IORA Council of Ministers – Delhi Communique 2026 Charts the Indian Ocean Agenda

Prelims: *Current events of National and International Importance | International Relations*

Why in News?

*India hosted **the 25th Council of Ministers (COM) meeting of the Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA)** in New Delhi on November 27, 2026, chaired by External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar; it adopted the Delhi Communique 2026.*

About IORA

- **Origin** – Launched in 1997 as the Indian Ocean Rim Initiative; renamed IORA in 2013.
- **Headquarters** – Ebene, Mauritius.
- **Members** – 23 member states, including India, Australia, Indonesia, Iran, Oman, Singapore, South Africa, Thailand and the UAE, plus 12 dialogue partners.
- **Leadership** – India is Chair for 2025–27 under the theme ***"Innovation, Openness, Resilience and Adaptability";*** Mauritius is Vice Chair.
- **Mandate** – Promote sustainable growth and balanced regional development through cooperation.
- **Functions** – Six priority areas: maritime safety and security; trade and investment facilitation; fisheries management; disaster risk management; academic, science and technology cooperation; tourism and cultural exchanges. Blue economy and women's economic empowerment cut across them.



Outcomes in Delhi

- **Centres of Excellence** – An IORA Digital Innovation Hub at CSIR-NIO, Goa (ocean sciences), and a Centre of Excellence in Maritime Law at Rashtriya Raksha University, Gujarat.
- **Funding** – India announced a USD 500,000 grant for IORA's institutional and financial capacity-building.
- **Next** – Ministers discussed IORA's Action Plan for 2028–32.

Significance for India

- **MAHASAGAR** – IORA is a platform for ***India's MAHASAGAR vision***, the successor to SAGAR.
- **Trade** – About 95% of India's trade by volume moves through the Indian Ocean.
- **Strategy** – It deepens ties with Africa, West Asia and Southeast Asia while balancing China's presence.

Challenges

- Limited funds and a small secretariat; consensus-based decisions; no hard-security mandate; overlap with IONS, BIMSTEC and the Colombo Security Conclave; and piracy, illegal fishing and climate risks.

Way Forward

- Fund the Action Plan 2028–32, operationalize the new Centres of Excellence, link blue economy and maritime security work with other forums, and widen engagement with dialogue partners.

Reference

PIB | IORA Ministers Endorse India Proposals for Centres of Excellence

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