

STATEMENT BY
HIS EXCELLENCY AMBASSADOR
SYED MUNSHE AFDZARUDDIN,
AMBASSADOR OF MALAYSIA TO THE
ISLAMIC REPUBLIC OF IRAN

AT
THE EIGHTH MEETING OF THE COUNCIL
OF MINISTERS OF IOR-ARC
TEHRAN, IRAN.

SUNDAY, 4 MAY 2008

His Excellency Manoucher Mottaki,
Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Islamic Republic of Iran,

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

At the outset, let me express my gratitude and appreciation to His Excellency, Foreign Minister Manoucher Mottaki, and the Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran for the excellent arrangements made for this meeting as well as for the gracious hospitality accorded to the Malaysian delegation. I would also like to take this opportunity to convey the best wishes of the Honourable Datuk Seri Utama Dr. Rais Yatim, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Malaysia to you, Your Excellency, and of his hopes for a successful 8th Meeting of the Council of Ministers of the Indian Ocean-Rim Association for Regional Cooperation.

Mr. Chairman,
Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

2. IOR-ARC at its inception had raised our hopes and promises of stronger ties and cooperation in many areas in our region. Malaysia for its part remains convinced that despite the many challenges confronting us, we would be able to fully capitalise on the vast potentials and opportunities inherent to our region. With the commitment, and political will, of all IOR-ARC member countries, we will be able to achieve a lot more. In this regard, I am confident that under Iran's stewardship and with the commitment of all present here today, this 8th Ministerial Meeting will provide fresh impetus to all of us to move forwards in enhancing the bonds of friendship and cooperation in various areas of mutual interests among members of IOR-ARC at all levels and in all sectors.

Mr. Chairman, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

3. We can derive satisfaction from the deliberations carried out by the officials at the Working Groups and Senior Official Meeting over the past few days. They have discussed many important issues ranging from cooperation in trade, investment and education to administrative and budgetary issues, as well as ways and means to improve and strengthen the Secretariat.

4. We are pleased to note that the Committee of Senior Officials has adopted the 4 years cycle Action Plan that provides policy guidelines on the 6 priority areas identified for the Association. We hope that the Action Plan will provide the much needed framework to IOR-ARC members on how we can achieve the Association's medium and long term goals.

5. Malaysia continues to hold the view that if we are to expect any measure of success, we should focus and concentrate on practical projects and initiatives that can bring benefit to all member countries. We also maintain that participation and financial contribution to such projects and initiatives should continue to be voluntary as this would enable member states to actively participate in areas of interest to them, and where they can contribute not only in term of funding, but also in term of expertise, in accordance with their ability and capacity.

Mr. Chairman, Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

6. Malaysia at the last meeting had expressed our readiness to take the lead in furthering exchanges in teaching, learning and research-intensive activities for the Association. In this regard, we are pleased to invite IOR-ARC member countries to participate in the IOR-ARC Higher Education Collaboration for Academic Convention to be held in Kuala Lumpur in November this year. University Kebangsaan

Malaysia will be the focal point for organizing this conference together with the Ministry of Higher Education and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. We would like this Convention to be the platform for us to explore and discuss the formation of the proposed Center for Multilateral Education which we hope could cater for the needs of the IOR-ARC member countries. We are also confident that this Convention would be a catalyst for many important collaborative activities among higher education institutions in IOR-ARC member countries in our efforts to further develop our human capital, which is so central to our socio-economic progress and development.

Mr. Chairman,

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

7. Malaysia would like to take this opportunity to express our heartfelt appreciation and thanks to the outgoing Executive Director, Ambassador TZ Samsudeen for his tireless efforts and exemplary work in the Secretariat, and in helping to develop IOR-ARC into what it is today. We will miss him, and we wish him well and the best in all his future undertakings.

8. Malaysia is supportive of the effort to improve the effectiveness of the IOR-ARC Secretariat. We believe that a high performing secretariat regardless of funding levels would require a strong, dynamic leadership as well as clear mandate from member states. The Secretariat must also be able to communicate regularly and effectively with member states. In this regard, Malaysia feels that the recommendations contained in the paper submitted by Australia on this matter would be a good starting point for discussion.

Mr. Chairman,

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

9. It is important that we maintain our trust and confidence in the goals of IOR-ARC. As we all know, IOR-ARC has been designed for all member states to participate through cooperation at the regional level. It is therefore crucial that we use the Association to gain more fruitful cooperation between the countries and peoples of our region. Malaysia would like to see IOR-ARC as a successful regional endeavour and we are always ready to extend our cooperation to our partners in the Association towards this end.

10. Malaysia is confident that this 8th Meeting of the Council of Ministers would be a turning point for all of us to move forward to expand and strengthen our collaboration and cooperation for our mutual benefits.

Thank you.