

Webinar on “*Marine Spatial Planning and the UDA Framework: Navigating the Future of Safe, Secure, and Sustainable Growth in the Indian Ocean Region (IOR).*”

Being organized to mark World Maritime Day 2025
Held on September 25, 2025

Introduction

World Maritime Day, observed annually under the auspices of the International Maritime Organization (IMO), underscores the significance of the maritime sector in global trade, economic development, environmental conservation, and human security. "**Our Ocean, Our Obligation, Our Opportunity**" is IMO's World Maritime Day theme for 2025, which culminated in the celebration of World Maritime Day on 25 September 2025. In this context, **Marine Spatial Planning (MSP)** provides a strategic and integrated approach to managing maritime activities. By balancing safety, sustainability, and economic opportunity, MSP ensures that oceans remain a source of prosperity and ecological balance for future generations.

For the Indian Ocean Region (IOR), with its rich biodiversity, critical sea lanes of communication, and vulnerable coastal communities, MSP is especially vital. Integrating **Underwater Domain Awareness (UDA)** with advanced technologies such as AI, spatio-temporal mapping, and big data analytics, while also engaging local stakeholders, can enhance both safety and sustainability in line with the 2025 theme.

Background

The strategic dependence on the West for technology and know-how has become the biggest bottleneck for the sustainable blue economy and climate change risk management. This dependence has slowed progress in building a sustainable Blue Economy and tackling climate change risks. By focusing too narrowly on security, countries in the region have remained tied to external powers, often at the cost of their own socio-economic and cultural growth. Despite a rich civilizational heritage of over 10,000 years, indigenous knowledge and practices are increasingly overshadowed by Western-driven approaches. To address this imbalance, it is vital to prioritize a UDA Framework that combines policy reforms, technological innovation, and acoustic capacity-building.

The IOR's young and aspirational population must be meaningfully engaged to drive both economic prosperity and sustainable development. Security initiatives cannot stand alone; they must be integrated with the Blue Economy, climate resilience, and science & technology within a single, holistic framework. The UDA framework proposed by the Maritime Research Center (MRC) provides such an approach. It encourages resource pooling, regional collaboration, and digital transformation to overcome the tropical challenges of the Global South, where resources are often limited and socio-economic priorities are pressing. Built on five pillars—research, innovation, skilling, knowledge, and policy—this framework offers a pathway for nuanced transformation. With India's large and talented youth population, and through local, site-specific R&D and field experiments, the IOR can move towards a future that is safe, secure, and sustainable.

Proposal

The Maritime Research Center (MRC), Pune, in partnership with M/S NirDhwani Technology Pvt Ltd (NDT), hosted a webinar titled: "**Marine Spatial Planning and the UDA Framework: Navigating the Future of Safe,**

Secure, and Sustainable Growth in the Indian Ocean Region (IOR). The event was held at 1630 hours IST on 25 September 2025, coinciding with the global observance of World Maritime Day 2025. The webinar brought together strategic thinkers, domain experts, academicians, researchers, industry representatives, and community stakeholders to deliberate on the urgent need for integrated approaches in ocean governance. Particular emphasis was placed on how Marine Spatial Planning (MSP), strengthened by the Underwater Domain Awareness (UDA) framework, can contribute to maritime safety, economic prosperity, and ecological resilience in the IOR.

Here are the recorded videos from the speakers:

1. **Ambassador Mudgal, Member Blue Economy Apex Committee-** [Link here](#)
2. **Dr. (Cdr.) Arnab Das, Founder & Director, MRC-** [Link here](#)
3. **Dr Dhugal Lindsay, Senior Research Scientist, Japan Agency for Marine Earth Sciences and Technology (JAMSTEC), Tokyo-** [Link here](#)
4. **Dr. Mehul Sangekar, Senior Research Fellow, Japan Agency for Marine Earth Sciences and Technology (JAMSTEC), Tokyo-** [Link here](#)
5. **Mrs. J. Catherine, Head of Research and Publication, MRC-** [Link here](#)
6. **Mr. Shridhar Prabhuraman, Deputy Director, MRC-** [Link here](#)
7. **Here is the link to the full video:** [Link here](#)

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

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