



## **SUMMARY OF THE 7<sup>th</sup> INDIAN OCEAN NAVAL SYMPOSIUM SEMINAR, LA REUNION**

The 7<sup>th</sup> Indian Ocean Naval Symposium (IONS) Seminar was held in La Réunion from 28 Jun to 1 July 2021 and hosted by the *Marine Nationale* (MN) under the leadership of Admiral Pierre Vandier, Chief of the French Naval Staff.

There is little doubt that the global COVID 19 pandemic has severely impacted established routine, often tragically. The imperative to maintain the IONS work plan remains as relevant as ever in the current global context, so despite the unavoidable delays imposed in 2020, IONS must continue its important role. The current constraints to international travel precluded the attendance of a sufficient density of IONS Chiefs to achieve an authoritative quorum in the Conclave of Chiefs mid-year. Rather, the La Réunion IONS activity provided the opportunity to conduct the Seminar component of the IONS agenda (to permit formal transition of Chair from Iran to France and a review of outstanding work in progress). A separate Conclave of Chiefs event will be convened later in the year, in France to enable greater senior leader attendance.

To ensure the maximum level of involvement and to reach the largest audience, the 7<sup>th</sup> IONS Seminar was conducted as a hybrid on-line event (attendance approximately 50% in person 50% virtual). Accordingly the Seminar was physically attended by 62 delegates from 15 nations and virtually attended by various representatives from a further 12 nations.

### **Program**

The 7<sup>th</sup> IONS 2021 Seminar program was structured to first achieve the traditional formalities, including the handover of Chairmanship from Iran to France, followed by updates of IONS Working Group (IWG) progress since the last Conclave of Chiefs, through individual sessions delivered by the respective IWG Co-chairs. Each IWG functional area was further highlighted by a specific round-table panel discussion framed around contemporary issues on day two. Finally, on the last morning a short working meeting was conducted to announce plans for the scheduling of the 7<sup>th</sup> IONS Conclave of Chiefs in Paris on 15-16 November 2021 and to ensure that sufficient attention will be paid to getting the respective IONS staff work and preparations in order before then.

A list of the Presentations, Panel Discussions and IWG Updates presented is attached.

### **Key Themes**

Both the COVID crisis and global climate change have confirmed the need for strong regional cooperation. The two main themes that will guide the French Chairmanship of IONS are:

- a. to maintain and develop IONS as a lively and dynamic organisation, and
- b. to act in full accordance with the IONS Charter.

The Indian Ocean is a source of richness for the countries not only of the Indian Ocean Region but also for the rest of the world. However, at the same time it is also an area of trafficking and competition where one can observe an unprecedented rearmament taking place. In this complex context, IONS is very precious as an organisation through its commitment to contributing to peace and stability.

The threats to marine resources, the integrity of sea-lanes of communication and the increasing risks of natural and manmade disasters, compel us to reinforce our cooperation, to increase the exchange of information, to conduct more exercises and to increase interoperability.



France proposes to add ‘environmental security’ as a new emphasis for IONS consideration. The reduction of biodiversity, rising sea levels, the increase of ocean temperature and the worsening violence of climate events are all of concern. Potential impacts are not just limited to coastal states but have a more global scale (e.g. migration, political instability, crises). Our collective naval assets are usually the first to observe these evolutions of climate and thus they have a role to play. Accordingly, France is convinced that IONS should work on this issue. As a cross-domain issue, environmental security is best incorporated across the current IWG construct rather than addressed in isolation.

## **Outcomes**

The 2021 IONS Seminar was very successful. The main outcomes were as follows:

- a. France assumed Chairmanship of IONS from Iran for the period 2021-23.
- b. Qatar’s application for IONS membership was accepted.
- c. The 7<sup>th</sup> IONS Conclave of Chiefs will be hosted by France in Paris 15-16 November 2021.
- d. The 2021 IONS Essay Competition subject is: *Environmental challenges as a common threat*.
- e. The 2022 IONS Maritime Exercise (IMEX) will be HADR-focussed.

## **Conclusion**

To conclude proceedings, Admiral Pierre Vandier thanked Iran for the impressive work at the helm of IONS throughout the last three years. He also thanked the Seminar participants, especially those who attended in person despite the long journey carried out in a complex health environment, for their fruitful contribution to this important and successful 7<sup>th</sup> IONS Seminar.

## **7<sup>th</sup> IONS SEMINAR PRESENTATIONS, PANEL DISCUSSIONS AND IONS WORKING GROUP UPDATES**

### **Presentations**

1. *Opening speech:* Ambassador Marcel Escure, Delegate for regional cooperation in the Indian Ocean area (France)
2. *Climate security in the Indian Ocean:* Ms Julia Tasse, Research Fellow IRIS
3. *The French organisation related to law enforcement at sea:* Captain Bruno Sciascia, Maritime Zone of South of Indian Ocean Command and Brigadier general Yves Metayer, Commander of the French Armed Forces in the South of the Indian Ocean.
4. *The Maritime security architecture:* HH Prof. Vélayoudom Marimoutou, General Secretary, Indian Ocean Commission (IOC) and Mr Raj Mohabbeer, IOC Advisor.
5. *IFC Singapore:* LTC Lester Yong, Head of the Information Fusion Centre (IFC).
6. *Major challenges of the Indian Ocean for the EU:* Rear Admiral Jürgen Ehle, Senior Military Advisor in the European External Action Service.

### **Panel discussions**

7. *Environmental risks, the next common major issues.* Panellists: Ms. Julia Tasse, Research Fellow at the Institute for International Relations and Strategy (IRIS) and co-director of the Defence and Climate Observatory - Mr Charles Giusti, Préfet of the French Southern and Antarctic Lands (TAAF) - Colonel Mohamed Ibrahim, Department of International Defence Cooperation and Policy, Maldives Ministry of Defence.
8. *HADR, our compelling duty for the benefit of all.* Moderator: Vice Admiral Rob Kramer Commander of RNN (Netherlands). Panellists: Commander Paulino Tomas (Mozambique), First Admiral Agoeng Moh Kancana, Head of Information and Command Centre (Indonesia), Captain Ashraf Mahmud Riadh (Bangladesh Navy), Rear Admiral Chris Smith, Deputy Chief of the RAN (Australia). Vice Admiral (rtd) Pradeep Chauhan (National Maritime Foundation)
9. *MarSec, much already done, much still to do.* Moderator: Captain Eric de Beauregard, Deputy Coordinator for Maritime Security, French MoD. Panellists: Captain Mohammed Hamood Alzadjali, Head of Maritime Security Centre (Oman) - Captain Muhammad Nasir Iqbal Chaudhary, Army and Naval Attaché to France (Pakistan) - RAdm Jacques Fayard, Joint Commander of the French Forces deployed in the Indian Ocean (ALINDIEN) Operation Commander of AGENOR operation, EMASoH – Vice Admiral José M. Núñez Torrente, EU NavFor Somalia Operation ATALANTA Commander.
10. *Enhanced interoperability through more effective information sharing.* Moderator: Vice Admiral Nicolas Vaujour (Coordinating Authority for International Relations, French Navy Staff). Panellists: Colonel Micheal Rosette, Chief of Defence forces, Seychelles - Captain Franck Aimé Razafindraibe, Director of Regional Maritime Information Fusion Centre in Madagascar (RMIFC/CRFIM) - Mr Martin Cauchi-Inglott, Team Leader for CRIMARIO Project. External expert: Ms Jane Chan Git Yin; Senior Fellow IDSS / RSIS.

### **IONS Working Group Updates**

11. Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief IWG – Commodore Shantanu Jha, (India)
12. Maritime Security IWG – Captain Aghil Shefaat (Iran)
13. Information Sharing and Interoperability IWG – Rear Admiral Chris Smith (Australia) and Commodore Shantanu Jha (India)