

## MAURITIUS

### AGENDA ITEM 2: STATEMENT BY H.E. MR. A.P. NEEWOOR. GOSK, CSK, SECRETARY FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS at the IOR-ARC Council Meeting, Gurgaon, 2 November 2012

#### Chairperson

#### Hon. Ministers

#### Distinguished Representatives of Dialogue Partners (UK, France, Egypt, China, Japan) and of the Observer Organizations (the Indian Ocean Tourism Organization and the Indian Ocean Research Group)

#### Distinguished Delegates

At the outset, let me seize this opportunity to congratulate H.E. Mr. Salman Khurshid for assuming his new important portfolio as the Minister of External Affairs of the Republic of India. We look forward to work closely under your able leadership, and we are confident that you will steer our Group ahead for the achievement of our common objectives for the next decade.

I would also like to express my profound gratitude to the Government of the Republic of India for the warm welcome and kind hospitality extended to the Mauritian delegation.

I wish to welcome Comoros as the new member of our organization as well as United States as the new Dialogue Partner.

Excellency,

It is indeed a great pleasure for me to address this distinguished group while we are reflecting on the theme “**IOR at 15 – a decade ahead**”. We are here today to take stock of the achievements of our organization and to reflect on the experiences and the challenges ahead. I am confident that we shall come up with constructive decisions for the future direction of our organization and we shall prioritize our actions towards this end.

Mauritius, as a founding member of the organization, has always and will always provide the necessary support and assistance to the organization. Some of you will surely recollect how we have worked together for the launching of the Indian Ocean Rim Association for Regional Co-operation in Mauritius on 7 March 1997 at the first Ministerial Meeting.

Since then we have come a long way and some of the important achievements of the IOR-ARC are:

- (i) The creation of the Special Fund in 2006 to speed up the implementation of projects;
- (ii) The setting up of the Regional Centre for Science and Technology Transfer (RCSTT) in 2008 aimed at developing research and support in new technologies
- (iii) The adoption of a new Charter in 2010 in the wake of the global changes;
- (iv) Creation of the Fisheries Support Unit in 2010 targeting mutual cooperation on fisheries related activities; and

Further, we also expect that the imminent establishment of the Maritime Transport Council will promote cooperation in maritime transport activities and enhance the much needed connectivity in our region.

We are very grateful to India for its significant contribution to the Special Fund. The adoption of the new procedures relating to the Funding Administration will ensure project implementation to be accelerated. We believe the speeding up of the disbursement of the Funds would encourage other Member States and Dialogue Partners to contribute to the Special Fund.

Excellency,

I would like to share some of our thoughts that would give new impetus to our organization. With its new mandate, as set out in the revised Charter 2010, there are major milestones that IOR-ARC could achieve in the next decade. In this endeavour, the support of all Members is important to enable the effective empowering of our organization to meet the upcoming challenges.

After 15 years of existence, the scope of the IOR-ARC has extended from a platform where issues of common interest were discussed to a dynamic regional grouping, willing to cooperate in areas like trade and investment, tourism, energy, disaster, protection of environment and transport. The time has now come to set out targets with a new vision and to unleash the dynamic complementarities among our member states. The six priority areas agreed upon at Bengaluru reflect this paradigm shift.

Excellency,

I therefore believe that we need to prioritize our actions and focus on the following issues:

**(i) Trade**

First, on the trade front at the inception of the IOR-ARC, there was a serious challenge in embarking on a full-fledged trade agenda with the result that the economic integration route was avoided. We firmly believe that the inclusion of trade in the agenda of our organization, is critical for our economic integration.

**(ii) Transport**

In the area of transport and logistics, discussions are on-going for the improvement of the capacity, frequency and reliability of air and maritime transport, in particular cargo traffic as part of the strategy for the region to be connected and competitive. The Maritime Transport Council hosted by the Sultanate of Oman, is set to give an added boost to maritime transport.

**(iii) Maritime Security**

Mauritius attaches much importance to maritime security which is also being discussed in other fora such as EU, AU, SADC, COMESA and IOC. As part of the Indian Ocean Rim, we need to work together to enhance our capacity to address the maritime security issues for the region.

Excellency,

These are the few ideas that I wanted to share with the Group. It is our sincere desire that such orientations will help our organization in fostering our common goals.

I thank you, Chairperson.