

**PLENARY STATEMENT BY H.E. RAHARISOA JULIETTE
JOELSON
MINISTER OF TOURISM
OF THE REPUBLIC OF MADAGASCAR
AT THE FIRST MINISTERIAL MEETING
THE INDIAN OCEAN RIM - ASSOCIATION FOR REGIONAL
COOPERATION
(IOR-ARC)
Grand-Bay, Mauritius
6 March 1997**

**Your Excellency, Mr. CASSAM UTEEM, President of the Republic of Mauritius,
Your Excellency, Mr. Paul BERENGER, Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of
Foreign Affairs, International and Regional Co-operation
Your Excellencies, Ministers of Member States
Ladies and Gentlemen,**

Like my august predecessors, it's a privilege for me to address sincerely salutations to the honourable delegates here present. Would you allow me, first, to address my warm thanks to the Government of Mauritius for his initiative to organise the present Conference. Indeed, we are all fully aware of their competence while they assured the coordination of the transitory structure of our association.

I am also most grateful to the seven countries of the IOR Central Group who have kindly invited my country to last September's Inter-governmental Meeting. Indeed, they might as well have chosen any other country of the Indian Ocean South-East sub-region. We are all aware of the importance of that meeting since its main goal was to finalise the documents to be submitted to this Conference.

In the present context of globalisation characterised by a harsh competition, it is quite a deed to try to set up a voluntary based Association. We may nonetheless congratulate ourselves as we managed to bring the negotiations to their final terms and are now able to proceed to the adoption of the IOR-ARC Charter.

Madagascar, for his part, feels confident in the future of the Association. In that respect, we declare solemnly that we adhere to the spirit of consensus of the Charter and appreciate greatly the innovating aspects of its principles, especially the participative approach which is open altogether to Governments, Business spheres and Academic circles.

Besides, the Charter has provided for a supple institutional mechanism and a system of cooperation designed in such a way that they do not stand as hindrances to the rights and obligations members-states might have concluded with the previously established regional organisations. In other words, IOR-ARC will be able to live together and even to cooperate with the regional economic and trade apparatuses such as the IOC (Indian Ocean Commission) the COMESA (Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa) or the ASEAN (Association of South-East Asian Nations).

As far as the Work Programme is concerned, the participative voluntary based approach announced by the Charter finds itself fully reflected on the relevant projects that have met the agreement of the Second Inter-Governmental Meeting. Madagascar gives its support to this Work Programme and notes with satisfaction that some of the identified projects have already been launched. In that respect, I would like to thank the member-states who have contributed to the launching of these projects and I recognise their abnegation and goodwill, such rare qualities which demonstrated, if need be, how mature and how dynamic the Association is.

Nonetheless' as the 1992's Rio Summit has it, Environment is part and parcel of Development. Consequently, the Malagasy Delegation thinks it would be important to introduce such projects as "Biological Diversity Preservation" and "Protection of Oceans and Seas" in the work Programme. In that respect, we kindly invite member-states interested in these ideas of project to join us.

As for the resources mobilisation, we would like to suggest that the Association made an appeal to external sponsorships, owing to the limited means of the developing member-states and the extensive scope of the activities.

Ladies and Gentlemen

We already pointed out that our Association does not mean to be in any way the substitute to the member-states' multilateral or bilateral obligations, but on the contrary it aspires to be their complement. It is not necessary to remind you that the main weakness of most regional organisations lies in the lack of complementarity and the lack of comparative advantages among members. Fortunately, we are sure that is not case within the IOR-ARC group as it includes countries with important and various economic potentialities.

I would suggest that the determination of each member state's contribution should take into consideration its gross national products (GNP) as well as its performances in the import- export field. Moreover, in order to instaur a sustained dynamism within the sub-regions of the IOR-ARC, it would be advisable to set up a rotating Secretariat endowed with a light co-ordination structure.

Still about institutional matters, in our opinion, the introduction of French as a language of work on the same level as English, seems, essential. It has been proven from experience that the use of both languages in international organisations has greatly contributed to the facilitation of information flow, technology transfer and cultural relations among the member-states.

Ladies and Gentlemen

With the setting-up of the IOR-ARC, new horizons and great economic and trade perspectives lie ahead. The Malagasy Government would like to express the entire commitment to the achievement of the purposes of the Charter and their best wishes for the first Ministerial Conference.

To conclude, Madagascar notes with interest that recently, a few countries, namely Seychelles, Pakistan, Thailand, Bangladesh, Egypt, Iran and France have expressed their wishes to join the Association. Such applications constitute tangible evidence of the worthfulness of our common work

Thanks you very much for your kind attention.