

# Kochi Declaration

## *A Resolution for Marine Science Cooperation in the Bay of Bengal Region*

14 February 2023



**Outcome Document of the**

HD-BOBP DIALOGUE ON  
**Development of a Marine Fisheries Research  
Network for the Bay of Bengal Region**

## Kochi Declaration

### A Resolution for Marine Science Cooperation in the Bay of Bengal Region

The Bay of Bengal region is a vital contributor to global seafood production, boasting the largest conglomeration of small-scale fisheries. Considering the ecological and socio-cultural commonness of the region, it is well-advocated that countries should collaborate in education, research, and training (ERT) to address common problems facing the region. However, there is yet to be an effective mechanism to promote and manage regional coordination in ERT, to tackle common challenges like climate change and ecosystem health.

A Regional Dialogue on Marine Scientific Cooperation in the Bay of Bengal Region was organized in Kochi, India, on 14<sup>th</sup> February, 2023 jointly by HD and BOBP-IGO. The dialogue explored various narratives on South-South cooperation and provided a platform to collectively address challenges like pollution, climate change, and over-exploitation.

The attendees included representatives from the littoral countries of the Bay of Bengal and educational and research institutions involved in fisheries and ocean research in the region, and they discussed the following topics:

- The significance of the Bay of Bengal's marine environment and fish stocks for food security and livelihood of coastal communities.
- Concerns about transboundary marine environmental degradation and depletion of fish stocks.
- The necessity for timely collective intervention and cooperation among marine scientists, policymakers, and regional governments.

The Dialogue identified the core tenets of the agenda for cooperation as under:

- **Common goals and objectives** that align with the priorities of each member country, ensuring a coordinated approach to addressing shared challenges and capitalising on mutual opportunities.
- **Robust communication and knowledge-sharing platform** that facilitates the exchange of ideas, best practices, and lessons learned, ultimately promoting a more robust and integrated regional community.
- **Cross-sectoral collaboration**, engaging stakeholders from the academic, research, governmental, and private service sectors to harness their collective expertise and resources in pursuit of shared goals.
- **Adequate funding and resource allocation mechanisms** that support collaborative research, capacity-building, and policy advocacy efforts, driving the sustainable development and management of the marine fisheries sector.
- **Strengthened institutional capacities**, enabling regional organisations like BOBP-IGO to lead and operationalize the networks and initiatives emerging from this collaborative framework.

# The outcome of the Dialogue was adopted as the “Kochi Declaration: A Resolution for Marine Science Cooperation in the Bay of Bengal Region”

## The Declaration:

Underscoring the importance of the marine environment and fish stocks in the region;

Recognizing the transboundary nature of marine environmental degradation and depletion of fish stocks and

Appreciating the lack of functional platforms for facilitating research cooperation and collaboration among the BOB littoral countries.

Called upon the littoral states of the Bay of Bengal to consider:

- Creation of the '**Bay of Bengal Marine Research Network**' under the BOBP-IGO Agreement, consolidating existing research networks, as a means of strengthening regional cooperation on marine scientific research.
- BOBP-IGO, to operationalize the collaboration network through appropriate mechanisms to provide technical assistance and capacity-building support to the BOB rim countries and HD.

**And urged the littoral states of the Bay of Bengal to:**

**Review** the outcomes of the dialogue i.e., the Kochi Declaration and consider taking appropriate measures to support marine research and education in the region.

**Support** marine research in the region, including exploring options for financing and promoting methods of marine education and research.

**Strengthen** collaboration among the countries, particularly in the marine science domain, given the shared challenges and opportunities facing the Bay of Bengal region.

**Design and implement** programmes to facilitate collaboration between/among countries, institutions, and individuals (researchers/ students).

**Earmark funds** for regional collaboration within existing programmes at the regional and national level, to kickstart joint research projects, fellowships, etc.

**Leverage** multilateral funding agencies to designate funds for regional research in areas prioritised by member countries to facilitate the institutionalisation of regional research in a more targeted and strategic manner.

**Support** the BOBP-IGO, a regional fishery body mandated to foster collaboration and cooperation among member countries, in operationalizing the networks.

The Declaration recognizes the significant role of the multi-lateral agencies in facilitating regional collaboration and towards this end,

**Invites** the United Nations system, including the FAO and other relevant bodies to extend all support, including technical and financial, as appropriate, for the effective implementation of this Resolution.

**Urges** the international community to support the efforts of the Bay of Bengal littoral states in addressing challenges to the marine environment and fish stocks and contributing to the sustainable development of the region.

**The attendees decided to remain engaged in this matter and adopt this declaration by consensus on the 14<sup>th</sup> of February 2023 at Kochi, India.**

## About the Organizers



### Bay of Bengal Programme Inter-Governmental Organisation (BOBP-IGO)

*The BOBP-IGO is a regional fisheries advisory body with Bangladesh, India, Maldives, and Sri Lanka as its contracting parties. It is mandated to enhance cooperation amongst its member countries and other countries (especially Indonesia, Malaysia, Myanmar, and Thailand) for sustainable fisheries management in the Bay of Bengal region. The organisation evolved from the erstwhile Bay of Bengal Programme of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), founded in 1979. The BOBP-IGO Secretariat is hosted by the Government of India and is located in Chennai.*



### Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue (HD)

*HD is an International non-profit organisation founded on humanity, impartiality, neutrality and independence. It aims to prevent, resolve, and mitigate conflicts through dialogue and mediation. HD has been involved in organizing BOB Maritime Dialogue Series involving regional experts. The first dialogue was held in 2021, and the second in 2022, the critical decision was to organize an event to network academic and research organizations in the region.*