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BEF
BLUE ECONOMY FORUM
Fostering Dialogue on Blue Economy



CMEC
Centre for Maritime Economy
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समुद्री अर्थव्यवस्था व संयोजन केंद्र



Roundtable Discussion

Hybrid

Prospects for Maritime Connectivity and Blue Economy in the Indian Ocean: Towards Strengthening India-Africa Relations

1:00 PM - 5:30 PM | 15 May 2026

Tamarind Hall, India Habitat Centre, New Delhi

Concept Note

The bilateral relationship between India and Africa is deeply intertwined with its shared ocean and its maritime resources. India and Africa collectively share one of the most extensive and strategically significant maritime domains in the world. Africa is uniquely positioned at the confluence of three major oceans and bordered by two important seas with a coastline extending to 47,000 km and an Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) of nearly 13 million sq. km. Similarly, India also mirrors this maritime centrality with nearly 11,000 km. of coastline and 2.4 sq. km. of EEZ. With the shared ocean comes the shared challenges and opportunities for collaboration for both regions. One of the 10 key guiding principles for India's engagement with Africa is ensuring maritime cooperation and enhancing Blue Economy support. The forthcoming India–Africa Summit offers a timely opportunity to deepen such cooperation leading to strengthen partnership under the South-South framework. It will also be an occasion to showcase good governance and inclusive development initiatives developed over the last decade in the maritime and Blue Economy.

This roundtable would dwell on the challenges and potential that exists in India and Africa in the maritime sector, while focusing on the opportunities that the Blue Economy provides. The roundtable aims to deliver policy recommendations

and inputs for the forthcoming India-Africa Summit and foster cooperation among the countries. In this regard, two panel discussions are being organised to discuss the following issues:

Maritime Connectivity

India and Africa are connected by maritime civilization. Both are having rapidly expanding maritime activities, redefining the Indian Ocean as a source of global resources, trade and connectivity. Both are also active partners of G20 and other multilateral initiatives. India and some of the African countries are partners in Indo-Pacific. Anchored by the SAGAR (Security and Growth for All in the Region) and MAHASAGAR initiatives, India and Africa have been facing shared maritime challenges in the areas of connectivity and security. Key efforts include joint security exercises (AIKEYME), infrastructure development, and anti-piracy operations across the Horn of Africa and the Western Indian Ocean. India offers its role as a “net security provider” by partnering with eastern African littoral states to counter piracy, illegal trafficking, and illegal fishing. The maiden 'Africa India Key Maritime Engagement' (AIKEYME) held in Tanzania focused on strengthening maritime security, interoperability, and joint anti-piracy exercises with African maritime agencies. India has provided coastal surveillance radar systems to Mauritius, Seychelles, and Madagascar, alongside setting up listening stations to track maritime activity in the western Indian Ocean. The 2025 AIKEYME exercise and the MAHASAGAR vision signify a mature, collaborative approach focusing on shared maritime challenges, ensuring safe and open sea lanes between the two regions.

In the recent past, India and Japan worked together in placing the Asia-Africa Growth Corridor (AAGC) as driver of the economic connectivity. The Mundra-Mombasa shipping route is a vital link for trade, enabling connectivity with land-linked African nations like Uganda, South Sudan, and Rwanda. India and African countries are also working on the digitalisation of trade facilitation. India's rich experience in paperless trade facilitation offer many lessons to African countries. India's focus has expanded from the Red Sea to the Horn of Africa and the Mozambique Channel, aiming to safeguard shipping lanes and enhance cooperation with Madagascar and Mauritius.

Blue Economy and maritime cooperation involve joint hydrographic surveys, training maritime personnel, and investing in sustainable ocean resource management under the Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA) framework.

Blue Economy

India-Africa's institutional mechanism on the Blue Economy is not new and has been visible since 2008, when both regions committed to cooperate on fisheries and aquaculture. This has expanded to cooperation in coastal tourism and infrastructure in 2011. It was in 2015 that both specifically committed to promoting cooperation in the Blue/Ocean Economy. Individually, as well, the African Union's Agenda 2063 identifies the Blue Economy as a driver of transformation. Fisheries and aquaculture contribute significantly to food and nutritional security, while maritime transport underpins trade flows. Offshore renewable energy, eco-tourism, and marine biotechnology are emerging sectors with high growth potential. On the other hand, India, with its Maritime Amrit Kaal Vision 2047, Deep Ocean Mission, etc., underscores its commitment to the sustainable development of maritime resources and regional cooperation.

The Blue Economy is central to addressing shared challenges such as climate change, marine pollution, and food security, while also creating new avenues for trade, investment, and innovation for both regions.

Therefore, these two sessions would explore the possibilities of unlocking the untapped potential, while sharing the best practices and technologies from India and Africa to deepen cooperation.