the next WGWE meeting in person as well as active participation of Member States. Further information, in this regard would be communicated through diplomatic channels.



**Mr. Behzad Azarsa** extended his appreciation to the Secretariat and a warm welcome to the Secretary General, H.E Sanjiv Ranjan. He further invited Member States to host activities in person, as it enhances cooperation, and allows delegates to share their commonalities and greater impact.

He further welcomed the input from the Iranian delegation regarding the women's business forum in the 32nd IORBF Meeting and looked forward to the outcome.

**The Chair** thanked all delegates for their participation and the Secretariat for coordinating the meeting. She expressed her desire to meet with all delegates, in person, at the 11<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the WGWE.

**The Secretariat** thanked the Chair for leading the discussions and reiterated Secretariat's availability to assist Member States in the drafting of Concept Notes.

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# ANNEX 1: FINAL AGENDA

INDIAN OCEAN RIM ASSOCIATION

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### **Final Agenda**

#### **1. OPENING SESSION**

- 1.1 Welcome Address by the Chair (Islamic Republic of Iran)
- 1.2 Remarks by the Secretariat
- 1.3 Adoption of the Agenda
- 1.4 Family Photo

#### **2. WORKING GROUP SESSION**

- 2.1 Introducing the initiatives of IRI (The chair of WGWEE)
- 2.2 Review of the WGWEE Workplan (2024-2025)
  - 2.2.1 Update as to activities undertaken by Member States
  - 2.2.2 Amendment to the Workplan (if any)

#### **3. CLOSING SESSION**

- 3.1 Closing Remarks by the Chair of the WGWEE

## ANNEX 2: PARTICIPANTS LIST

	<b>Member State/Dialogue Partners</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Full name</b>	<b>Position</b>
1	India	Ministry of Women and Child Development	Daya Shankar	Director
2	India	FDC	Dr. Mohamed Koya	
3	India	Indian National Centre for Ocean Information Services	Dr. Madhusmita	
4	India	Indian National Centre for Ocean Information Services	Dr. Udhay Baskar	
5	Indonesia	Ministry of Women's Empowerment and Child Protection	Maftuh Muhtadi	Policy Planner
6	Indonesia	Ministry of Women Empowerment and Child Protection	Yasmin Zafira	Associate Planner
7	Indonesia	Ministry of Women's Empowerment and Child Protection	Jitanaya Kumoro Prameswari	internship
8	Iran	Iran Vice Presidency for Women and Family Affairs	Dr. Fatemi Haji Agha	Advisor/Chair
9	Iran	Iran Vice Presidency for Women and Family Affairs	Ms. Elham Aziznasiri	International Affairs Expert
10	Iran	Ministry of Foreign Affairs	Mr. Behzad Azarsa	Director for ECO and Multilateral Economic Organizations
11	Iran	Ministry of Foreign Affairs	Ms. Somayeh Karbakhsh Ravari	Senior Expert
12	Madagascar	Ministere De La Population Et Des Solidarites	Tata-Johasy Stephanie Andrea	Chef De Service Egalite Femmes-Hommes
13	Maldives	Ministry of Social and Family Development	Aminath Areeka Rasheed	Senior Social Protection Officer
14	Mauritius	Ministry of Gender Equality and Family Welfare	Vyadha Joggesser-Balgobin	Family Welfare and Protection Officer
15	Oman	Ministry of Social Development	Nahed Said Salim Al-Majrafi	International Relations Specialist
16	Oman	Foreign Ministry of Oman		
17	Seychelles	Family Department, Ministry of Youth Sports and Family	Mrs. Jane Larue	Director General Research and Policy Planning (Gender and Population)



18	South Africa	DIRCO	Lethogonolo Mashilo	Assistant Director
19	South Africa		KP Maponyane	
20	South Africa	Department of Women, Youth Person, and Disabilities	Mulisa Magidi	Director - International Relations
21	South Africa	Department of Women, Youth Person, and Disabilities	Welhemina Tshabalala	Deputy Director General
22	South Africa	Department of Women, Youth Person, and Disabilities	Mawahibsh	
23	South Africa	Department of Women, Youth Person, and Disabilities	Mmatlala Maredi	
24	South Africa	Department of Women, Youth Person, and Disabilities	Mmguni Anna	
25	Tanzania	Ministry Of Foreign Affairs and East African Cooperation	Miriam Ntuah	Foreign Service Officer
26	Tanzania	Ministry Of Foreign Affairs and East African Cooperation	Rehema Hassan Jarufu	Foreign Service Officer II
27	Tanzania	Ministry of Community Development, Gender, Women and Special Groups	Hanipher Kilua	Principal Community Development Officer
28	Tanzania	Ministry of Community Development, Gender, Women and Special Groups	WAKURU CHRISTOPHER NYARATHA	SCDO
29	Thailand	Department of Woman's Affairs and Family Development	Ms. Nongluk Termarbsri	Social Development Officer, Practitioner Level
30	Thailand	MSODHS Department of Women Affairs and Family Development	Jaruwit Sukprasert	Foreign Affairs Assistant
31	Thailand	MSDHS Department of Women Affairs and Family Development	Sonthariya Netirungsiwatchara	Chief of International Cooperation Group
32	Germany	German Federal Foreign Office	Laura Leschinski	Desk Officer Indian Foreign and Security Policy, IORA Focal Point
33	IORA Secretariat	Women's Economic Empowerment (WEE) Directorate	Ms. Zelda Vrolick	Director



34	IORA Secretariat	Women's Economic Empowerment (WEE) Directorate	Ms. Selvana Mootien	Programme Officer
35	[Unknown]		Amir Robert Ta	
36	[Unknown]		Dahir	

## ANNEX 3: REPORT OF THE MEETING WITH IORA AMBASSADORS' RESIDENT IN IRAN

The first meeting with IORA Ambassadors residing in Iran (Japan, Indonesia, and South Africa) was held on Wednesday, February 21, 2024, at the IRI Ministry of Cultural Heritage, Tourism, and Handicrafts.



This event was organized by the International Relations Department of the Vice Presidency for Women and Family Affairs in collaboration with the Ministry of Cultural Heritage, Tourism, and Handicrafts. The meeting was held in line with the Vice Presidency's mission as the chair of the WEE Working Group, aiming to represent the capabilities of Iranian women to the Member States and develop and strengthen cooperation.

At first, the ambassadors visited different Research Center sections, attracting significant attention and praise from the guests. Then, an official meeting was held. Dr. Karimi, the Director General of the International Relations Department of the Vice Presidency and the WEE Working Group chair, outlined the Islamic Republic of Iran's efforts in cooperation with the IORA Secretariat. She also introduced the main plans and programs of the Vice Presidency for Women and Family Affairs during the new chairship of Iran on this working group and welcomed cooperation with Member States and Dialogue Partners to strengthen the working groups' programs and capacities.

The Ambassadors expressed their appreciation for Iran's remarkable activities and Dr. Karimi's comprehensive report. They also emphasized that women's empowerment is one of their respective countries' most important policies and strategies. They also underscored the significance of developing bilateral cooperation regarding women and family affairs.



It is worth mentioning that the Advisor on Women and Family Affairs at the Ministry of Cultural Heritage, Tourism, and Handicrafts, the Head of the IORA Regional Centre for Science and Technology Transfer, and the Head of the International Network for Probiotic Industrial Research (affiliated with the RCSTT), were present at the meeting and shared their opinions, too.