

**STATEMENT DELIVERED BY AMBASSADOR S NGOMBANE
AT THE GENERAL DEBATE DURING THE 10TH MEETING OF THE
COUNCIL OF MINISTERS OF THE INDIAN OCEAN RIM ASSOCIATION FOR
REGIONAL COOPERATION (IOR-ARC), SANA'A, REPUBLIC OF YEMEN, 5
AUGUST**

Honourable Chair
Your Excellencies
Executive Director
Ladies and Gentlemen

We would like to extend a warm word of appreciation for the hospitality extended to my delegation during the 10th Meeting of the Council of Ministers of the Indian Ocean Rim Association for Regional Cooperation. Also, please allow us on behalf of the South African delegation to congratulate our host, for the excellent organization of this event and the effective manner in which he has conducted the Chairmanship. We would also like to congratulate India on their assumption of the Chair of the Association and Australia as incoming Vice-Chair.

May I also express our gratitude to the Executive Director as well as the Secretariat, for the excellent support rendered to ensure the smooth functioning of the meetings preceding this 10th Meeting of the Council of Ministers of the IOR-ARC.

Members of the IOR-ARC

The strategic importance of the Indian Ocean is increasingly recognized. The ocean surrounding us is vital to many in terms of trade. For India, the Middle East and Africa, China, the US, the European Union and others. For centuries, our countries, economies and peoples have been bound together in an informal cooperative economic community. Traders, seaman, fishermen, and pilgrims traveled across the Indian Ocean, building a vibrant trading network.

Currently, as observed by other colleagues, the Indian Ocean carries half of the world's container ships, one third of the bulk cargo traffic, and two-thirds of the world's oil shipments. Therefore, one of the clearest areas of mutual interest for Members of the IOR-ARC is maritime transport. We are therefore glad that today we shall launch the Maritime Transport Council, with the aim of facilitating cooperation across the Indian Ocean Rim and the promotion of inter-regional trade and investment.

On the borders of the Indian Ocean Rim lie a number of large and expanding markets, including India and South Africa, which are undergoing steady economic liberalization and growth. We trust that the evolving economic structures of Indian Ocean Rim countries will drive much of the future trade growth. We therefore need to create a conducive environment in which the goal of the IOR-ARC for regional cooperation becomes a reality. We need to use the IOR-ARC as a key to unlock the potential of the

Indian Ocean Rim, in particular enhancing trade and investment flows, as well as the sustainable exploitation of the vast tourism potential of the Association's members.

For this reason, I am glad that the Review of the Charter and regulations will be completed at this meeting. Constructive contributions from all Member States have led to the reinvigoration of the IOR-ARC and practical measures to strengthen the Secretariat. In the coming years, we will have to keep up the momentum and ensure that project implementation is made more efficient, and that projects are increasingly targeted at agreed focal areas of cooperation addressing mutual interests and needs in the Indian Ocean region.

I would like to express my appreciation to the Working Group of Heads of Missions who are in charge of the overview of projects, met in Tshwane Pretoria earlier this year. The added value of having an oversight body to monitor project implementation is clear to us all. I would like to urge all member countries to participate, be actively involved and take ownership of the projects identified and discussed during this series of meetings.

South Africa remains committed to the strengthening of the institutional capacity of the IOR-ARC. In this regard, we have decided to extend the secondment of our official to the Secretariat in order to sustain the momentum generated in the implementation of the work programme of the IOR-ARC and to ensure continuity until the vacant Director's post is filled. In this regard, we would like to welcome India's efforts and encourage other member countries to show their commitment by actively assisting with the strengthening of the Secretariat and thereby having a positive impact on the operations of this Association.

Distinguished Members of the IOR-ARC

We hope this 10th Meeting will strengthen our resolve to unlock the enormous potential of the Indian Ocean Rim Association for Regional Cooperation for the benefit of our people. In addressing the security concerns in the Indian Ocean, South Africa is considering the request from the African Union to deploy naval units in the Indian Ocean to assist in combating Piracy and Trafficking.

In conclusion, Chairperson

South Africa looks forward to fruitful discussions together with our partners from the region. May our deliberations be focused and productive.

Thank you for your attention.