

PRESS RELEASE

Webinar on Nature's Shield: Blue Carbon Habitats for Disaster Risk Reduction

27 March 2026- The Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA), in collaboration with the United Kingdom as a Dialogue Partner and its delivery partner the Joint Nature Conservation Committee (JNCC), has convened a webinar examining how blue carbon habitats can serve as nature-based solutions for disaster risk reduction across the Indian Ocean region.

Mangroves, seagrass meadows, and tidal marshes—collectively known as blue carbon habitats—act as natural infrastructure, buffering coastlines against storm surges, reducing erosion, and absorbing floodwaters. Beyond their protective function, these ecosystems act as a critical asset in both climate adaptation and mitigation. Protecting and restoring these habitats is essential for the safety and livelihoods of coastal communities, which form the backbone of many Indian Ocean economies. This work directly supports IORA's priority areas of disaster risk management and marine environment protection, as reflected in the IORA Charter and ministerial commitments to sustainable development.

As the Indian Ocean region faces increasing exposure to cyclones, sea-level rise, and coastal hazards, the preservation of blue carbon ecosystems is a distinctly regional imperative. Framed regionally first, the webinar emphasized that collective action among IORA Member States is essential to safeguard these shared natural assets. Globally, these efforts align with commitments under the Paris Agreement and the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction, reinforcing the interconnectedness of climate, biodiversity, and resilience agendas.

IORA reaffirms that environmental conservation is not separate from disaster risk reduction but foundational to it. Member States are encouraged to recognize blue carbon habitats as critical infrastructure and to prioritize their protection, restoration, and integration into national disaster risk management strategies.

The webinar, titled "Nature's Shield: Blue Carbon Habitats for Disaster Risk Reduction," was held on 24 March 2026 and attracted 30 participants from 9 IORA Member States. The session provided a platform for JNCC and IORA Member States to share their work, exchange knowledge, and identify potential areas for future cooperation. Discussions focused on practical approaches to mapping, monitoring, restoring, and conserving blue carbon habitats, with an emphasis on the value of regional collaboration in the marine environment.