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Report of the Ad Hoc Committee on the Indian Ocean

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Note

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Chapter I

Introduction

1. By its resolution [76/17](#), the General Assembly, having taken note of the report of the Ad Hoc Committee on the Indian Ocean ([A/76/29](#)), requested the Chair of the Committee to continue his informal consultations with the members of the Committee and to report through the Committee to the Assembly at its seventy-eighth session.
2. Pursuant to that resolution, the Committee held its formal session (460th meeting) on 6 July 2023 at United Nations Headquarters. The Chair also held a number of consultations and meetings during 2023.
3. At the 460th meeting, the following delegations made statements in the general discussion under agenda item 4: Indonesia, Russian Federation, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Pakistan, Australia, China and India.
4. The Committee is composed of the following States:

(a) 43 members:

Australia	Mozambique
Bangladesh	Netherlands (Kingdom of the)
Bulgaria	Norway
Canada	Oman
China	Pakistan
Djibouti	Panama
Egypt	Poland
Ethiopia	Romania
Germany	Russian Federation
Greece	Seychelles
India	Singapore
Indonesia	Somalia
Iran (Islamic Republic of)	Sri Lanka
Iraq	Sudan
Italy	Thailand
Japan	Uganda
Kenya	United Arab Emirates
Liberia	United Republic of Tanzania
Madagascar	Yemen
Malaysia	Zambia
Maldives	Zimbabwe
Mauritius	

(b) Observers:

Nepal

South Africa

Sweden

5. Following elections to fill vacancies in the Bureau, the officers of the Committee were as follows:

Chair:

Peter Mohan Maithri Pieris (Sri Lanka)

Vice-Chairs:

Timothy O'Sullivan (Australia)

Andy Aron (Indonesia)

Inácio Virgílio Domingos (Mozambique)

Rapporteur:

Herinirina Ravelonarivo Andriamasy (Madagascar)

Chapter II

Work of the Committee in 2023

A. Adoption of the agenda

6. At its 460th meeting, the Committee adopted the agenda as contained in document [A/AC.159/L.153](#), which read as follows:

1. Opening of the session.
2. Election of officers.
3. Adoption of the agenda.
4. Report of the Chair of the Committee pursuant to paragraph 3 of General Assembly resolution [76/17](#).
5. Adoption of the report of the Committee to the General Assembly at its seventy-eighth session.
6. Other matters.

B. Report of the Chair

7. At its 460th meeting, the Committee considered agenda item 4, concerning the report of the Chair of the Committee pursuant to paragraph 3 of General Assembly resolution [76/17](#). The Chair made the following comprehensive statement on his consultations:

“With the close of the thirty-third Meeting of States Parties to the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, it is appropriate that this Ad Hoc Committee on the Indian Ocean gather to adopt a report specifically relating to the Indian Ocean region.

“The Indian Ocean region plays a pivotal role in the sustainability of global economic growth and an intense upsurge in strategic interest and competition. One of the world’s busiest and most critical trade corridors – carrying two thirds of global oil shipments and a third of bulk cargo and hosting the most critical sea lanes of communication – the Indian Ocean region directly impacts global trade and is of crucial significance to the world economy. Therefore, ensuring the safety and security and maintaining the freedom of navigation in the sea lanes is vital, not only for the region, but also for the global economy.

“The States in the region, I say, cannot afford to remain complacent about the developments taking place in the region, since it results in adverse impacts on the region’s security. The failure of the two consecutive Review Conferences of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons speaks of a deterioration of the adherence to the principles of disarmament. It is crucial for all stakeholders in the Indian Ocean region to prioritize constructive dialogue, cooperation and the pursuit of shared interest in the stability of the region.

“One cannot forget that the 1971 resolution [2832 \(XXVI\)](#) was approved by the United Nations General Assembly with a two-thirds world majority. The resolution carried the voice against the dangers of the great Power rivalry in the region.

“The second point of the proposal called upon the great Powers, in conformity with this Declaration, to enter into immediate consultations with the littoral States of the Indian Ocean with a view to, firstly, halting the further escalation and expansion of their military presence in the Indian Ocean and, secondly, eliminating from the Indian Ocean all bases, military installations and logistical supply facilities, the disposition of nuclear weapons and weapons of mass destruction and any manifestation of the great Power military presence in the Indian Ocean conceived in the context of great Power rivalry.

“Now, subsequently, at the twenty-seventh United Nations General Assembly session, this Committee introduced a three-staged proposal concerning the denuclearization of the Indian Ocean:

“Firstly, the countries of the region should commit themselves to a policy of denuclearization. Secondly, the Indian Ocean, within limits to be determined, together with the air space above and the ocean floor subjacent thereto, is hereby designated for all time as a zone of peace. And thirdly, the nuclear Powers should undertake the obligation not to deploy nuclear weapons in the Indian Ocean peace zone.

“It is a matter of regret, however, that over these decades the Ad Hoc Committee on the Indian Ocean has not been able to reach agreement on the manner of implementation of the 1971 Declaration of the Indian Ocean as a Zone of Peace, but the validity of the objectives and the vision of the Declaration still holds good and remains.

“However, regional initiatives have fared better, through the potential of platforms like the Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA) and the Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation, in fostering collaboration and advancing common goals.

“Sri Lanka will assume the Chair of IORA in the latter part of this year, for the period 2023–2025. Sri Lanka conducted the third meeting of the IORA Working Group on Maritime Safety and Security, in March 2023 in Colombo, to review the progress of the activities under the Working Group’s workplan and revisit its objectives. Sri Lanka will continue to act as the coordinating country for the Working Group until the assumption of the Group’s Chairmanship. As the Chair of IORA, Sri Lanka expects to arrange, coordinate, host and preside over the meetings of senior officials, and any other meetings mandated by the Council, on the agenda of Sri Lanka once we assume the Chair.

“The Indian Ocean region plays a pivotal role in the sustainability of global economic growth and intense upsurge, as I said, in strategic interest in regional security. Defence cooperation in the Indian Ocean region is an imperative, rather than a discretionary choice. The intricate challenges we encounter demand collective efforts, as no individual nation can confront them in isolation. The presence of ongoing territorial and maritime disputes in the region poses a risk of escalating tensions and impacting the stability of the broader Indian Ocean region, with the potential for conflict to escalate into full-scale wars and the utilization of advanced weaponry, endangering valuable regional resources.

“Defence cooperation in the Indian Ocean region is aimed at fostering, as you will know, mutual trust and enhanced security capabilities to address common security challenges. It therefore requires collaborative efforts among regional and major international actors, and by fostering partnerships and promoting collaboration we can perhaps proficiently address the intricate

security concerns that we set ourselves, acknowledging the multifaceted nature of these challenges.

“Sri Lanka, I reiterate the fact of its position, that the Indian Ocean should be a region of peace and work towards ensuring stability in the region, without allowing any ancillary pressures. Sri Lanka’s position is that the Indian Ocean region should not be used for military activities, and to fully focus on enhancing trade and economic activities.

“Finally, in complementing the work done at the regional level, the work of this Committee at the United Nations level must continue as we collectively commit ourselves to ensuring peace, security and economic growth in the region.”

8. During the meeting, an exchange of views was held on a range of issues relating to the work of the Committee.

9. The Committee reaffirmed the continuing relevance of its mandate in the light of new threats and challenges confronting the region. The importance of organizations such as the Indian Ocean Rim Association was viewed as being of particular significance in enhancing cooperation in maritime safety and security. The need for Member States to continue their engagement in the process was also emphasized, with a view to determining the future direction of the work of the Committee in order to reflect current realities and convergent interests in the region. The Committee reaffirmed its commitment to the realization of the goals of peace, security and stability in the Indian Ocean region.

10. The Committee remained convinced that the participation of all permanent members of the Security Council and the major maritime users in the work of the Committee was important and would assist the progress of a mutually beneficial dialogue aimed at developing conditions of peace, security and stability in the region.

C. Recommendations

11. The Chair was requested to continue informal consultations with the members of the Committee and to report through the Committee to the General Assembly at its eightieth session.

D. Adoption of the report of the Committee

12. At the 460th meeting, the Rapporteur introduced the draft report of the Committee.

13. At the same meeting, the Chair informed the members of the Committee of his intention to hold informal consultations concerning the text of the draft resolution to be submitted to the General Assembly at its seventy-eighth session.

14. Also at the same meeting, the Committee adopted its report.

