

IOR-ARC Council of Ministers' Meeting

2 November 2012, Gurgaon, India

Australian Opening Statement

Parliamentary Secretary for Pacific Island Affairs

Parliamentary Secretary for Foreign Affairs

The Hon Richard Marles MP

I would like to thank the Government of India for the extremely efficient, generous arrangements made for our meeting today – and for the suite of officials, academics and business meetings earlier this week. It is great to have a chance to visit Gurgaon and see “Incredible India” in motion. I also congratulate our Host and Chair on his promotion to Foreign Minister and I very much enjoyed our meeting yesterday.

Australia wants our discussions and decisions to result in outcomes. We want outcomes which will make a practical difference to our members from this meeting, ones which will really add value for all of us.

Australia is ready to contribute to those outcomes. We are today proposing a package of new projects worth \$ 1.3 million, in addition to measure announced last year. These will concentrate on new fields within the key priority areas.

We want to help find out how our oceans work – and how best to make it work for us, for our collective benefit. We wish to organise a new workshop for experts from IOR-ARC countries in ocean forecasting to meet, to build capacity, to progress, validate and apply Indian Ocean Forecasting Systems.

Addressing climate variability is also another important area to address in the Indian Ocean region. We have an initiative to help strengthen adaptation to climate variability, which will help to evaluate capacity among IOR-ARC members to identify, develop and implement appropriate adaptations based on common understanding of the impacts of climate variability.

It is also important to build the capacity of member officials in maritime security and safety. As such we will host a course in maritime regulation and enforcement, and Maritimes security for officials working in this area. In addition, Australia will also undertake an Indian Ocean Post State Control Capacity Development Program. This will improve the application of national Port State Control procedures in the Indian Ocean region – and will involve those members affiliated with the Indian Ocean Memorandum of Understanding on Port State Control.

Furthermore, we believe more can be done among members to reduce our risks of disasters. We wish to build closer cooperation in this area so would like to host (or co-host) a meeting for officials from IOR-ARC National Disaster Management Offices. We hope that this will allow disaster management officials to work together further to find new ways to cooperate in this important field.

While we do not want to overload our system; nor to over-reach with our plans, we do not want to keep building on the strong foundations set by India as Chair.

To that end, we want the membership of IOR-ARC to cover more of the countries which call the Indian Ocean their home and want to congratulate Comoros on their membership. We want our links with other regional bodies – IOC, AEAN and SADC especially – to be closer, more frequent, and more comprehensive. We want our list of effective, practical projects to grow year by year. And we want our level of ambition to rise, to match our growing sense of common purpose and common interests.

Next year, when we meet again, Australia will have the honour of taking the Chair of this group. We have worked closely and collaboratively with India at this Council as at the last. For the next two years, we will depend on the advice and guidance of India – and of Indonesia.

All the membership, though, will need to work together, as we will today, to give ever more substance and momentum to our Organisation and to our regional identity.