

**Address by
His Excellency Yousuf bin Alawi bin Abdullah
Minister for Foreign Affairs, Oman**

On the occasion

**Of the
Extraordinary Meeting of Council of Ministers**

Muscat, 22nd to 23rd January, 2000

Honourable Ministers,
Excellencies,
Members of Delegations,
Distinguished guests,

Peace and God's blessings be upon you.

It gives me great pleasure to welcome you all in the Sultanate of Oman for the Extraordinary meeting of the Council of Ministers of the Indian Ocean Rim Association for Regional Co-operation. I am also pleased to welcome the new members of the Association: the People's Republic of Bangladesh, the Islamic Republic of Iran, the Republic of Seychelles, the Kingdom of Thailand and the United Arab Emirates, as well as the two dialogue partners, the sisterly Arab Republic of Egypt and the friendly Japan. The presence of the new Member States and both dialogue partners with us today and for the first time will add special importance and contribute vigorously, effectively and positively to the Council meeting at present and in the future.

Excellencies

The historical links and relations binding the peoples of our Association are deeply rooted in the region's human and cultural history as many human civilizations and trade activities emerged along its coasts. We cannot ignore the prominent and important role played by the region in the ancient international trade between East and West. The unique diversity of the sources of natural wealth and minerals, let alone the large population density of the member states, qualifies the Association to become one of the most important regions in trade and investment especially as many of these sources have not yet been exploited. Therefore, we are fully confident to assert that cooperation within this large gathering will contribute not only to the development and prosperity of the region's peoples but of the whole world in view of the new world trend towards globalization and the ever increasing importance of the World Trade Organization. All these developments necessitate that we, the sons of the States and peoples of the region being from different sectors, have to work seriously, patiently and with confidence to benefit ourselves and others from these wealth and unique advantages amassed in our States and in our large Ocean.

Excellencies

Your keenness and desire to persistently and effectively push forward the march of common action necessitated the convening of this extraordinary meeting to finalize the matters and issues pending from the second Council of Ministers meeting held in Mozambique in March last year.

Excellencies

The recommendations of the Committee of Senior Officials held in Muscat on 20, 21 of this month which are referred to the Council of Ministers are a clear indication that the positive efforts of the Association's Experts Group, who met in Maputo during the period 8-10 December, 1999, succeeded in creating the suitable common ground needed to finalize the setting up of the required mechanisms and legal frameworks. The recommendations also indicate that the Working Group on Trade and Investment which met in Muscat for the first time on January 20th started discussing the means to support trade facilitation and liberalization as well as promote technical cooperation in the region. We are fully confident that these recommendations would gain the due attention of the Council of Ministers.

I don't want to take up your time because the agenda of the Council of Ministers' meeting is full of important subjects. However, I would like to take this opportunity to thank you for accepting our invitation to this extraordinary meeting. My special thanks go to His Excellency Leonardo Santos Simao, the Minister of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation of the friendly Republic of Mozambique and Chairperson of the Association's Council of Ministers, and to His Excellency Manou Bheenick, Minister of Economic Development, Productivity and Regional Development of the Republic of Mauritius the ex Chairperson of the Council for their countries continued efforts and support for the Association. I would also like to express my heartfelt thanks to his Excellency Kailash Ruhee, Director of the Co-ordinating Secretariat for his efforts in consolidating the institutions of the Association. I wish him every success in his new job.

Finally, I wish you all a pleasant stay in the Sultanate, and every success to the meeting in achieving the objectives we all cherish.

Thank you.