

**IOR-ARC 12<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Council of Ministers (COM)**  
**Gurgaon, India**  
**2 November 2012**

**Country Statement by H.E. Mr. Datuk Richard Riot Jaem, Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs for**  
**YB DFM**  
**at General Debate Session**

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**Mr. Chairman,**  
**Excellencies,**  
**Ladies and Gentlemen,**

Let me begin by expressing my sincere congratulations to you, Mr. Chairman, on your recent appointment as the Minister of External Affairs of India. In this regard, I take this opportunity to wish you continued success in your new and distinguished position.

2. I wish also to express my deep gratitude to you, Excellency, as well as, to the Government and people of India, for the warm hospitality and excellent arrangements that were extended to me and my delegation, during our stay here in this vibrant city of Gurgaon, for this important gathering of the Indian Ocean Rim-Association for Regional Co-operation (IOR-ARC).

3. This is my first time to this part of India, though I was in Bangalore last year. I am indeed delighted to be in this city, while getting a glimpse of Delhi, yesterday.

**Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,**

4. The Indian Ocean Rim countries represent a melting pot of diverse ethnicities, cultures and religions. From the statement made by distinguished colleagues before me, I take note that we all here for a common goal, and that is of expanding and deepening cooperation among us.

5. In this regard, Malaysia believes that IOR-ARC remains a viable and important platform for close cooperation among the Indian Ocean Rim countries. As an organization that has been in existence for more than 15 years, IOR-ARC has indeed grown in its importance of intensifying mutual understanding and strengthening close partnerships among its member countries.

6. To make IOR-ARC more effective and to further increase its profile, Malaysia is of the view that IOR-ARC members should consolidate further and draw focus on tangible deliverables. There is no doubt that IOR-ARC has the potential to become an important mechanism to help member countries achieve their national development agendas.

7. For that to happen, we certainly need to establish a niche for IOR-ARC with practical programmes and initiatives that are based on the existing principles of open regionalism and consensus.

8. At the same time, it is pertinent for IOR-ARC programmes to be conducted based on the voluntary spirit of inclusive participation and in accordance with the members' ability and capacity.

**Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,**

9. Malaysia attaches great importance to the IOR-ARC initiatives and has taken the necessary measures to prioritise projects, especially in the areas of education, trade, investment and human capacity building.

10. One of the main opportunities for cooperation identified by Malaysia is in the area of education. Malaysia believes that there is great potential for education cooperation among IOR-ARC member countries. Based on this spirit, Malaysia through the National University of Malaysia, or commonly known as UKM, has presented a concept paper during the IOR Academic Group meeting earlier this week. The concept paper is aimed at the eventual establishment of a Center for Multilateral Education.

11. The initial concept of this proposed Center for Multilateral Education would focus on entrepreneurship education, which is increasingly being recognized as one of the key drivers of generating economic growth, spurring productivity and innovation, as well as, creating employment opportunities.

12. In this regard, Malaysia hopes to institutionalize our joint efforts to upgrade our educators, particularly in delivering quality and effective sharing of knowledge in entrepreneurship education for IOR-ARC members.

13. In the area of trade and investment, Malaysia remains committed to ensuring the nation's economic cooperation with IOR-ARC member countries, continue to flourish. Despite the volatile global economic outlook, in particular the Eurozone financial crisis, Malaysia is pleased to note that the total trade between Malaysia with IOR-ARC member countries has continued to expand.

14. For the year 2011, total trade between Malaysia and IOR-ARC member countries increased by approximately 13 percent to the tune of USD133.7 billion, as compared to the previous year. This has contributed to approximately 32 percent of Malaysia's total external trade. Hence, Malaysia is heartened by the growing intra-regional trade, such as trade among the IOR-ARC member countries.

**Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,**

15. Malaysia echoes the sentiments of other IOR-ARC members on the need for us to work closer for the greater benefit of us all. The positive interaction among IOR-ARC partners over the years is a fundamental step towards the right direction that would significantly contribute towards a strengthened IOR-ARC cooperation.

16. In this context, Malaysia welcomes the Union of Comoros as a new member of IOR-ARC. Pursuant to Seychelles re-joining IOR-ARC last year, the new membership of Comoros is a manifest that the work undertaken by our Association is gaining more recognition among the international community, and that, there is an increasing interest towards IOR-ARC. We should capitalize on this momentum and continue to intensify cooperation to realize the objectives, and achieve the tangible targets of IOR-ARC.

**Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,**

17. Finally, I wish to once again commend our host, India, for the excellent arrangements and for the efforts made to ensure the success of this meeting. I look forward to fruitful deliberations with colleagues for the rest of the meeting.

Thank you.