

Colombo Declaration

Indian Ocean Region (IOR) Interior Ministers met on 4th November 2016 in a high-level meeting in Colombo, Sri Lanka. The resolution was adopted by 18 littoral states to make IOR, a 'Drug-Free Zone,' and the resolution came to be known as the Colombo Declaration.

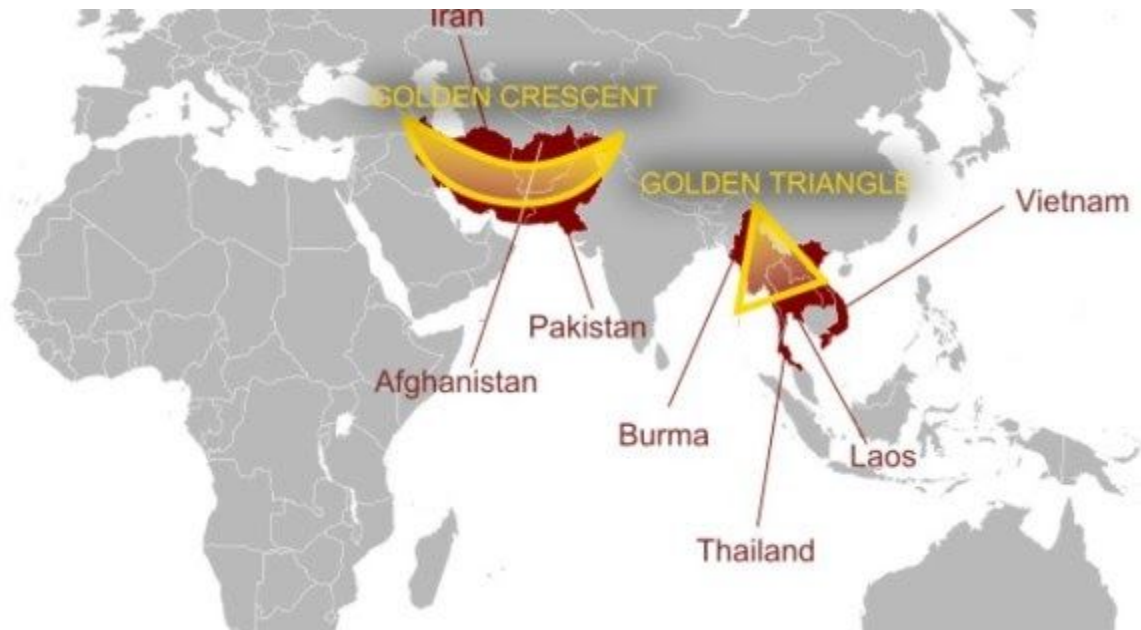
The article will provide you with the details on the Colombo Declaration holding importance for IAS Exam and its Prelims and Mains stages. The topic comes under UPSC GS Mains-II (Bilateral, regional and global groupings and agreements involving India and/or affecting India's interests.)

Who were the attendees in the Colombo Declaration?

- The meeting was attended by delegates from 18 littoral states of the IOR which included seven ministers and Deputy Ministers of Home Affairs/Interior.
- It was even attended by seven international organisations and UN agencies who are involved in counternarcotics activities in the region.
- Upon making the declaration, Tofik Murshudlu, the head of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) stated that *"In the future, the drug enforcement agencies and partner agencies will coordinate their efforts through the mechanism of the Southern Route Partnership which we believe will disrupt the flow of drugs in the Indian Ocean"*.

Why was this resolution adopted?

Two of the biggest narcotics superhighways, the Golden Triangle in South East Asia and the Golden Crescent in South- West Asia, make use of the waters of the Indian Ocean to ferry their goods around illegally. In fact, it is these maritime routes that account for a significant portion of opium and heroin from Afganistan that are trafficked along the East African coast. Both the route of the Golden Triangle and Golden Crescent can be seen in the image below:



The increase in the volumes of illicit drugs along the coastlines of Eastern Africa highlights the importance of the islands that dot the Indian Ocean. Over the last three years, about 9300 kg of heroin has been seized by the Combined Maritime Forces (CMF) in trading dhows, further strengthening the argument of the Indian Ocean being a transit point for the world's narcotics supply.

Thus to better combat this drug menace, the Columbo resolution was adopted

What are the Features of the Colombo Declaration?

- The declaration emphasizes the need for the cooperation amongst the coastal areas, more closely in order to share information in narcotic drug trafficking, provide mutual legal assistance and enforce the maritime law.
- It also calls for the development and expansion of communication. It could be carried out through the Indian Ocean Prosecutors Network of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC's).
- The declaration calls on the littoral states of the Indian Ocean Region to hold meetings on a yearly basis within the framework of the Southern Route Partnership (SRP) of Indian Ocean Forum on Maritime Crime (IOFMC). These states need to assess and share reports on the threat of drug trafficking in the IOR, which would in turn help in developing a coordinated approach for countering such threats.