

**Opening Remarks and Presentation of the Chairperson's Report by  
H.E. Mr. Salman Khurshid at the  
12<sup>th</sup> Council of Ministers (COM) Meeting  
2 November 2012, Gurgaon, India**

Excellencies,  
Distinguished Leaders and Delegates,  
Representatives of the Media,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I extend a very warm welcome to all of you to the 12<sup>th</sup> Council of Ministers' Meeting of Indian Ocean Rim Association for Regional Cooperation at Gurgaon. The city of Gurgaon is rightfully called the industrial and financial powerhouse of the State of Haryana, and its vitality and dynamism perfectly complement those of India's Capital, New Delhi

I do hope that you are all comfortable and have had an opportunity for some rest after your arrival.

This is the second and last meeting of the Council of Ministers under India's current Chairmanship of our Association. Over the last year, since we assumed the Chair at Bengaluru last November, India has worked closely with her IORARC partners to further deepen and consolidate our cooperation in pursuit of our shared objectives.

We have taken our agenda forward and a number of activities have been successfully concluded in each of the six priority areas identified for IORARC at Bengaluru, namely maritime security and safety, disaster risk reduction, trade & investment facilitation, fisheries management, academic and S&T cooperation, and tourism and cultural exchanges.

It gives me pleasure to report that several programmes were undertaken under these priority areas. These include a professional course for diplomats from IORARC countries, a workshop on coastal zone management, a meeting of Heads of National Archives of our countries, a mobile exhibition of archival documents from IORARC countries and a separate IORARC segment in the forthcoming International Film Festival of India in Goa this month. The first meeting of the Core Group on Cultural Cooperation, the 13<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Working Group of Heads of Mission and a meeting to finalise the Draft Constitution of the University Mobility in the Indian Ocean Region were held in South Africa earlier this year. The Regional Centre for Science and Technology Transfer hosted a number of useful programmes to further our cooperation in the arena of Science and Technology.

The IORARC Report on Trade and Investment prepared by the Indian think-tank 'Research and Information Systems for Developing Countries' (RIS) was released followed by two very useful workshops on Trade Facilitation and Customs Harmonization, and on Trade Policy, held in India and Australia earlier this year. The active participation by member countries in all these programmes is a reaffirmation of our collective commitment to our Association. These initiatives have helped further consolidation of the cooperative agenda.

A mid-term meeting of Committee of Senior Officials was held in Mauritius in May this year under India's Chairmanship to take stock of the progress in our cooperation. India has made the payment of US\$ 1 million towards the Special Fund as was committed by us at Bengaluru in November 2011.

These are a few highlights of the activities over the last one year. The Secretary General and the Chairman of the Committee of Senior Officials would provide details later in the day.

India, as the Chair, is committed to maintain the momentum gained by our Association during the last one year in pursuit of our aim to deliver tangible benefits to the peoples of the IOR region.

Excellencies,

Before I proceed further, I would like to place on record our appreciation for our officials, business chambers and academics, as well as the IORARC Secretariat, for the hard work they have put in to prepare our meeting today.