

International Conference on International Trade and Investment (ICITI2025)

'Trade and FDI Facilitation in the IORA Region'

25–26 September 2025, Le Voila Hotel, Bagatelle

Organised by the University of Mauritius (UoM), the UoM WTO Chair Programme (WcP), the Centre of Excellence for International Trade and Investment (CEITI) and the Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA)

PROGRAMME

* The time specified is the local time/Mauritian time. Please check your respective time zones. It is currently GMT+4

DAY 1

THURSDAY 25 SEPTEMBER 2025

OPENING CEREMONY AND KEYNOTE ADDRESS: 09:15–12:00 (GMT+4)		Zoom Link: here
9:15-9:20*	Opening and Welcoming Remarks by WCP Organising Team	
9:20–9:25	Address by Vice Chancellor, University of Mauritius, Prof Sanjeev Sobhee	
9:25–9:35	Address by IORA Secretary General, Mr. Sanjiv Ranjan	
9:35-9:45	Address by Deputy Director General WTO, Mr Xiangchen Zhang^(virtual)	
9:45-9:55	Address by Minister of Tertiary Education, Science and Research, Dr The Hon. Kaviraj Sharma Sukon PFHEA	
9:55-10:15	"Alternative Dispute Resolution as a Cornerstone of Trade and Investment Facilitation in the IORA Region": By Mr Alexis Merle (Mauritius Chamber of Commerce and Industry, MCCI)	
10:15-10:40	Keynote Address "Wins and Woes of African Integration": By Prof Jim De Melo (Emeritus Professor, University of Geneva, Scientific Director at the FERDI and Academic Advisor at the Geneva Business School)	
10:40- 11:00	Tea Break & Networking	
11:00–12:00	Round Table Discussion on 'Trade and Investment Facilitation in IORA' Panellists: Dr Sunil Boodhoo (Ex Director, International Trade Division); Micheal Turner (Director-General IORA); Prof Jim De Melo (Emeritus Professor, University of Geneva); Paul Baker (Executive Director, International Economics); Dr Myriam Blin (Head, Charles Telfair Centre) Moderator: Dr Sheereen Fauzel (University of Mauritius)	

PARALLEL TRACK SESSIONS

DAY 1

THURSDAY 25 SEPTEMBER 2025

(13:00 – 14:40)

PARALLEL SESSION I

TRACK 1: 13:00–14:40 (GMT+4)

TRACK 1 THEME: INTRA IORA TRADE Chair: S Fauzel Discussants: <i>Md. Shahadat Hossain and Pralok Gupta</i> Zoom Link: here	1.	Intra-IOA trade: Opportunities, Challenges and recommendations in the context of Seychelles <i>Vannesa Patricia Rosemay Ernesta & Yaw Junior Adu-Ampomah (University of Seychelles, Seychelles)</i>
	2.	Unlocking Intra-IOA Trade through a Phased Modular Preferential Trade Agreement: A Conceptual Framework <i>Pranab Kumar Paul (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Bangladesh)</i>
	3.	Intra-IOA Trade Potential: An Empirical Analysis <i>Tina Neogi and Aakash Sharad Gondge (Centre for WTO Studies (CWS); Gokhale Institute of Politics and Economics, India)</i>
	4.	Intra-IOA Regional Trade Trends, Patterns, and Implications for IOA Countries. <i>Kennedy Otwori Osoro (University of Nairobi)</i>
	5.	Determinants of Bilateral Trade Between China and Mauritius: A Gravity Model Analysis <i>Sheshna Dookhit (Economic Development Board, Mts)</i>

PARALLEL SESSION I

TRACK 2: 13:00–14:40 (GMT+4)

TRACK 2 THEME: TRADE FACILITATION Chair: B Seetanah Discussants: <i>M Ibrahim and Joshua Yindenaba Abor</i> Zoom Link: here	1.	The Impact of US Reciprocal Tariffs on African Indian Ocean Rim Association (IOA) Member States <i>Paul R. Baker and Loan Le (International Economics Consulting)</i>
	2.	Trade Facilitation in Kenya: Progress, Challenges, and Opportunities in the Context of Regional and Continental Integration <i>Tabitha Kiriti-Nganga (University of Nairobi)</i>
	3.	Enhancing Trade Integration in the IOA: Progress, Gaps, and Policy Pathways in Trade Facilitation <i>Dinesh Kumar (Centre for WTO Studies, Indian Institute of Foreign Trade)</i>
	4.	Leveraging IOA Trade Facilitation Initiatives for Bangladesh Post-LDC Graduation: Lessons from Graduated IOA States <i>Md. Abdur Rakib (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Bangladesh)</i>
	5.	Digital Trade As A Facilitator Of Trade And Investment In The IOA Region <i>Varsha Mooneeram Chadee (University of Mauritius)</i>
	6.	Impact of trade facilitation on IOA trade <i>S Fauzel, V Tandrayen, B Seetanah & K Mootooperian (Uni of Mauritius)</i>

TEA BREAK: 14:40-15:00

PARALLEL SESSION II
TRACK 1: 15:00-16:30 (GMT+4)

TRACK 1 THEME: TRADE AND ENVIRONMENT Chair: V Tandrayen-Ragoobur Discussants: Yaw Junior Adu-Ampomah and Shakeeba Taqdees Zoom Link: here	1.	Navigating the Blue and Green Future: Legal Possibilities for IORA in the Digital Era Amidst Environmental Challenges <i>Anshdha Sharma (Ministry of Commerce and Industry, Government of India)</i>
	2.	Unravelling the Environmental Consequences of Trade and Energy on Greenhouse gas emissions in IORA countries <i>V Dreepaul-Dabee (Ministry of Agro Industry & Food Security, Mauritius)</i>
	3.	Assessing the Effects of Trade on Environment in Mauritius <i>V. Chengadu, B. Seetanah, R.Bhattu Babajee and Z. Khan Jaffur (UoM)</i>
	4.	Green Industrial Policies In Driving Economic Transformation And Sustainability In Kenya. <i>(Virtual)</i> <i>Kellen Kiambati, Margaret Kosgey, Nicolas Gitonga and Anne Kariuki (Karatina University)</i>
	5.	Towards a Bottom-Up Blue Economy Innovation Network: A Micro-Political Economic Perspective on Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA) <i>(Virtual)</i> <i>Maharani Hapsari (Center for World Trade Studies (CWTS), Universitas Gadjah Mada)</i>

PARALLEL SESSION II
TRACK 2: 15:00-16:30 (GMT+4)

TRACK 2 THEME: FOREIGN DIRECT INVESTMENT Chair: Ramahery Hanitsoa Ravo Discussants: Cathetine Kithinji and Abdur Rakib Zoom Link: here	1.	Investing in Sovereignty: Reforming Bilateral Investment Treaties to Enable Local Industrialisation of Strategic Resources in Madagascar – The ODOF Lever in the IORA Region <i>Ramahery Hanitsoa Ravo (Ministry of Industrialization and Trade – Republic of Madagascar)</i>
	2.	Exploring the determinants of FDI – A panel analysis from selected IORA Member States <i>(K. Mootooperian and B.Seetanah (Uni. of Mauritius))</i>
	3.	Capital Inflow, Strategic Subcontracting, and Formal Employment <i>Renu Bansal and Dibyendu Maiti (University of Delhi, India)</i>
	4.	How Can Central Bank Digital Currencies Facilitate Trade and Investment in Africa? <i>Joshua Yindenaba Abor (University of Ghana Business School)</i>
	5.	Price Transmission between Global and Local Food Markets: Evidence from Oman <i>(Virtual)</i> <i>Osman Gulseven (Sultan Qaboos University)</i>

PARALLEL TRACK SESSIONS

DAY 2

FRIDAY 26 SEPTEMBER 2025

(9:30 – 14:00)

PARALLEL SESSION III TRACK 1: 9:30–11:00 (GMT+4)

TRACK 1 THEME: DIGITAL TRADE Chair: Mohammad Ibrahim Discussants: <i>Ramahery Hanitsoa Ravo and Renu Bansal</i> Zoom Link: here	1.	Boosting Bangladesh's Trade in IORA: A Digital Facilitation Framework <i>Md. Shahadat Hossain and Abdur Rakib (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Bangladesh)</i>
	2.	The Interplay between Digital Transformation, Trade Facilitation, and NonTariff Barriers to Trade <i>Thabelo Prayers Muleya (Tutwa Consulting)</i>
	3.	Enhancing Regional Cooperation through Digital Trade and E-Commerce in the IORA Region <i>Mohammad Ibrahim (Swinburne University, Australia)</i>
	4.	The Role Of ICT In Trade: Evidence From The Western Indian Ocean Region <i>Yaw Junior Adu-Ampomah (University of Seychelles, Seychelles)</i>
	5.	Digital Crossroads: An Empirical Analysis of Customs Digitalisation's Impact on Trade Efficiency and Costs in the Indian Ocean Rim ^(Virtual) . <i>Beatrice Mbinya, University of Nairobi</i>

PARALLEL SESSION III TRACK 2: 9:30–11:00 (GMT+4)

TRACK 2 THEME: TRADE IN SERVICES Chair: Caiphas Chekwoti Discussants: <i>Anshdha Sharma and Dinesh Kumar</i> Zoom Link: here	1.	The Competitiveness of services to Harness the IORA Services Market: Case of United Republic of Tanzania <i>Caiphas Chekwoti (Head of Centre, ESAMI-TRAPCA)</i>
	2.	Impact of Exchange Rate Volatility on Services Trade: An Empirical Investigation using Pooled Mean Group and Nonlinear Cointegration Approach <i>Pralok Gupta (Centre for WTO Studies (CWS))</i>
	3.	Tourism Demand in IORA Member States: Assessing the Interaction between Regional Integration and Global Economic Growth. <i>Fatimah Boodoo and Boopen Seetanah (University of Mauritius)</i>
	4.	Does International Tourism Facilitate Merchandise Trade in IORA Countries? An Empirical Analysis using Augmented Gravity Model. <i>Pralok Gupta (Centre for WTO Studies (CWS))</i>
	5.	'Competitors or Complements: Dynamics of trade and cultural ties between the 'Asian Elephant' India and 'African Tiger Cub' Mauritius ^(Virtual) <i>Satabdee Banerjee and Verena Tandrayen-Ragoobur (Netaji Nagar Day College & Post-doctoral fellow of UoM; UoM)</i>

TEA BREAK: 11:00-11:15

**PARALLEL SESSION IV
TRACK 1: 11:15-13:00 (GMT+4)**

TRACK 1 THEME: REGIONAL TRADE INTEGRATION AND DEVELOPMENT Chair: Chibole Wakoli Discussants: <i>Tabitha Kiriti-Nganga and Tina Neogi</i> Zoom Link: here	1.	Impact of Trade Openness on Taxation: Evidence from the IORA Region <i>Lydie Amelot and Leenshya Gunnoo (Open University of Mauritius; University of Technology, Mauritius)</i>
	2.	Enhancing electricity access through trade: A case study of the Kenya-Tanzania Interconnector <i>Chibole Wakoli & Martha Wakoli (World Trade Organization; Clean Energy Access Research – CLASP)</i>
	3.	Unlocking Regional Trade Opportunities for MSMEs: A Case Study of Kenya's Engagement in the IORA Region <i>Catherine Kithinji (Center for Teaching and Learning Excellence, KCA University)</i>
	4.	Impact Of Trade Liberalisation On Poverty In IORA Regions <i>R. Subramanyan, B. Seetanah and V. Tandrayen-Ragoobur (University of Mauritius)</i>
	5.	A critical assessment of the importance of rules-based trading system in the current global context for the IORA region <i>Bhavna Mahadew (University of Technology, Mauritius)</i>

**PARALLEL SESSION IV
TRACK 2: 11:15-13:00 (GMT+4)**

TRACK 2 THEME: INVESTMENT FACILITATION AND DIGITAL TRADE Chair: Zeenat Fatima Discussants: <i>Pranab Kumar Paul and Vannesa Patricia Rosemay Ernesta</i> Zoom Link: here	1.	Diaspora-Led Investment Facilitation in the IORA Region: A Case Study of Optiven and the Kenyan Diaspora <i>Fred Atoh & Sennane Riungu (University of Nairobi)</i>
	2.	Smart Trade: Using Digital Twins and AI to Enforce Sustainability Standards in Global Commerce <i>Chitisha Gunnoo (University of Mauritius)</i>
	3.	Global Rare Earth Magnet Value Chain and Strategic Trade Controls: India's Challenges in a China-Dominated System <i>Shakeeba Taqdees and Dr Zeenat Fatima (Senior Research Fellow, Centre for WTO Studies (CWS), Indian Institute of Foreign Trade (IIFT), Under Ministry of Commerce and Industry, India)</i>
	4.	Artificial Intelligence: The Law of Humans for Robots and Machines In Digital Trade and E-commerce-Where does the Law Stand? <i>Rajendra Gunput and Assogbavi (University of Mauritius)</i>

	5.	Harnessing the Power of Communication in Regional Cooperation: The Opportunities and Constraints in the East Africa Community (EAC) <i>Fred Atoh & Sennane Riungu (University of Nairobi)</i>
	6.	Effect of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) on International Trade in services in Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA): The role of access to electricity. <i>(Virtual)</i> <i>Lotsi Afi Bertille (University of Lomé, Togo)</i>
12:45-14:00 LUNCH		

14:00-15:00 NETWORKING AND DISCUSSION
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**Co-Chairs**

Prof Boopen Seetanah (University of Mauritius), Dr S Fauzel (University of Mauritius), and Dr Verena Tandrayen-Ragoobur (University of Mauritius).

**Organising Committee**

Dr Adelia Jansen van Rensburg (North-West University), Prof Tabitha W. Kiriti-Nganga (University of Nairobi); Dr Chaipas Chekwoti (TRAPCA, Tanzania); Dr Jonas Barayandema (University of Rwanda); Mrs Varsha Mooneeram-Chadee (University of Mauritius); James Nedumpara (Indian Institute of Foreign Trade); Maharani Hapsari (Universitas Gadjah Mada, Indonesia) and Osman Gulseven (Sultan Qaboos University).

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