

24 October 2012

**Statement by Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Thailand
Mr. Navin Boonseat
at the 12th Council of Ministers Meeting of the Indian Ocean Rim
Association for Regional Co-operation (IOR-ARC)
2 November 2012
Gurgaon, Republic of India**

Mr. Chairman, Excellencies, Distinguished Delegates,

May I first begin by joining my colleagues in expressing my gratitude to the Government of the Republic of India for the excellent arrangements and the warm hospitality extended to me and my delegation. My special thanks also go to the IOR-ARC Secretariat for their hard work in support of our association.

Excellencies,

IOR-ARC is a unique regional forum, comprising countries from Africa, the Middle East, and Asia. The diversity of its membership and the complementarities of their strengths should be an asset that would help reach our association's untapped potentials.

We **welcome and commend India and Australia's leading role in revitalizing IOR-ARC cooperation**. Their contribution in key areas of cooperation is well recognized by the member states. With our shared political will and close collaboration, I believe that this forum will provide an opportunity for all of us to fully utilize our shared economic potentials towards sustainable growth and balanced development in the region.

In this regard, **Thailand sees the importance of the active role of Dialogue Partners**. Meaningful interaction should be strengthened to enhance regional capacity building. Let me share our experience in cooperating with Development Partners under sub-regional frameworks such as Mekong – Japan Cooperation, Lower Mekong Initiative and Mekong – Republic of Korea. Thailand is working closely with various Development Partners to establish a network of collaborators for our development cooperation projects under a trilateral structure. Participation from Development Partners aims to help our region achieve its goal and support the implementation of our projects through provision of external sources of funding, insights and expertise. These Development Partners play a crucial role as co-drivers in moving forward the projects and activities of the relevant cooperative framework.

Indeed, a more focused and action-oriented approach is required if we were to make our cooperation more concrete and more relevant to the needs of member states. **There are some key priority areas of cooperation** that I would like to share with you.

First, since **enhanced regional connectivity** plays a vital part in our regional economic and social development, Thailand fully supports the development of port and harbor infrastructure in the region. We have committed to develop with the blessing of the Government of Myanmar the Dawei Deep Sea Port and Dawei Economic Zone. Once completed, it will link Dawei to Laem Chabang Deep Sea Port in Thailand, which will create a strategic land bridge linking the South China Sea with the Indian Ocean. Equally important, Dawei will create another

strategic sea link between the Mekong Sub-region and India through Chennai Port. Perhaps we could take inspiration from this ongoing effort to explore the possibility of upgrading other aspects of the shipping infrastructure and logistic chains in the IOR-ARC region.

Second, on **maritime security**, Thailand has actively participated in regional and international fora such as the ASEAN Maritime Forum, International Maritime Organization and the Contact Group on Piracy off the Coast of Somalia. Like others, we believe that to effectively address piracy, we need to address the problem at its root causes, be they poverty, instability or the lack of capacity. We also hosted a number of regional workshops and seminars to promote sharing of best practices and experiences among member states. Furthermore, Thailand is considering providing training for Somalia's law enforcement agencies.

Third, another issue that we can work closely is **fisheries**. The IOR-ARC Fisheries Support Unit in Oman can be an effective mechanism in supporting the exchange of know-how as well as promoting trade, research and management in the field of fisheries. I am delighted that we are now in the process of developing a draft Action Plan of the Fisheries Support Unit. We propose that the issues in the Action Plan should include extraterritorial fishing, maritime safety for fishing boat operations and aquaculture.

Fourth, on **trade and investment**, greater participation in trade fairs, exhibitions, business activities will help increase trade and investment among us. It is essential that we promote regular exchanges of information relating to trade and customs regulations in order to facilitate a favorable business and investment environment among the IOR-ARC countries.

In this regard, I wish to highlight the importance of the private sector and public-private partnership. We all recognize the vital role of entrepreneurs and private industries in promoting trade, investment and tourism services trade. While we as governments welcome enterprises to help boost economic growth, the business sector needs our support to ensure a smooth run.

I therefore support the idea of having a **dialogue between IOR-ARC Ministers and the business sector** to ensure that we hear about innovations and changes in rules and regulations that can facilitate business activities. At the same time, businesses can hear some of our views on issues like CSR and sustainable development.

Furthermore, we should focus on **enhancing private sector competitiveness**. Thailand would like to draw attention to the importance of building capacity for Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs). This is not only needed for them to better meet global challenges, but also to ensure that with globalization, the gap within economies does not grow wider. In other words, we should grow together and sustainably.

Lastly, given the **rising threats of natural disasters** in the region, it is necessary to closely coordinate and expedite our works on this matter. We may consider setting up an efficient mechanism to react to such emergencies. At the same time, networking of regional centres should also be strengthened to promote effectiveness. The Asian Disaster Preparedness Center or ADPC in Thailand could help share its experience and expertise in building awareness and training on early warning and disaster management, especially in the area of Community Based Disaster Risk Management. Moreover, we should explore the possibility of developing a partnership between the ASEAN Coordinating Centre for Humanitarian Assistance and other disaster management centres in IOR-ARC countries to enhance the overall capacity of the region to respond to natural disasters.

Excellencies,

As an active and responsible member of the international community, Thailand is committed to playing a constructive role in the IOR-ARC. On behalf of the Kingdom of Thailand, I would like to express our willingness to work with all Member States and Dialogue Partners in order to accomplish our common goals for the sustainable development and shared prosperity of our region.

Thank you.