

Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA) and Tourism in Indian Ocean Region

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Indian Ocean Rim Association for Regional Cooperation (IORARC), is an inter-governmental organization initiative of the Indian Ocean Rim countries, established in 1997 with the aim of promoting economic cooperation and social development of the Indian Ocean region, giving special attention on the expansion of trade and investment. While working as a platform for socio-economic cooperation between countries located in the Indian Ocean, promotion of sustainable tourism and cultural exchanges within the region is one of the main priority areas of IORA. Members of the association has identified that substantial economic benefits could be achieved through the enhancement of tourist linkages and marketing within the region. As states, sharing the third largest ocean of the world, IORA members have an immense opportunity to promote their rich cultural diversity through sustainable tourism with the whole world. According to the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) tourism is one of the fastest growing economic sectors in the world. Thus as an ocean based community, IORA recommends that they should strive towards regional cooperation in tourism, especially to achieve sustainable tourism growth in the region. The aim of this study is to provide critical analysis of the importance of tourism for IORA to achieve sustainable socio-economic cooperation in the Indian Ocean region. The methodology that has been followed for the study is qualitative in nature based on secondary data.

Keywords: *culture and tourism, Indian Ocean region, IORA, regional cooperation, sustainable tourism.*

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