

**STATEMENT FROM H.E. KAMAL KHARAZI,
THE ISLAMIC REPUBLIC OF IRAN
AT THE
EXTRAORDINARY MEETING OF THE COUNCIL OF MINISTERS OF IOR-ARC AT
MUSCAT, OMAN
22-23 JANUARY 2000**

In the name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful

Mr. Chairman,

I am delighted to be present in this august body for the first time. I take this opportunity in congratulating your election as the Chairman of the Council of Ministers. My congratulations are also extended to other members of the bureau. I am confident that our meeting will achieve fruitful conclusions under your wise and able Chairmanship. Meanwhile, I would also like to thank you and the Sultanate of Oman for the hospitality extended to my delegation.

Mr. Chairman,

As you are well aware, Islamic Republic of Iran's application for the membership in the IOR-ARC was accepted by the Second Meeting of the Council of Ministers in March 1999. On behalf of my Government, I would like to express appreciation to you, to the distinguished Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Mozambique who informed me of the acceptance, and the other members of the Association who extended their valuable support to our application. Islamic Republic of Iran is determined, in cooperation with other members, to endeavour for the realization of the noble goals of the Association. This, I am sure, will in turn contribute to the welfare and progress of the countries of the Indian Ocean Rim as well as peace and security of the region.

Mr. Chairman,

My government believes that regional and sub-regional cooperation can be regarded as a basis for the enhancement of inter and intra regional and subsequently international cooperation. There is no doubt that economic, social and cultural similarities, though in some cases are restrictive, have an effective role in shaping the nature of regional and sub-regional cooperation. The initiative to form the IOR-RAC, in my opinion, is a step ahead of sub-regional and regional cooperation, which will open new horizons and facilities for the member states. Countries with various degree of economic development can establish wider commercial and economic relations by complementing each other and consequently prepare the ground for the interaction of various cultures. The Islamic Republic of Iran has always welcomed any initiative for the enhancement of cooperation among countries located at the Indian Ocean Rim. Fortunately, two bodies namely Indian Ocean Academic Group and Indian Ocean Rim Business Group have been envisaged as consultative arms in the present arrangements to work effectively in both directions.

Considering that the 53rd Session of the General Assembly of the United Nations has adopted the year 2001 as the year of Dialogue among Civilizations, the IOR Academic Group can play a

great role in academic exchanges as well as interaction of cultures by putting forward new initiatives. Undoubtedly, this interaction will help to develop economic and trade relations.

In my view, our young Association has a good start in realizing its goals, indicating a promising future of concrete cooperation in the fields of trade and investment. The projects deliberated in the related bodies of the Association should be outlined in a way that is inclusive and takes into account the interests of each and all of the members. This will create sufficient incentive for them to participate actively in the work of the Association. We believe that establishment of a data base covering trade and customs policies and regulations as well as investment laws is a crucial step for getting familiar with each other's market potentials and a qualitative leap forward for the development of trade in the region. Based on this information, further steps will be taken for trade facilitation and technical cooperation.

Mr. Chairman,

In conclusion, once more, I would like to emphasize that my country stands ready to actively participate in the discussions and future projects of the Association for the realization of its goals.