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.