

Statement by

H.E. Mr. Mohammad Mehdi Akhondzadeh, Deputy Foreign Minister of the Islamic Republic of Iran, For Legal and International Affairs, Before the 12th Meeting of the Council of Ministers of Indian Ocean Rim Association for Regional Cooperation, 2 November 2012 – Gurgaon, New Delhi

**Mr. Chairman
Honorable Ministers,
Ladies and Gentlemen**

First of all, I should express my gratitude to H.E. Salman Khurshid, distinguished Minister of External Affairs of India for warm hospitality in charming city of Gurgaon and for the arrangements of the current Meeting of Council of Ministers of Indian Ocean Rim Association for Regional Cooperation, and its sideline gatherings to foster public and private engagement in the work of the Association. I should thank the Secretariat of IOR-ARC for their elaborate arrangements. We found the report of and Ambassador Bhagirath, IOR-ARC Secretary-General a substantive and useful document.

Mr. Chairman

The Indian Ocean is the world's third largest Ocean which carries half of the world's container ships, one third of the bulk cargo traffic, and two-thirds of the world's oil shipments. It is indeed a lifeline of international trade and economy. The Indian Ocean Rim with population of 2 billion constitutes around a third of the world's population which makes it a massive market. It is rich in strategic and precious minerals and metals and other natural resources, valuable marine resources ranging from food fisheries to raw material and energy for industries. It has abundant agricultural wealth in terms of the variety and mass of arable land and has significant human resources and technological capabilities. It is a region of much diversity, in culture, race, religion, economic development, and strategic interests.

IOR-ARC has been designed to build and expand understanding and mutually beneficial cooperation. Emanation of Indian Ocean Association is, indeed, an important manifestation of the revival of interest in cooperation among countries of our region.

The Islamic Republic of Iran attaches great importance to multilateral cooperation as an important means of growth and development of the countries of the region. IOR-ARC could play a unique role in further development of the region in different matters pertaining to 6 priority areas designated by Council of Ministers. In this context I maintain that the role of the subsidiary bodies of the Association is of great importance, and the initiatives and performance of Working Group on Trade and Investment (WGTI), Business Forum (IORBF), and Academic Group (IORAG) according to their mandate should be supported by us as policy making body of Association.

Mr. Chairman

We are happy to note that science and technology is one key area for cooperation in the Association. We have hosted Regional Center of Science and Technology Transfer (RCSTT) in Tehran, and accordingly we have done every effort to support the Centre in materializing its aims and goals. The Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran as host of RCSTT has assisted the Centre on a sustainable basis, in order to enable it become a global centre of excellence in science and technology transfer.

Recently the Cabinet of Ministers has adopted a financial decision of granting annually 200/000 US Dollar to the Centre. This grant has been allocated from this year onward, and we sincerely hope other member states of IOR-ARC initiate their financial grants to the Centre in order to enable it achieve its noble goals.

Mr. Chairman

Allow me to touch upon some of the important issues before our Council. First, with regards to proposal of increase in annual membership contribution, we believe we should be concerned and opt for enhancement of functioning of the Secretariat, and in this regard we support any proposal proposed by Committee of Senior Officials to enhance capabilities of the Secretariat in performing its mandate.

Secondly, my Delegation while commending India for voluntary contribution of 1 million US Dollars to the Special Fund, supports the agreed text of the Administrative Arrangements for Special Fund. We believe designing joint projects, co-funding for projects and due attention to less developed countries and projects which merely target Association priorities areas are of vital importance.

We believe there are more rooms for our Association in international arena, especially cooperation with United Nations and intergovernmental bodies in the region and beyond. In this regard we support obtaining observer status with UN General Assembly which first of all promotes international recognition of the Association and secondly will be a base for substantive engagement and to utilize deliberations and consultations in these bodies.

Mr. Chairman

As human beings are the focus of development, it is imperative to create an enabling environment for development as well as sound macroeconomic policies conducive to high investment rates for further enhancement of human resources in regional countries including mine. Unfortunately and contrary to our common expectations, the international community has witnessed a tendency to divide the world into unnecessary rival camps through exclusionist policies, which would adversely affect free trade as well as integration of all states into the world economy.

A majority of countries in our region are still confronted by numerous shared and common problems and great challenges such as extreme poverty, global food crisis and continued food insecurity, high level of unemployment, external debt burden, and lack of financial aid and climate change negative effects.

We believe that countries of our region should work on a vigorous, coordinated and comprehensive global response to these challenges, and to undertake immediate actions and initiatives to overcome these challenges. We need to shape a comprehensive plan of action with a focus on eradicating poverty, and deployment and transfer of advanced technologies. We should be cognizant of the fact that Coercive economic measures, including unilateral sanctions, against countries of our region violates and undermines international law and severely threaten freedom of trade and investment.

Last but not least, Mr. Chairman, We are confident that this Council of Ministers Meeting will certainly contribute to the efforts aimed at expanding regional cooperation and to the promotion and enhancement of our Association.

Once again I would like to extend my gratitude to the Government of India for wonderful arrangements and in particular Your Excellency, the Minister of External Affairs for chairing our Meeting, and I thank you for your attention.