

Address by Minister Jean Paul Adam
12th Council of Ministers of the Indian Ocean Rim Association for Regional Cooperation
Gurgaon, India

Mr. Chairman, H.E. Mr. Salman Kurshid, Minister of External Affairs of the Republic of India, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

First of all, I would like to congratulate you Mr. Chairman on your recent appointment as Minister of External Affairs of the Republic of India. I would also like to thank the Indian Government for their hospitality. And I would also like to salute the leadership of India to make the Indian Ocean a true space for peace and development.

For us to truly be able to mobilise the potential of our oceans- and mobilise the blue economy- no state can work alone, for the ocean is about shared resources.

Seychelles and Mauritius have earlier this year become the first two countries to jointly agree and submit a proposal to the UN on the co-management of the extended continental shelf that connects our two countries. While we could have spent years going back and forth with respective claims- this simple solution means that the peoples of our two countries can benefit much sooner. We are sharing benefits- and sharing responsibility. For me, this is one of the core tenets of IOR-ARC.

IOR-ARC offers us the ideal platform to share our experiences and best practices, across this shared space. In this 15th year of existence of IOR-ARC, the need to enhance this connectivity is stronger than ever.

Seychelles is pleased and proud to be part of this Indian Ocean family, having rejoined IOR-ARC last year. And especially while we also currently hold the presidency of the Indian Ocean Commission- a grouping of the islands of the South West Indian Ocean. There is a lot of scope for partnership between the IOC and IOR-ARC, and we believe that this is an ideal time to further institutionalize this partnership, perhaps through the establishment of mutual observer status, as well as a Memorandum of Understanding on potential areas of mutual intervention.

I take this opportunity to welcome our neighbours of Comoros, whose accession to IOR-ARC will further strengthen our efforts to promote the connectivity of our ocean.

Mr. Chairman, I would also wish to express our solidarity with the government and people of Madagascar, while they proceed with the political transition leading up to elections in May next year. We would also wish to bring to all partners, of the urgent need to mobilise resources for poverty alleviation in Madagascar to ensure stability, as well as safe and violence free elections. We also urge partners to contribute to the funding of these elections which will require significant international support.

Mr. Chairman, thanks to the determined and coordinated efforts of many nations here with us today- there has been a substantial decrease in piracy attacks in the Indian Ocean. In fact for the first quarter of this year, there have been 56% less successful attacks than during the same period last year.

But we cannot afford any form of complacency.

Because all the nations represented here today, still have too many sons and brothers being held hostage in Somalia. Because every time our fishermen are at sea, we still worry that they may not come home.

Not to mention the huge financial costs that piracy imposes on our region. Even as the number of attacks goes down, the fact that attacks are still likely means that we will still pay unaffordable insurance premiums and that it simply costs us more than it should to trade freely with each other.

The Indian Ocean Commission has set up a regional anti-piracy cell to better coordinate the efforts of its members against piracy. There is an ideal opportunity to build on these experiences in the context of IOR-ARC by also connecting with the efforts of many of our regional partners that have developed similar initiatives.

I would like to inform that Seychelles is in the process of establishing a Regional Anti-Piracy Intelligence Centre (RAPPIC), to better target the financiers of piracy. We believe we can build on this initiative within the IOR-ARC family to ensure that we can truly implement justice in our region, and that we put an end to impunity.

Mr. Chairman,

I would like to particularly take this opportunity to thank the Indian Government, and its armed forces for its diligence and determination in supporting countries of the region in the fight against piracy. I also warmly appreciate all the other nations that have contributed in one way or another to this effort.

A safer Ocean means that Fisheries and Tourism, which are undeniably linked to the Security of our ocean, can flourish within the region.

A sustainable fisheries industry, means that we must plan our fisheries based on a view of the whole of the Indian Ocean, and not just the part we may happen to control. There is a lot of scope to facilitate the sharing of best practices along these lines within our organization, as well as empowering coastal states to improve their access to their own fisheries resources.

As an island nation- the ocean is also our highway. The vast majority of our imports come by sea. In this era of escalating commodity prices, we strongly support the enhancement of regionally based shipping networks. By facilitating trade routes, we will create new opportunities for growth and exchanges.

Furthermore, in our attempts to foster business within member states and within our own economies, it is imperative that we maximize the opportunities by linking our countries with frequent flights, for this is crucial if we want to see business foster within the region and if we want to achieve our vision.

Mr. Chairman, We believe IOR-ARC can also be catalyst for developing business to business exchanges within SMEs of our region. As a small country, our experience has shown us that investment is not, and should not, be the preserve of multinationals. In IOR-ARC we can produce the right environment to facilitate SMEs to invest in each other, even on a small scale, and multiply possibilities for value addition.

Mr. Chairman, the principles of the blue economy imply that we are able to accelerate economic growth, while preserving our environment for future generations. I certainly am convinced that through our grouping, we have the right advocate for the blue economy in our region.

I thank you for your attention.