

6th Indian Ocean Conference – IOC 2023
Peace, Prosperity, and Partnership for a Resilient Future

Geopolitics is in its most transient phase in the 21st century. The global order is rapidly evolving, power axis is shifting, and complacency of the past is making way for greater confidence in future. At the bedrock of geopolitical churning of the day lies the emergence of the Indian Ocean region (IOR) as the epicentre of strategic, military, economic and technological gravity.

The natural construct of the region has left behind global romanticism enveloping alliances of the past. The IOR has emerged as a microcosm of partnerships, collaborations, and bilateral and multilateral dependence. Home to the most promising economies, the most populous lands and the most vulnerable islands, the region is a testimony to the multifaceted challenges that governance awaits in the 21st century.

With a vast reserve of natural resources and supply chain trade routes, the IOR has become an integral part of global strategic thinking. From Europe to America and Japan to South Korea, all major powers have aligned their global strategic outreach in line with the vision of developing a Free and Open Indo-Pacific Region (FOIP).

With a vision towards mutual growth and prosperity and strengthening of the international community, the 6th Indian Ocean Conference (IOC) will bring together stakeholder nations to discuss and deliberate on the theme of “**Peace, Prosperity and Partnership for a Resilient Future**”. In light of recent global developments, the global community appreciates the expansion of resilience to go beyond economic strength and military might to include in its ambit the challenges posed by rapid climatic deterioration, and exponential rise of disruptive technologies.

Peace: While the expanse of the IOR makes it a region of infinite potential, it is the same expanse that can lead to damages of unfathomable scale. The region today is faced with not just traditional challenges of security but non-traditional challenges of bio-hazards, cyber warfare and maritime piracy. The after-effects of such a disruption are unimaginable.

Thus, maintaining peace in the region is of paramount importance to ensure the rise of a resilient future. Rise of a peaceful IOR on the principles of a rules-based order will chart a new agenda for prosperity and greater partnership in the region and beyond.

Prosperity: The IOR is pegged to rise as the most economically prosperous region of the century. It has the economies of scale, mass consumer market, and technical prowess to lead the world into an era of global affluence based on the ethos of sustainable development. The region is home to 3 of the 5 fastest growing economies of the world, 64% of the global population, and 60% of the global GDP while also accounting for 40% of the world’s oil supply and 64% of oil trade.

As two stakeholder nations of the region, both India and Bangladesh have been traditional advocates of responsible growth and development while living in harmony with nature.

Pushing forth the ethos of a lifestyle based on sustainable development, taking climate conscious decisions ranks high on the prosperity agenda of the IOR.

Partnerships: One lesson that the pandemic taught the world is the importance of collaborative approach of working. Partnerships in the IOR will thus be more forward looking and constructive in their scope. With greater innovation, ample opportunities are opening up for countries to collaborate in multiple formats on carbon planning and green financing, navigating technological hegemony, development of blue economy, rise of alternate forms of financing and collaboration on public healthcare and education.

A case in point here is the global supply chain disruption. The pandemic induces shortages at various stage of production mostly owing to understaffed but over fed ports, high freight rates and misdirected shipping containers. As the region whose waters have seen a manifold rise in the passage of shipping container traffic since 1970, building resolute and reliable partnerships will go a long way in ensuring the management of uninterrupted supply chain through the waters of the IOR.

The IOR is no more an idea based on the arithmetic of contemporary power equations, but a natural construct based on principles of inclusivity, comradery and multi-stakeholderism. As two responsible powers, India and Bangladesh too are committed to ensure the rise of a free, open, inclusive and rules based IOR.

It is in furtherance of the joint objective of our countries to reinforce a proactive and outcome-oriented approach to strengthen regional cooperation and development partnership in the region that India Foundation under the aegis of the Ministry of External Affairs of India and in association with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Bangladesh and S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies of Singapore is organising the **6th Indian Ocean Conference in Dhaka, Bangladesh on May 12-13, 2023.**