

9th Indian Ocean Conference, Venue, Theme, Purpose

April 15, 2026 • vajiramandravi.com



The 9th Indian Ocean Conference was held in Port Louis, Mauritius from April 10–12, 2026, marking the first time the event was hosted in Africa. External Affairs Minister Dr. S. Jaishankar Subrahmanyam Jaishankar outlined India's priorities, including regional resilience, overcoming colonial legacies, and adapting to a fragmented global order.

About 9th Indian Ocean Conference

- **Venue:** The 9th Indian Ocean Conference (IOC 2026) was held in Port Louis, Mauritius from April 10-12, 2026. This is the first time the conference was held in an African country.
- **Theme:** Collective Stewardship for Indian Ocean Governance.
- **Organised by:** 9th Indian Ocean Conference (IOC 2026) was organised by the India Foundation in collaboration with the Government of Mauritius.
- No delegate attended from the Maldives, as diplomatic ties between Mauritius and the Maldives have been suspended over territorial differences related to the Chagos Islands

About the Indian Ocean Conference (IOC)

The Indian Ocean Conference is a flagship consultative forum aimed at strengthening regional dialogue and cooperation in the Indian Ocean Region.

- The conference was initiated in **2016** by the India Foundation in collaboration with regional partners.
- It brings together ministers, policymakers, scholars, and strategic experts from more than 40 countries.
- The conference focuses on regional cooperation under India's vision of **SAGAR** (Security and Growth for All in the Region).
- It serves as a platform to discuss geopolitical, economic, and environmental challenges in the **Indian Ocean** Region.

India's Five Key Priorities at 9th Indian Ocean Conference

EAM Dr. S. Jaishankar, in his keynote address, outlined five broad priorities for Indian Ocean nations.

Priority 1: The Ocean as a Living Ecosystem, Not Just a Geographic Space

- Dr. S. Jaishankar said the Indian Ocean is not merely a geographic space but a living ecosystem that sustains economies, livelihoods, connectivity, resources, and shared cultural heritage. He warned that any disruption to this interconnected system has far-reaching consequences, underscoring the need for stability and careful stewardship of the maritime domain.

Priority 2: Overcoming Colonial Legacies and Deepening Regional Integration

- Countries of the region must continue efforts to overcome historical barriers inherited from the colonial era and deepen regional cooperation. This includes the importance of stronger economic linkages, improved connectivity, and the revival of traditional ties, and nations must not lose sight of long-term collective goals even as global fragmentation increases.

Priority 3: Adapting to a More Fractured and Competitive World Order

- EAM Dr. S. Jaishankar highlighted the changing nature of the global order, noting that the world has become more competitive, inward-looking, and fractured. The benefits of globalisation are increasingly being overshadowed by tendencies to weaponise interdependence, prompting countries to seek more reliable partnerships and greater resilience in an uncertain environment.

Priority 4: Addressing Physical and Conceptual Choke Points

- While maritime choke points remain strategically significant, similar constraints are emerging in domains such as finance, technology, resources, and knowledge. Jaishankar cautioned that controlled systems can hinder global well-being and stressed the need for more open and resilient flows. This is a reference not only to strategic straits like Hormuz and Malacca, but also to technological dependencies (semiconductor supply chains), financial gatekeeping, and knowledge monopolies.

Priority 5: Building Collective Resilience in the Global South

- EAM Dr. S. Jaishankar called for deeper cooperation among Indian Ocean nations, describing the region as a "Global South ocean" facing shared challenges such as food, fuel, and fertiliser shortages; disaster response;

and the spillover effects of conflicts. He stated that the answer to these challenges lies increasingly in collective resilience

Importance of the Indian Ocean Region

The strategic relevance of the Indian Ocean explains the importance of the conference.

- The Indian Ocean connects over **35 littoral states** and supports nearly **40% of the global population**, making it a vital geopolitical space.
- It carries around two-thirds of global oil shipments and a significant share of global trade, making it central to energy and economic security.
- Key chokepoints such as the **Strait of Hormuz** and **Malacca Strait** influence global trade flows and strategic stability.
- The region offers vast Blue Economy potential, including fisheries, seabed resources, renewable energy, and maritime trade.

Source: <https://vajiramandravi.com/current-affairs/9th-indian-ocean-conference/>

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