

STATEMENT BY THE MINISTER OF STATE FOR EXTERNAL AFFAIRS,  
HIS EXCELLENCY SHRI. E. AHAMAD

(7<sup>TH</sup> MEETING OF THE COUNCIL OF MINISTERS OF IORARC, IRAN, TEHRAN)  
7 MARCH 2007

**Mr Chairman**  
**Honourable Ministers,**  
**Distinguished Delegates**

Let me, at the outset, convey my warm appreciation to the Government and people of the Islamic Republic of Iran for the gracious hospitality extended to me and the members of my delegation and for the excellent arrangements made for our meeting here.

2. This is the second consecutive year that Tehran is hosting the Council of Ministers Meeting. We value the forum of IOR-ARC and attach importance to its potential. It is useful to have this opportunity to review developments since our meeting in February last year.
3. I would like to appreciate the efforts of South Africa in facilitating the meeting of the Working Group of Heads of IOR-ARC Missions in South Africa under the stewardship of the Deputy Minister of South Africa and Chairperson of the Committee of Senior Officials there. The Working Group has met twice last year and these meetings have been found useful in follow-up and review of the projects. These meetings should continue to be held on regular basis. Their detailed consideration of activities will provide useful inputs and guidance to the functioning of our regional Association.
4. Our Senior officials have had detailed deliberations over the past two days. They have, inter-alia, discussed administrative and budgetary concerns. The recommendations they have made for our consideration are practical and result oriented. We need our Secretariat to be assured of logistical and budgetary support so that we can demand commensurate results from it.
5. Mr Chairman, in assessing the achievements of our organization, we must also take into accounts the fact that we are a diverse group of countries, with different levels of economic development and also belonging at times to different regional groupings. However, it is the Indian Ocean , which sustains the maritime lifeline of over 50% of world trade that binds us together.
6. The year 2007 marks the first decade of IORARC. As the economic grouping steps into its second decade of its existence, this is the opportune time to review IOR-ARC's achievements and devise strategies to carry forward our common vision of mutually beneficial cooperation. We should encourage and task the three working groups – the Academic Group, the Business Forum and the Working Group on Trade and Investment to come up with tangible proposals based on our complementarities and synergies.
7. As you all are aware, IOR “Chair” in Indian Ocean Studies is designed to play a catalytic role in fostering research in the fields of common interest to the IORARC and to promote trade and investments in the region. India and Mauritius are in the process of reviving the “Chair” in the coming months.
8. I would like to suggest that we organise workshops on issues having direct relevance to our trade and industry sectors, and for developmental activities in our countries. There are many areas where we can benefit by sharing each others' developmental experiences, technologies, traditional knowledge or best practices. Some sectors that have a great deal of potential include technology cooperation in new and high technologies, shipping and maritime cooperation, tourism. Technology, including ICT, is an added strength of regional countries, which could be a key to successful cooperation.

9. Disaster Mitigation and Management has emerged as a significant area of international cooperation. We are willing to share the experience that we have gained in mitigation of natural disasters. At the same time, we would be happy to learn from the experiences of other Member States. Towards this end, we had offered to host a meeting of experts on the technical aspects of a comprehensive disaster forecasting and mitigation system in the Indian Ocean. The Member countries are requested to provide information regarding their technical focal points. We would also be willing to provide opportunities for training and capacity building in the areas of prediction, modelling, forecasting and early warning of natural disasters.
10. Mr Chairman, the Indian economy has made remarkable progress in recent years. This is attracting major global companies to invest in India, as well as utilize the country as a manufacturing and R&D hub. At the same time, the Indian private sector is also looking for investment opportunities overseas. My Government is ready to facilitate investments in IOR-ARC member states for mutual benefit. In this context, I may mention that a Buyer Seller Meet was held in Mumbai in November 2006, to enhance Agro Food Processing and Fisheries trade within the region.
11. I would like to take this opportunity to mention that India Trade Promotion Organisation (ITPO) has been successfully organizing India International Trade Fairs (IITF) annually in New Delhi for over two decades. This is India's most prestigious trade fair. A large number of companies from India and abroad participate in the Fair. We would like to invite the IOR ARC Member Countries to participate in a big way in the Trade Fair, to be held this year from November 14-27, 2007. An "IOR-ARC" Pavilion will be specially set up for this purpose. On this occasion, a sectoral seminar and a Buyer Seller Meet will also be held. I would strongly urge all Member Countries to encourage participation in the Trade Fair. In the spirit to promote participation by all IOR-ARC countries in the Trade Fair, we offer a 3x3 sq. mtr. Stall free of cost to fellow developing countries, namely, Bangladesh, Madagascar, Mozambique, Tanzania and Yemen.
12. Mr Chairman, you would agree with me that people-to-people interaction should play a pivotal role in making our grouping more vibrant. We should think of initiating activities which can lead to better visibility of our grouping in our own countries and beyond. In this context and also in view of the year 2007 being designated a 'Year of Tourism', we offer to host IOR-ARC Film Festival later this year. We would request all Member Countries to provide at least one film each for this purpose.
13. Various training programmes are organized by India under Indian Technical and Economic Cooperation programme popularly known as "ITEC". In this context, I am happy to announce that specialized courses could be organized under the umbrella of IOR-ARC Cooperation, in the fields of IT and E-government, entrepreneurship development, development of Small and Medium enterprises; rural electrification, pharmaceuticals and hydrology. To begin with, we offer under ITEC two specialized courses; (i) on IT and E-government; and (ii) Small and Medium Enterprises and invite 2 participants from each Member Country for these courses.
14. Mr Chairman, I am glad that educational exchanges amongst the IOR - ARC countries have made rapid strides in the recent years. On one hand, substantial Indian Students are going for higher studies to Australia and Singapore, on the other hand, we are recipient to a large number of students from Iran, UAE, Oman and Mauritius and Yemen, to mention a few. My Government will continue to facilitate and further strengthen these exchanges for greater people - to people contacts in our region.

Before I conclude, let me express Mr. Chairman, my delegation's full support and out political commitment for the Indian Ocean Rim Association for Regional Cooperation for mutual benefit so that we succeed in our efforts to translate ideals into beneficial cooperation on the ground. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.