

[World Maritime Day 2024 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

[Background](#)

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 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 is the tropical waters of the Indian Ocean and the Pacific Ocean. The tropical waters provide rich biodiversity and, thus, high population density, making it politically sensitive. The unique acoustic propagation of the tropical waters makes sonar deployment extremely challenging due to the massive performance degradation. The sonars designed and developed during the Cold War era in the temperate and polar regions suffer over 60% degradation when deployed in the tropical waters of the IOR. The developing nations in the region are not able to prioritise spending on underwater technology development, given their socio-economic priorities.

The strategic dependence on the West for technology and know-how has become the biggest bottleneck for sustainable blue economy and climate change risk management. Overstating 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 civilisational heritage dating back to over 10,000 years. However, the West-driven modern ways seem to be completely undermining Indigenous knowledge and practices. The Underwater Domain Awareness (UDA) needs to be prioritised with a cohesive framework that deals with policy & technology intervention along with acoustic capacity & capability building. The demography of the region demands the 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.

[Significance of Underwater Domain Awareness \(UDA\) and its Framework](#)

The UDA framework proposed by the Maritime Research Center (MRC) encourages the pooling of resources and synergising of efforts by the stakeholders and the nations in the IOR and beyond. The UDA framework will ensure digital transformation to optimally deal with the tropical challenges & opportunities, 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 prioritise the UDA framework and work towards capacity & capability building to ensure 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 & synergising of efforts. The digital transformation could be a game changer, allowing optimal resource deployment for a larger strategic objective. India could be a formidable partner given its talent pool of young and aspirational human resources. 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), hosted 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 started at **1600 hrs IST on 26 Sep 2024**. The event brought together strategic thinkers, experts, policymakers, academicians, researchers and stakeholders to deliberate on this crucial issue and find a nuanced way forward.

This event was 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, we tried 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 need to be addressed.

Program line-up was as follows:

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 by Dr Timothy Curtis, Director, UNESCO New Delhi Regional Office.
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 of Indian Maritime University and Former Director General Shipping.
1735 hrs	-	Closing Remarks by Amb Anup Mudgal, Former Indian Diplomat and Member of FICCI Blue Economy Task Force.
1750 hrs	-	Vote of Thanks by Shri Praful Talera, MRC Advisor on Blue Economy.

Videos of our speakers

Please find below the video presentations/keynote addresses by our speaker:

1. Dr Malini V. Shankar, Vice Chancellor of Indian Maritime University- [Link here](#)
2. Dr Tim Curtis, Director, UNESCO New Delhi Regional Office- [Link here](#)
3. Dr (Cdr) Arnab Das, Founder and Director of the MRC- [Link here](#)
4. Shri P.K. Srivastava, Scientist G, Ministry of Earth Sciences- [Link here](#)
5. Ms Devleena Bhattacharjee, Chief Operations Officer (COO), Clima Crew- [Link here](#)
6. Ambassador Anup Kumar Mudgal, Member, FICCI's Blue Economy Task Force- [Link here](#)
7. Praful Talera, MRC's Advisor on Blue Economy- [Link here](#)
8. The link to the complete program's video is- [Here](#)