



Indian Ocean Rim Academic Group

Early Career Professionals Network

Webinar

Maritime Security

May 20, 2026 @ 14:00 MAU / 12:00 PM SAST



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AGENDA

1. **Dr Vhulenda Edna Mukheli**
Webinar Introduction
2. **Dr Prakash Gopal**
Global maritime insecurity and implications for the Indian Ocean Region
3. **Mr Solomon Kimaita**
Geopolitical Rivalry and Maritime Militarization in the Indian Ocean: Implications for the African Littoral States
4. **Ms Tshegofatso Ramachela**
The Western Indian Ocean in Crisis: Assessing the Maritime Threat Landscape
5. **Cdr Chanaka Udayanga**
The Present-Day Maritime Security Landscape in the IOR and Safety Concerns
6. **Q&A Session**



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Speaker **Dr. Vhulenda Edna Mukheli**

*University of South Africa
(UNISA). South Africa*

Dr. Vhulenda Edna Matshili Mukheli is a scholar in the field of International Relations with research interests in maritime diplomacy, paradiplomacy, and foreign policy. Her academic work focuses particularly on South Africa's maritime diplomacy and the intersection of soft and hard power in international relations. She is interested in advancing internationalisation through strategic partnerships, diplomatic engagement, and policy innovation that promote regional cooperation, global interconnectedness, and transformative knowledge exchange.

She serves as a Senior Lecturer at University of South Africa, where she teaches Research Methods and Political Theory. In this role, she is passionate about developing critical, analytical, and research-oriented thinkers equipped to engage complex political and global challenges.



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Speaker

Dr. Prakash Gopal

*Australian National Centre for Ocean
Resources and Security (ANCORS).
Australia*

Dr. Prakash Gopal is a Lecturer of maritime security and strategy at the Australian National Centre for Ocean Resources and Security (ANCORS) at the University of Wollongong. As a former navy officer, he has considerable experience in maritime security operations, policy and strategy. His doctoral research examined the concept of littoral security and developed a framework for the security of critical infrastructure in littoral areas. In addition to lecturing at ANCORS, Prakash is an Academic Fellow of the Australia-India Institute, University of Melbourne and Non-Resident Fellow at the United States Studies Centre, Sydney. His research interests include India's foreign and security policy, maritime domain awareness in the Indo-Pacific, the protection of critical maritime infrastructure, and international cooperation in regional maritime security efforts.



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Speaker

Mr Solomon Kimaita

Zetech University, Nairobi. Kenya

Mr Solomon Kimaita is an accomplished Lecturer of International Relations and Diplomacy at Zetech University in Nairobi, Kenya, specializing in Peace and Conflict Studies. He holds an M.A. in International Relations from the United States International University-Africa, and a B.A. in Social Studies – Government and Public Administration from Moi University in Eldoret, Kenya. Solomon's teaching portfolio covers topics such as Development Dynamics in Africa, Regional Integration and International Conflict Management. He is a Certified Professional Mediator and has certifications in pedagogy and academic quality assurance. His experience spans significant roles in humanitarian work with UNHCR and project management with USIU's Development Partnerships in Higher Education Project. He has contributed to multiple academic conferences and published in peer-reviewed journals on emerging themes like AI in conflict prevention, youth participation in climate resilience and digital diplomacy. A committed academic, Solomon actively contributes to curriculum development and mentorship as the patron of the UNESCO Club at Zetech. His professional affiliations include membership in the Christian Professional Mediators Association of Kenya (CPMAK) and the International Relations Society of Kenya (IRSK).



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Speaker

Ms Tshegofatso

Johanna Ramachela

*University of Pretoria. South
Africa*

Ms Tshegofatso Johanna Ramachela holds two masters degrees: a Master of Arts in International Relations from the University of Pretoria, and an International Master in Security, Intelligence and Strategic Studies, from the University of Glasgow and its partner institutions. Ms Ramachela is a Researcher for the Ocean Regions Programme at the University of Pretoria, where she is completing her PhD in International Relations.



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Speaker **Commander Chanaka Udayanga**

*Information Fusion Centre-Indian Ocean
Region (IFC-IOR). Sri Lanka*

Commander Chanaka Udayanga is currently serving as the International Liaison Officer at the Information Fusion Centre-Indian Ocean Region (IFC-IOR) representing Sri Lanka Navy. Prior to this appointment he was the Senior Staff Officer Maritime Surveillance at the Directorate of Naval Operations at Naval Head Quarters in Colombo and Officer In Charge of Maritime Rescue Coordinating Centre in Colombo.

He is a surface warfare specialist with 23 years of naval service. He holds a Bachelor's degree in Maritime Warfare from the University of Kelaniya, a Master's degree in Defence and Strategic Studies from General Sir John Kotelawala Defence University, and a Postgraduate Diploma in Logistics Management from the same university. He has received specialized training in maritime security and safety and has made significant contributions to these fields through engagement with think tanks and related publications.