

# THE BIG BLUE: REGIONAL NETWORKS ACROSS THE INDIAN OCEAN

The Department of International Relations and Cooperation (DIRCO) is preparing for South Africa's role as Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA) deputy chair to Indonesia from 2015 to 2017, and its position as IORA chair from 2017 to 2019. *Narnia Bohler-Muller* tells us more about the focus on regional collaboration across the Indian Ocean rim and the Blue Economy.

As South Africa is finding her feet as a fully integrated member of the international community post-1994 as a member of the United Nations, African Union, India-Brazil-South Africa Dialogue Forum (IBSA), and most recently, the Brazil, Russia, India, China, South Africa (BRICS) association, among others, it is necessary to complement these complex collaborative global and regional relationships with research partnerships that enhance the sharing of knowledge and skills.

## HSRC collaboration

In this regard the HSRC has begun contributing to the international agenda, in particular to the establishment of the BRICS Research Centre, as well as being a member of the BRICS Think Tanks Council (BTTC) that advises leaders on issues related to the BRICS vision and strategy, and common research agendas.

Another initiative the HSRC has embarked upon with the Department of International Relations and Cooperation (DIRCO) is to begin preparing for South Africa's chairing of the Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA) from 2017 to 2019. South Africa will be IORA deputy chair to Indonesia from 2015 to 2017.

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## The importance of developing the Blue Economy

The IORA 'Perth principles' provide guidance for the peaceful, productive and sustainable use of the Indian Ocean and its resources. Paragraph 4 of the Perth Declaration states that:



The Indian Ocean Rim region is home to nearly one-third of the world's population and is of high economic significance.



'IORA is the lead body for promoting regional collaboration across the Indian Ocean rim. We will take forward IORA's role in addressing the development, security, resource and environmental challenges that face our region through policy-oriented consideration of opportunities and risks and high-quality projects...'

For South Africa, the area that we are most well placed to develop is that of the Blue Economy. This priority is in line with the South African government's adoption earlier this year of the first phase of Operation Phakisa – a mechanism to fast-track the deliverables of the National Development Plan (NDP). Phase one focuses on the ocean's potential for sustainable economic growth and human development.

The Indian Ocean Rim region is home to nearly one-third of the world's population and is of high economic significance due to its strategic location. Half of the world's trade travels through this region. In addition, the region possesses a

variety of natural resources that are vital for the well-being of its inhabitants, trade and environmental stability. IORA has begun to place more emphasis on growing the Blue Economy in a sustainable and inclusive manner.

Growth through the Blue Economy is a long-term strategy to support sustainable and inclusive growth in the marine and maritime sectors. The Indian Ocean is a valuable resource that is a main driver for the Indian Ocean Rim economies, and holds great potential for innovation and job creation.

As the economic potential of the Indian Ocean and its rim has not yet been fully realised, it is vital to focus on unpacking the meaning and value of the Blue Economy in ensuring sustainable growth in the region through the co-operation of the IORA member states. South Africa can make her mark by leading this initiative that is fortuitously in line with the NDP.

## The economic potential of the Indian Ocean and its rim has not yet been fully realised.

### Securing our seas and ocean food sources

Two focus areas could be maritime safety and security, and aquaculture and food security.

The first priority area relates to a number of risks and threats IORA member states face: territorial maritime disputes; maritime piracy; terrorism against ships, ports and other critical infrastructure; organised sea-borne crime and trafficking; and potential impacts of natural or man-made disasters or extreme events. These risks and threats affect national security and are detrimental to peaceful trade in the region.

Aquaculture relates to farming finfish, shellfish and aquatic plants. It is one of the world's fastest growing food sectors and already provides the planet with nearly half of all the fish consumed globally. It is therefore important to develop knowledge around this area, especially as it relates to food security – a major problem facing Africa in particular.

Important research questions deserve further investigation. These relate to the effectiveness of regional co-operation and governance; the applicability and role of existing regional institutions in addressing socioeconomic challenges; relationships within, among and beyond regions (bilateral and multilateral relationships) as well as the role of the United Nations; and the legal regimes that govern the oceans and seas.

Clearly this is a huge opportunity for the HSRC to continue contributing to the global good in ways that simultaneously enhance national interests. Read more about the HSRC's involvement in IORA research in NewsRoundup on page 3. ■

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# UNPACKING THE TRUE POTENTIAL OF LIMPOPO'S TOURISM INDUSTRY

A new study has found that tourism in Limpopo contributes significantly to the national and provincial economies of South Africa, with more than 5% to Limpopo's economy and 3% to the national economy. *Selma Karuaihe, Nthabiseng Tsoanamatsie, Lebogang Mashile and Maria Molokomme* relate the key findings.

The study was compiled by the HSRC with the aim of measuring the actual contribution of the tourism sector, which is not normally measured as a clearly-defined industry but rather treated as a critical economic sector based on the value it adds to other sectors of the economy.

Its objectives included establishing the current composition of the tourism industry in Limpopo; the ways in which tourism contributed to provincial and national economies; the types of available attractions and tourism packages; its B-BBEE compliance; factors that hindered the diversification of tourism; threats to the tourism industry and other potential areas of development.

### Study methods

The research team conducted face-to-face interviews using a structured questionnaire with either the owners or the managers of the tourism establishments and tourist attractions, and with key informants. The key informants were mainly experts from government departments dealing with tourism initiatives, district municipalities and the Limpopo tourism agencies in the respective districts.

### Findings in a nutshell

- Empirical findings from the study supported secondary data that the tourism sector contributed to the national as well as the provincial economies.
- The tourism sector accounted for more than 5% of Limpopo's economy, measured in terms of tourism spending as a percentage of GDP<sup>1</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> Measured in nominal/current prices