

## Official Launch of the Customs Committee of the Indian Ocean Commission

### A Strategic Platform to Enhance Regional Cooperation

The Mauritius Revenue Authority (MRA) hosted the official launch of the Customs Committee of the Indian Ocean Commission (IOC) on Friday, 03 October 2025, at Custom House, Mer Rouge, Port-Louis. The event brought together the Directors General of Customs and representatives from the Union of Comoros, France/Reunion, Madagascar, Mauritius and Seychelles, as well as the Secretary General of the IOC and technical and financial partners.

The establishment of the Customs Committee follows the decision of the 37th Council of Ministers of the IOC, which encouraged closer collaboration between Member States in the field of customs. This initiative came in response to growing transnational threats such as drug trafficking, money laundering, terrorism financing and the smuggling of illicit goods, which undermine regional stability and economic security.

The Customs Committee is a permanent platform for cooperation and exchange, enabling Member States to strengthen risk profiling, intelligence-sharing and enforcement, while also promoting trade facilitation and harmonisation of customs best practices across the region. It aims at reinforcing regional security architecture, ensure fairer trade and contribute to the long-term prosperity of the Indian Ocean community.



In his address at the launching ceremony, the Director-General of the MRA, Mr. Rohit Ramnawaz, emphasised that, threats such as drug trafficking, money laundering, terrorism financing and smuggling are transnational challenges requiring collective action. He underlined that these crimes destabilise economies, erode public trust, and undermine social development and stressed that no nation can succeed alone. Highlighting MRA's proactive

efforts in risk profiling, intelligence-sharing, and border security, he welcomed the establishment of the Customs Committee as a strategic platform to enhance regional cooperation, strengthen operational synergy, and facilitate information exchange. Mr. Ramnawaz reaffirmed Mauritius' full commitment to

the Committee, noting that, through shared vision, mutual trust and coordinated action, member states can build a safer, more resilient and prosperous Indian Ocean region.

The Secretary General of the IOC, Mr. Edgard Razafindravahy, recalled that the Committee provides a genuine regional space for customs cooperation. He underlined the central role of customs administrations in combating illicit trafficking and protecting maritime territories, underscoring that no country could act alone. Mr. Razafindravahy highlighted the importance of single-window systems and information-sharing as pillars of economic integration. He concluded by calling for a spirit of expertise-sharing and mutual trust to ensure the success of the Committee.



Representatives of Comoros, Reunion, Madagascar and Seychelles also addressed the floor. They underlined the importance of establishing a permanent platform under the Committee to pursue its objectives, particularly in the fight against illicit trafficking. They stressed the need to engage the private sector as a partner in the process, highlighted the central role of information exchange in risk prevention, and called for stronger cooperation mechanisms to secure trade and facilitate legitimate commerce across the region.

The official launch of the Customs Committee of the Indian Ocean Commission, marked a significant milestone in regional customs cooperation and sets the stage for stronger collective action in addressing common challenges.

