# IORA summit, 2017

## Why in news?

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Ministers and members of delegates met at the Council of Ministers Meeting at Indian Ocean Rim Association summit in Jakarta, Indonesia.

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## IORA:

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- The **Indian Ocean Rim Association** (IORA), formerly known as the Indian Ocean Rim Initiative and Indian Ocean Rim Association for Regional Cooperation (IOR-ARC), is an international organisation consisting of coastal states bordering the Indian Ocean.
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- The Association comprises **21 member states and 7 dialogue partners, the Indian Ocean Tourism Organisation and the Indian Ocean Research Group has observer status.**
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## Objectives:

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- To promote sustainable growth and balanced development of the region and member states
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- To focus on those areas of economic cooperation which provide maximum opportunities for development, shared interest and mutual benefits
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- To promote liberalisation, remove impediments and lower barriers towards a freer and enhanced flow of goods, services, investment, and technology within the Indian Ocean rim.
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## What is the scope of IORA?

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- Realists will concede that IORA is not yet a credible regional institution.
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- Yet, they would also acknowledge that its existence is a reminder of the untapped potential of Indian Ocean regionalism.
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- Pragmatists will insist that the IORA's success would depend, to a large extent, upon what the middle powers of the Indian Ocean littoral, like Indonesia, Australia and India, can do.
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## Importance of IORA to India:

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- It was India that took the diplomatic initiative at the beginning of this decade to revive the dilapidated idea of Indian Ocean regionalism.
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- That move suggested that Delhi's sea-blindness was finally giving way to a belated recognition of the nation's maritime imperative.
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- India's growing sea-borne trade and a historic power shift in the Indian Ocean compelled Delhi to pay greater attention to securing a sustainable regional order in the vast littoral.
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## What are the priority areas for India?

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- As it began to reinvest in Indian Ocean regionalism, the Indian Ocean forum identified some priority areas, including **maritime safety and security, trade and investment facilitation, fisheries management, disaster risk management, and promotion of tourism.**
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- If the new found interest in Delhi put the IORA back on the regional agenda, Australia that took the baton from India in 2013 as the chair of the forum

gave it a new name and fresh energy.
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## Jakarta summit:

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- Jakarta, which took over from Canberra in 2015, deserves credit for hosting the first ever summit of the forum.
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- One of the main outcomes is expected to be a “Jakarta Accord” that will define a broad framework to promote peace and prosperity in the Indian Ocean.
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- The leaders are also likely to identify an action plan of specific steps that could be implemented in the near term.
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- The summit is also likely to approve an agreement to strengthen counter-terrorism cooperation in the littoral.
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## What are the challenges ahead?

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- The ideas of regional and global integration that held sway since the turn of the 1990s has taken some beating amidst the resurgence of the dark forces of de-globalisation in the West.
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- America, which had guaranteed the regional security order after the withdrawal of the British from the littoral in the late 1960s looks terribly distracted.
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- Internal turbulence in the littoral, especially in the Middle East, has unleashed forces of violent extremism that bring anarchy and instability.
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- **While Indonesia, Australia and other middle powers are important players in the Indian Ocean, their regionalist priorities are elsewhere**.
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- As the largest economy and biggest military power, it is largely up to India to shape the future of Indian Ocean regionalism.
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## What are the obstacles for India?

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- At the time of Independence, India was at the heart of trade and capital flows across the Indian Ocean, deeply connected to the rest of the littoral through multiple corridors, and the very centre of regional security management.
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- India marginalised itself from the region’s economic and security dynamics due to its inward oriented policies.
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- By the time it came back to into the play in the new millennium, it finds huge obstacles for reclaiming the regional leadership of the littoral.
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- The rise of China has meant that Beijing has become a powerful economic force in the Indian Ocean. It has the resources and the will to develop regional infrastructure and connectivity.
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- In contrast, India’s economic liberalism is too weak to let it drive regional integration.
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- India cannot match the resources, financial or institutional, that Beijing brings to bear on Indian Ocean connectivity.
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- Its political class remains hesitant about building coalitions with other powers to improve India’s regional position.
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- Delhi’s defence establishment appears utterly unprepared to build real military partnerships in the littoral.
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### Source: The Indian Express

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