

INDIAN OCEAN RIM ASSOCIATION
WHALE AND DOLPHIN WATCHING WORKSHOP
“Building sustainable whale and dolphin watching tourism in the Indian Ocean region”

- Dr Saman Kelegama, Executive Director of the Sri Lanka Institute of Policy Studies
- Mr Bruno Mainini, Chair of the International Whaling Commission
- Ms Pia Simonsen, Deputy Director, IORA Secretariat
- Members of the diplomatic corps, distinguished guests, experts and delegates
- Thank you for inviting me, as the recently arrived Australian High Commissioner-designate, to the inauguration of the IORA Whale and Dolphin Watching Workshop
 - There is a good connection between my former role in Canberra, where I was the senior official responsible for Australia’s engagement with IORA, and my new role here in Colombo, at the heart of the Indian Ocean.
- I’d like to extend my thanks to the Sri Lankan Government for your generous hospitality as hosts of this workshop.
- The Australian Government has been pleased to partner with the Sri Lankan Institute of Policy Studies, the International Whaling Commission, the Murdoch University Cetaceans Research Unit and the IORA Secretariat to prepare the workshop.
- Australia completed its two year term as IORA Chair in October 2015.
- During our time as Chair, Australia sought to make IORA a stronger and more practically-oriented regional institution, building on the strong foundations laid by India as the Chair before us
 - IORA is now the premier organisation of the Indian Ocean region, with a broad-based member-led agenda.
- IORA’s program of activities and stature as a regional organisation continues to grow
 - With workshops such as this one, IORA is becoming increasingly important to its members as a forum for cooperation, information exchange and new ideas.
- Australia introduced the blue economy – the sustainable use of our marine resources – as a policy and program priority at the 2014 IORA Ministerial Retreat in Perth
 - We hoped that this concept would capture the interest of the IORA membership, and it has
 - The Blue Economy has emerged as a significant focus for IORA
 - It is a key driver for sustainable growth and development in our region.
- Australia is committed to advancing the blue economy agenda, and working with our Indian Ocean neighbours to find innovative ways to support sustainable economic growth from the ocean resources of our Indian Ocean neighbours
 - In 2014, Australia’s Foreign Minister the Hon Julie Bishop announced funding of A\$1 million through an economic development fund to support initiatives that boost growth and facilitate trade in the Indian Ocean
 - That funding includes over A\$200,000 to build sustainable whale and dolphin watching tourism in the Indian Ocean region
 - : This workshop forms part of that initiative.
- This workshop is well-timed, with whale and dolphin watching tourism an important – and growing – blue economy sector, delivering numerous potential benefits.
- In fact, whale watching is one of the world’s fastest growing nature tourism industries, worth many millions of dollars.

- Whale and dolphin watching that is managed responsibly is not only economically sustainable, but also brings important educational, environmental, scientific and other socioeconomic benefits
 - The industry supports economic growth and local businesses and brings much-needed income to coastal communities through job creation
 - The close-up, live encounters help foster an appreciation for whales and dolphins and the environment in which they live
 - It supports protection of the marine environment.
- As IORA Chair, Australia has championed the issue of women's empowerment. We know that women's empowerment is one of the most effective drivers of economic growth. No country or community, regardless of its circumstances, can reach its full potential while drawing on the ideas and talent of only half its population
 - Whale and dolphin watching tourism in Indian Ocean rim countries provides genuine opportunities to promote women's empowerment by developing women as industry leaders and champions of responsible and sustainable whale watching tourism.
- This workshop is an excellent opportunity for governmental policy makers and scientists to share experiences in managing whale and dolphin watching tourism and accessing international whale and dolphin watching expertise.
- I understand that participants in this workshop will be evaluating the need for an IORA Whale and Dolphin Watching Tourism Network and I look forward to hearing the outcomes of the workshop and the subsequent recommendations.
- On behalf of Australia, I would like to thank IORA member states for their ongoing energy and commitment.
- As Australia's Foreign Minister Julie Bishop said as part of her statement as outgoing IORA Chair in October 2015, strengthening the Indian Ocean region as a common economic and strategic resources will contribute to all of our shared prosperity — and through greater prosperity, greater regional stability
 - This workshop can play a part in that.