

World Maritime Day Webinar on Indian Ocean Framework Underwater Domain Awareness (UDA) framework for Safe, Secure, Sustainable Growth for All in the Tropical Waters of the Indian Ocean Region (IOR) - 26 Sep 2024

The Indo-Pacific Strategic Space has become the de facto theatre for global power play in the 21st century. The Indo part of the Indo-Pacific has attained strategic interest due to its political sensitivity and the economic potential. More and more global powers are maintaining their strategic assets in the Indian Ocean Region (IOR) and ensuring enhanced domain awareness. The Indo-Pacific by definition is the tropical waters of the Indian Ocean and the Pacific Ocean. The tropical waters provide rich biodiversity and thus high population density as well, making it politically sensitive. The unique acoustic propagation of the tropical waters, makes sonar deployment extremely challenging due to massive degradation of performance. The sonars designed and developed during the Cold War era in the temperate and the polar region, suffer over 60% degradation, when deployed in the tropical waters of the IOR. The developing nations in the region are not able to prioritize spending on underwater technology development, given their socio-economic priorities.

The strategic dependence on the west for technology and knowhow has become the biggest bottleneck for sustainable blue economy and climate change risk management. Overstating of the security perspective has ensured continued dependence on the extra-regional powers at a very high cost to socio-economic and socio-cultural growth. The nations in the region boast of rich civilizational heritage dating back to over 10,000 years, however the west driven modern ways seem to be completely undermining the indigenous knowledge and practices. The Underwater Domain Awareness (UDA) needs to be prioritized with a cohesive framework that deals with policy & technology intervention along with acoustic capacity & capability building. The demography of the region demands meaningful engagement of the aspirational youth along with economic growth and prosperity. The strategic security initiative has to be inclusive to ensure the blue economy, sustainability & climate change and science & technology are all integrated into one holistic framework.

The UDA framework proposed by the Maritime Research Center (MRC), encourages pooling of resources and synergizing of efforts by the stakeholders and also the nations in the IOR and beyond. The UDA framework will ensure digital transformation to deal with the tropical challenges & opportunities in an optimal manner, particularly for the Global South with limited resources and competing socio-economic priorities. An integrated framework with five pillars, including research, innovation, skilling, knowledge and policy to ensure nuanced transformation. The Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA) could prioritize UDA framework and work towards capacity & capability building for ensuring safe, secure, sustainable growth for all in the IOR. The IOR regional partnership has an opportunity to consider a holistic UDA framework to encourage pooling of resources & synergizing of efforts. The digital transformation could be a game changer and will allow optimal deployment of resources for a larger strategic objective. India could be a formidable partner given its talent pool of young and aspirational human resource. Local site-specific field experimental R&D will be critical. More about the UDA framework is available at: <https://udafoundation.in/>.

Proposal

The Maritime Research Center (MRC), Pune in partnership with M/S NirDhwani Technology Pvt Ltd (NDT), proposes to host a webinar titled “*Underwater Domain Awareness (UDA) framework for Safe, Secure, Sustainable Growth for All in the Tropical Waters of the Indian Ocean Region (IOR)*”. The event will start at **1600 hrs IST on 26 Sep 2024**. The event will bring together strategic thinkers, experts, policy makers, academicians, researchers and stakeholders to deliberate on this important issue and find nuanced way forward. A detailed report will be generated at the end of the webinar and circulated to the concerned authorities and influencers across the two countries and beyond.

This event is being hosted on the occasion of World Maritime Day and the theme for this year is Navigating the Future – Safety First. Although World Maritime Day is driven by the International Maritime Organization (IMO) and more focused on the Shipping Industry, however we would like to broaden it to a larger marine and freshwater system management perspective. The IORA has become the focus of geopolitical and geostrategic power play, but large number of gaps exist that needs to be addressed.

Program

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| 1600 hrs | - | Introductory Remarks on the UDA framework.
Dr (Cdr) Arnab Das, Founder & Director MRC, India. |
| 1615 hrs | - | Opening Remarks by Shri W Bharat Singh, Director at the
Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change. |
| 1635 hrs | - | Key Note Address on Sustainability Challenges & Opportunities
Dr. Timothy Curtis, Director UNESCO India Cluster. |
| 1650 hrs | - | Remarks on Sustainable Blue Economy
Shri P K Srivastava, Sc G Ministry of Earth Sciences. |
| 1705 hrs | - | Special Intervention by Ms. Devleena Bhattacharjee,
Chief Operations Officer (COO) at ClimaCrew. |
| 1720 hrs | - | Chief Guest Remarks on Maritime Future for the IOR.
Dr. Malini V Shankar, Vice Chancellor Indian Maritime University
Former Director General Shipping. |
| 1735 hrs | - | Closing Remarks by Amb Anup Mudgal, Former Diplomat and
Member of FICCI Blue Economy Task Force. |
| 1750 hrs | - | Vote of Thanks by Shri Praful Talera,
MRC Advisor on Blue Economy. |

Convenor

Dr (Cdr) Arnab Das, Founder & Director Maritime Research Center (MRC), Pune.

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