

'REVIEWING POLICY COHERENCE AND COORDINATION IN THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT OF THE BLUE ECONOMY IN THE INDIAN OCEAN'



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Vice Admiral PERERA, Commander of the Sri Lanka Navy, distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen! 'Aayu-bo-wan' and a very good afternoon. It is a personal pleasure for me to be here at the Galle Dialogue 2023. In the next 15 to 20 minutes or so, I shall talk about "Reviewing Policy Coherence and Coordination in the Sustainable Development of the Blue Economy in the Indian Ocean".

INTRODUCTION

Importance of Oceans. We all know that oceans and seas are critical elements of global economy, food and energy security as well as for livelihood. As highlighted in the previous paper, oceans are the world's single largest ecosystem, covering nearly three-fourths of the earth's surface, thereby providing a massive arena for emerging complex and interconnected development issues such as climate change, livelihoods, commerce and security. Accordingly, the concept of blue economy has thus gained currency as an essential element with respect to regional and global development.

Blue Economy and Challenges. As discussed in the previous paper, blue economy has emerged as an influential concept for sustainable use of ocean resources for economic growth, improved livelihood and jobs, and ocean ecosystem health. It is redefining the role of the coastal states, international organizations and the global community in sustainable development. The ocean is increasingly being advocated as development space by developing and developed nations. Accordingly, there has been a rapid proliferation of international and national blue economy initiatives. However, it has also brought to light, concerns about ocean health in the face of increasing demands on ocean renewable and non-renewable resources, marine pollution and climate change. Thus, realizing this potential is not without its challenges, particularly in terms of policy coherence, coordination and governance architecture.

Today's paper will discuss the challenges and

opportunities in the sustainable development of the Blue Economy in the Indian Ocean and the role of regional and international collaboration in achieving this goal. At the end, I shall also discuss few of the initiatives being undertaken by Pakistan in the sustainable development of blue economy.

SIGNIFICANCE OF INDIAN OCEAN AND BLUE ECONOMY

Among the world's oceanic divisions, the Indian Ocean is the third largest, covering an area of more than 70 million sq kms that includes extensive Exclusive Economic Zones (EEZ) of different countries and a large volume of 'high seas'. Indian Ocean due to its vast expanse also plays a crucial role in the global economy, biodiversity and geopolitics. It is home to diverse ecosystems, supports the livelihoods of millions, and serves as a key transport route for goods and resources. In recent years, there has been growing recognition of the potential of the Blue Economy in the Indian Ocean region.

Majority of littorals in Indian Ocean are developing countries and are home to one-third of the world's population that rely extensively on the marine resources for livelihood and food security. The sheer size of this population subjects the Indian Ocean's resources to pressures from pollution, habitat degradation and over-exploitation. Moreover, the region and its resources face multi-dimensional challenges from climate change impacts such as sea-level rise, ocean acidification and extreme weather events; the latter, in turn, leading to changes in distribution of aquatic species, community structures due to migration and decreased economic productivity. It is imperative, therefore, to increase cooperation towards conservation and sustainable use of the oceans, seas and marine resources as

outlined in the goal 14 of the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDG).

Given the continuing growth of the human population in the coming decades, urgent action in the improvement of policy coherence and governance structures is crucial in order to preserve the Indian Ocean's resources for future generations, including those in Areas Beyond National Jurisdiction (ABNJ).

POLICY COHERENCE AND COORDINATION CHALLENGES

Drawing on the existing examples of promoting blue growth and sustainable development in other regions, this paper will now discuss the major challenges in the domain of policy coherence and coordination.

a. Fragmented Governance.

(1) The Indian Ocean region is characterized by fragmented governance structures and overlapping maritime claims. With over 30 coastal states, each having its own set of priorities, interests, and policies, there is lack of coherence in the regulation and management of Blue Economy activities. There is no single overarching organisation looking after Blue Economy aspects that covers all IOR countries in its membership.

(2) Presently, there are few bilateral and multilateral agreements that today bind the relevant participating Indian Ocean littoral countries. However, not only are these mechanisms limited in focus, they have also failed to include all relevant stakeholders in the fray. The IORA, for example, with 23 member states, is one of the most comprehensive arrangement that embraces a significant part of region under one forum. Yet, the current architecture lacks coherent governance instruments, and this

could inhibit sustainable blue development in the Indian Ocean, even as they attempt to address issues such as food security, ecosystem management and biodiversity conservation. Therefore, for IORA to live up to the commitment would require impartial dedicated leadership free of biases, mechanisms for regional research and monitoring programs and policy guidelines for member countries.

b. Ineffective Collaboration and Coordination

(1) Environment Sustainability.

Achieving a balance between economic growth and environmental sustainability

is a perennial challenge. Overfishing, destructive fishing practices, habitat degradation, and pollution are major threats to the Indian Ocean's marine ecosystems. Without effective coordination, the exploitation of marine resources can lead to irreversible environmental damage, impacting the long-term viability of the Blue Economy. Therefore, essential feature for the success of governance framework and to ensure effective outcomes is through coordination among relevant stakeholders.

(2) Research and Data Sharing. A major

reason for the lack of development of blue economy in the region is the lack of research, barring a small body of biological and physical scientific data. It is imperative to pursue research directed at improving the technical knowledge of the seabed, sea column as well as the behaviours of those whose livelihoods are dependent on the health of the ocean. There is also a lack of research that focuses on the architecture of governance required to construct a regional blue economy.

(3) Security Concerns. The Indian Ocean

is plagued by various security issues, including piracy, illegal, unreported, and unregulated (IUU)

fishing, and territorial disputes. These security concerns not only pose risks to human lives and assets but also disrupt economic activities. Managing these challenges requires coordinated action among coastal states, which is often complicated by geopolitical tensions and differing security priorities.

PROPOSED MEASURES FOR POLICY COHERENCE AND COORDINATION

Having discussed the challenges, it is pertinent to highlight that policy coherence and coordination measures taken by Pacific, Caribbean and Nordic-Baltic countries have yielded encouraging results in sustainable development of the respective regions. Therefore, considering the stated challenges vis-à-vis policy and coordination measures taken by these regions for sustainable development of Blue

Economy, I shall now propose the measures for improving policy coherence and coordination.

a. Improved Governance Framework. Coordination among the countries of Indian Ocean require a new framework agreement to be negotiated that could play a prominent and legally embedded role in the field of sustainable oceans governance. The envisaged inclusive multilateral framework agreement should introduce a system of governance that provides an overarching framework for sub regional and sectoral approaches covering marine areas, allocation of fishing rights, combating pollution, climate change mitigation, and other systemic issues. This would aid in reducing the regulatory burden created by multiple treaties and governance programmes in different overlapping areas.

b. Monitoring and Surveillance. Comprehensive and effective monitoring, control and surveillance systems are imperative for the goals of reducing non-

sustainable practices and achieving broader sustainable development in the Indian Ocean.

c. Auditing and Analyses. Data concerning the Indian Ocean and its scientific scrutiny are usually limited and poorly shared. Integrated systems to identify and deter non-compliance through independent verification and auditing, additional data collection, improved data sharing and scientific analyses concerning all activities and environmental impacts in the region are needed to monitor and adaptively improve cooperation and governance across the Indian Ocean.

d. Marine Spatial Planning. Marine Spatial Planning is the measures taken at the national level and later aligned with the neighbouring coastal countries to harmonize the efforts towards attainment of blue economy goals. Therefore, collaborative efforts are required for development of marine spatial plans that allocate both coastal and ocean resources efficiently, minimize conflicts, and promote sustainable development. These plans take into account the ecological, economic, and social aspects of the Blue Economy sectors, ensuring that they are managed in a holistic and sustainable manner.

e. Research and Data Sharing. Mechanism for sharing scientific research and data on the Indian Ocean's marine ecosystem among the IOR countries is vital. Collaboration in research is purported to help in understanding the dynamics of the ocean, the distribution of marine species and the impact of human activities. Accordingly, evidence-based policies are essential for effective management and conservation efforts.

f. International Collaboration and Regional Integration.

(1) International Collaboration. The United Nations Sustainable Development Goal 14 (Life Below Water) underscores the importance of international collaboration. Bilateral and multilateral agreements, as well as partnerships with international organizations, can significantly contribute to policy coherence and coordination in the sustainable development of the Blue Economy.

(2) Regional Integration. Regional organizations may play a crucial role in fostering policy coherence in the Indian Ocean. For instance, the Indian Ocean Commission (IOC) serve as platforms for dialogue and cooperation among its five member states at the regional level. These organizations provide opportunities for harmonizing policies, sharing best practices, and developing joint strategies for the sustainable development of the Blue Economy.

(3) Blue Diplomacy. "Blue diplomacy" involves addressing disputes and conflicts related to the maritime domain through peaceful means and negotiated settlements. Building trust and cooperation among nations is essential for sustainable development. Diplomatic efforts can lead to the resolution of territorial disputes and the establishment of mechanisms for collaboration in the Blue Economy sectors.

(4) Capacity Development. International organizations can support capacity development in the region through training programs, technology transfer, and knowledge sharing. This can empower coastal states with the skills and resources needed to implement and enforce policies that promote the sustainable development of the Blue Economy.

EFFORTS IN SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT OF BLUE ECONOMY - PAKISTAN

10. Having discussed options for

reviewing policy coherence and coordination for suitable development of the blue economy, I shall now highlight Pakistan's efforts towards promotion of Pakistan's Blue Economy.

11. Pakistan Navy is playing a key role in generating maritime awareness and channelizing efforts to reap full potential of Pakistan's maritime sector and promote Blue Economy in the country. In this regard, various measures are being taken under the ambit of Maritime Awareness Campaign Plan (MACP). Salient are:

a. Regular conduct of maritime related briefings and visits to relevant Govt officials/ policy makers for maritime awareness and improved policy making at Govt level.

b. Restructuring of Ministry of Maritime Affairs to bring all stakeholders related to maritime affairs under one hierarchy.

c. Revision of draft National Maritime Policy and Maritime Strategy.

d. Domain specific research at Maritime Centre of Excellence (MCE) and National Institute of Maritime Affairs (NIMA) to render viable policy options to Govt Officials for development of Pakistan's maritime sector.

e. Support for continuous systematic research and surveys for mapping of marine resources in Pakistan EEZ. In this regard, mapping of free gas, crude oil and gas hydrates have indicated promising results.

f. Engagement with Business Community to promote development of maritime sector and undertake commercially viable projects to generate funds to contribute to national economy.

g. Awareness at national level on implications of marine pollution. After continuous efforts, Marine

Pollution Control Board (MPCB) has been established to control the marine pollution in our maritime zones.

j. Frequent mangroves plantation campaigns in line with Govt's Vision of 'Plant for Pakistan' are being carried out to secure the marine habitat. Since 2016, plantation of more than 7.5 Million mangroves in coastal areas have been undertaken.

k. In order to support the efforts for promoting blue economy, 'Pakistan International Maritime Expo & Conference (PIMEC)' was held from 10-12 February 2023 in tandem with Exercise AMAN 2023.

12. I would reiterate that Pakistan maritime sector has huge potential which is yet to be fully exploited for economic development of the country and GoP will continue to play its role for the development of maritime sector and socio-economic growth of coastal communities.

CONCLUSION

13. To conclude, sustainable development of the Blue Economy in the Indian Ocean is a multifaceted endeavour that necessitates policy coherence, effective coordination, and international collaboration. While challenges such as fragmented governance, environmental sustainability, and security concerns persist, opportunities for progress exist through regional integration, blue diplomacy and capacity building. International collaboration is essential to address trans boundary issues and unlock the full potential of the Indian Ocean's Blue Economy. As nations in the region work together and align their policies, they can achieve economic growth while preserving the ocean's ecological integrity for generations to come.

14. I thank you all for your patient listening!