

1. Putting the SAGAR Vision to the Test

Context:

- Following a request from New Delhi, the Indian Ocean Commission granted observer status to India on March 6 at the Commission's 34th Council of Ministers.

Brief Background:

- **Maritime Security is a prominent feature of India's relations with Indian Ocean littoral States**, India's interest in the IOC should be understood in this context.
- Besides, IOC will also be able to supplement the India's SAGAR vision to the Indian Ocean.

Security and Growth for All in the Region (SAGAR):

- SAGAR Doctrine was unveiled by India in 2016 underlining the growing salience of the Indian Ocean and global maritime commons in India's z
- It calls for intensifying cooperation among navies and maritime agencies of the world to engineer virtuous cycles of cooperation.
- It is a maritime initiative which gives priority to Indian Ocean region for ensuring peace, stability and prosperity of India in Indian Ocean region.

About IOC:

- It is an intergovernmental organization that is composed of five African Indian Ocean nations: Comoros, Madagascar, Mauritius, Réunion (an overseas region of France), and Seychelles.
- It was created in 1982 and was institutionalized in 1984.
- To serve as platform of solidarity for the entire population of the African Indian Ocean region
- Its secretariat is located in Port Louis, Mauritius.

IOC – Opportunity and Benefits to India:

- The IOC style of 'bottom-up regionalism' has produced a sub-regional view and definition of maritime security problems and local ownership of pathways towards workable solutions.
- Its regional maritime security architecture is viewed locally as the most effective and sustainable framework to improve maritime control and surveillance and allow littoral States to shape their own destiny.
- Moreover, with **proper regional coordination, local successes at curbing maritime threats** will have broader security dividends for the Indian Ocean space.

- The IOC's maritime security activities have a strong foundation, but they require support and buy-in from additional regional actors.
- India has already signalled a strong interest in the work of the IOC through its request to be admitted as an observer
- Nearly all littoral states in the Western Indian Ocean need assistance in developing their maritime domain awareness and in building capacity to patrol their EEZs
- All would benefit from national information fusion centres that can link to those of the wider region.

Conclusion:

- As a major stakeholder in the Indian Ocean with maritime security high on the agenda, India will continue to pursue its interests and tackle maritime security challenges at the macro level in the region.
- However, as an observer of the IOC, a specific, parallel opportunity to embrace bottom-up regionalism presents itself.

Source: The Hindu

