

Address by Dr Arvin Boolell
**Minister of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International
Trade**
Of
The Republic of Mauritius

1st IOR-ARC Economic and Business Conference

Le Meridien Hotel, 4th July 2013 at 11h45 hours

Dr the Hon. Navinchandra Ramgoolam, Prime Minister

H.E. Shri Anand Sharma , Minister of Commerce and Industry of the Republic of India and current Chair of the IOR-ARC

Hon. Ministers and Heads of Delegation,

Mr Kailash Ruhee, Chief of Staff and former Director of the IOR-ARC

Coordinating Secretariat

Ambassador Mr Bhagirath, Secretary General of the IOR-ARC

Excellencies and Distinguished Guests,

All protocol observed

It is indeed a great pleasure for me to welcome you all and I wish to thank the Honourable Prime Minister, Dr Navinchandra Ramgoolam for having graciously accepted to deliver the keynote address at this 1st IOR-ARC Economic and Business Conference.

Let me add a special word of welcome for my colleague Ministers from overseas and their official and business delegations as well as for Minister Anand Sharma, who motivated the convening of this Conference.

Ladies and Gentlemen

This first Economic and Business Conference is an important milestone in the operationalisation of one of the three IOR-ARC pillars, namely Government, Business and Academia. The choice of the theme, *“Deepening Economic Linkages for Balanced, Inclusive and Sustainable Growth”* highlights our common concern on issues such as sustainable development, energy security, handling the effects of climate change and availing of ocean resources. These issues will become inextricable components of all future business activities.

We are confident that this Conference to-day, will give further impetus to trade and investment between our countries at a time when the effects of the financial crisis are still being felt. It will equally forge greater ties between the states around the Indian Ocean which counts in its midst, countries of an emerged Asia, and a rapidly emerging Africa.

The opportunities that Asia and Africa can provide are huge as the business community is already aware. The purpose of the B to B meetings to-morrow is to facilitate the connect of businesses between Asia and

Africa and within Asia and Africa. The challenge will be to develop partnerships across work and business cultures to avail of the growing markets in Asia and Africa.

Allow me, **Ladies and Gentlemen**, to plead in favour of a greater involvement of African states of the IOR-ARC in the global and regional chain of supply through greater value addition to the natural resources of Africa. Our objective should be to build bridges with the Continent by supporting sustainable development. We are pleased that many IOR-ARC companies are supporting sustainable practices of doing business and investing in Africa. We need to encourage this trend. We equally need to work with our dialogue and other development partners in this direction.

Let me therefore, suggest that the IOR-ARC looks into the creation of an enabling business environment within the IOR-ARC and the development of a process whereby our member States will be supported to improve their ease of doing business indexes individually and collectively.

Through our constructive discussions on economic and business issues at the conference to-day, let us work towards defining a common agenda for

cooperation between our countries and our two billion people with the active participation of the business community.

One available vehicle to support this aspiration is to use the IOR-ARC platform of Investment Promotion Agencies (IPAs) which this Conference proposes to set up. We look to this collaboration between our agencies.

We also look forward to innovative partnerships to avail in a sustainable manner of business opportunities that lie in the ocean that binds us all, the Indian Ocean.

To conclude, I would like to urge both public and private sector representatives assembled here today, to come up with proposals that will lay the firm foundation for fruitful cooperation between the Government and the business community in the attainment of our common objective for inclusive and sustainable development.

I thank you for your attention.

Dr A.Boolell
Le Meridien
4 July 2013