

**REMARKS BY MR ZAINUL ABIDIN RASHIEED, SENIOR MINISTER OF STATE FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS, SINGAPORE, AT THE TENTH COUNCIL OF MINISTERS' MEETING OF THE INDIAN OCEAN RIM-ASSOCIATION FOR REGIONAL COOPERATION, 5 AUGUST 2010, SANA' A, REPUBLIC OF YEMEN**

- Thank Yemen as the Chair for the excellent arrangements and warm hospitality.
- It has been 13 years since the IOR-ARC was first launched in Mauritius in March 1997. The organisation was initiated with the vision to promote growth and development of the region, with a special emphasis on economic cooperation among the countries along the Indian Ocean Rim.
- As a proponent of global free trade, Singapore had welcomed the formation of the organisation, which we had envisaged would help reduce barriers to intra regional trade flows among the Indian Ocean Rim countries.
- We have always felt that the diversity of the of the IOR-ARC member countries provides a range of complementarities which could be tapped. The diversity of the IOR-ARC also makes it an excellent platform for the Foreign Ministers to network and meet with their respective counterparts. As such, we are committed to playing a constructive and meaningful role in the IOR-ARC.
- Nonetheless, the IOR-ARC has yet to reach its full potential. The sheer diversity and geographical spread of its members make it a challenge to build up the mutual confidence and understanding that is necessary for the organisation to progress and flourish.
- It is thus necessary for us to constantly fine-tune the organisation's mechanisms, and to streamline the array of activities and projects that have so far been proposed by various members. A review of the IOR-ARC Charter is timely in this regard, as it will provide an opportunity to consolidate and to re-examine the goals and objectives that we had set out for ourselves and the organisation.
- That said, we should continue to be realistic about what the IOR-ARC can achieve in the short to medium-term. A regional forum like this takes time to develop.
- The identification of the three flagship projects, namely the Fisheries Support Unit (FSU), The Maritime Transport Council (MTC) and the Regional Centre for Science and Transfer of Technology (RCSTT), for members to focus on, is a step in the right direction.

- Getting a few successful projects going will help increase contact and interaction, gradually boost comfort levels and instil confidence. It will also highlight the relevance of the organisation as a whole and lay the foundation for more substantive cooperation in the future.
- In the process, there is a need to be ruthless in dropping projects that do not have the endorsement of the majority of the members.
- In terms of what Singapore can contribute in the IOR-ARC per se, we continue to welcome member states to participate in our Singapore Cooperation Programme where we provide technical assistance in human resource training to many countries. Singapore has to date, hosted over 14,000 SCP participants from the various IOR-ARC countries.
- In addition to the SCP, IOR-ARC member states may also wish to tap on our development experience through our governmental outfit known as the Singapore Cooperation Enterprise (SCE).
- The SCE was formed jointly by the Ministry of Trade and Industry and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Singapore to respond effectively to the many foreign requests for us to share our development experience .The SCE operates on a cost-recovery basis and does not seek to make profit.
- Since its inception in 2006, the delivered more than 120 customised training courses to government partners all over the world. These include IOR-ARC member countries such as India, Mauritius, Tanzania and Oman.
- We look forward to working closely with colleagues to make steady progress in realising the objectives under the revised IOR-ARC Charter that would be adopted.

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