

**Statement of the Arab Republic of Egypt
At the Extraordinary Meeting of the Council of Ministers of the Indian
Ocean Rim Association for Regional Cooperation (IOR-ARC)**

**Delivered by
His Excellency Ambassador Samir Seif El-Yazal
First Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs**

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Excellency,

At the outset allow, me, Mr. Chairman, to express my delegation's appreciation for the Government and people of the Sultanate of Oman for the warm welcome and the expected hospitality we have encountered since we arrived in Muscat. The fact the Sultanate of Oman is hosting this meeting reflects the active role and commitment of Oman to the cause of this Association.

It gives me great pleasure to address this honourable meeting on behalf of the Government of the Arab Republic of Egypt in its capacity as Dialogue Partner for Trade and Investment with the IOR-ARC a status that Egypt formally received at the Second Ministerial Meeting of the IOR-ARC held in Maputo in March 1999

On this occasion, I wish to express Egypt's gratefulness for the position adopted by the members of the IOR-ARC regarding Egypt's admission as Dialogue Partner. I would also like to extend our congratulations for Bangladesh, Iran, Seychelles, Thailand and the United Arab Emirates who were admitted as members of the Association, as well as Japan, which was welcomed as Dialogue Partner for Trade and Investment.

Egypt feels privileged with that acquired status which conforms to Egypt's political will and determination to play both a positive and active role in the formulation to play both a positive and active role in the formulation elaboration, implementation and follow-up of projects and programs of common interest and benefit with the members of the IOR-ARC in the relevant fields particularly as the Association includes members from different regions of the world, namely Africa, Asia and Australia. With whom Egypt is keen to develop close relations.

There is no doubt that the participation of Egypt in the Meeting of the Working Group on Trade and Investment, which is addressed projects and programs related to trade facilitation, technical cooperation and exchange of views on relevant international and regional trade development as well as its participation in the Special Meeting of the Committee of Senior Officials both held prior to our present meeting demonstrate the firmness and seriousness with which Egypt undertakes its status as Dialogue Partner with the Association.

We consider the Special Meeting between the members of the IOR-ARC and officials from Egypt and Japan, in their capacity as Dialogue Partners, to address the issue of promotion and enhancement of economic, trade and investment cooperation between the IOR-ARC and the Dialogue Partners in the work program of the IOR-ARC, in particular those projects relating to trade and investment issues constitute a constructive step forwards involving the partners in the work of the Association for the mutual benefit of both sides and in furtherance of the objectives of the Association. This being said, I would like to hereby reiterate Egypt's continued interest in acquiring a full member status in the Association.

In the meantime Egypt seeks to maximize the participation of the Dialogue Partners in the activities of the Association, including in the IOR Business Forum and the IOR Academic Group which could play a vital role both in enhancing the involvement of the civil society in our countries in the work of the Association as well as ensuring mutual enrichment and better coordination towards a more effective implementation of its programs and projects.

My delegation particularly welcomes the conclusion of agreement by members regarding the instruments of acceptance the rules of procedure the headquarters agreement all of which contribute to the development of the institutional setup of IOR-ARC.

The adoption of such documents adds to the already existing ones including the Charter of the Association which embodies important principles and objectives including enhancement of regional cooperation: peaceful coexistence, exchange of benefits and non-intervention in the internal affairs of countries: as well as furtherance of sustainable and balanced development and dialogue in international for on relevant international economic issues.

My delegation notes with interest the focus of the Association on the issues of trade promotion and liberalization, investment, cooperation in the fields of science, technology tourism, infrastructure development human resource development and the projects already approved in the work program of the association with a view to substantiating these common fields of interest.

I would like to refer to the fact that Egypt accords great importance for its future cooperation with the members of the IOR-ARC, taking into account that Egypt is increasingly being integrated in a network of complementary trade liberalization arrangements including its admission in the COMESA which covers more than 200 million people in Africa the conclusion in the very near future of Egypt's partnership agreement with the European Union positive developments towards the implementation of the Arab Free Trade Area Agreement and finally the potential regional cooperation arrangements in the Middle East and North Africa in the aftermath of the hopeful successful conclusion of the peace process in the Middle East.

In this context Egypt's hosting a COMESA regions economic conference open for both government and business representatives from all over the world by the end of February 2000, and is also hosting the next session of the MENA Conference in the course of the year 2000. All these developments and events should make Egypt more attractive for future trade and investment cooperation with the government and the private sector of the IOR-ARC members.

In conclusion, Please rest assured, Mr. Chairman, of Egypt's deep commitment to the work of IOR-ARC and its continued support to its activities.