

**FIRST MINISTERIAL MEETING OF THE INDIAN OCEAN RIM
ASSOCIATION FOR REGIONAL COOPERATION**

**HON. DR. H. MANDUKU
ASSISTANT MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS
AND INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION
KENYA**

Hon. Deputy Prime Minister, Paul Raymond BERENGER

Mr. Chairman of our Meeting

Honourable Ministers

Your Excellencies

Distinguished Delegates

Ladies and Gentlemen

HIS EXCELLENCY'S STATEMENT

Mr. Chairman

I should like at the outset to preface my remarks by thanking the Government and people of Mauritius for the excellent arrangements and generous hospitality they have made for this historic and momentous occasion of the launching of the Charter of the Indian Ocean Rim Association for Regional Cooperation, which is also the First Ministerial Meeting of our Organization.

We in Kenya have deep-seated admiration of the drive for excellence in all spheres demonstrated by the Government and people of Mauritius. The launching ceremony yesterday was a clear manifestation of this drive.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Let me add also that we could not have had a more propitious setting for the launch of our Organization. Mauritius is in all ways the quintessential Indian Ocean country,

standing as it does at the hub of the Indian Ocean Rim. There could have been no better place to launch the Organization, or indeed to site the headquarters of the proposed Secretariat.

I should like to express my delegations deep appreciation of the Government of Mauritius commitment of substantial financial and human resources towards the hosting of the preparatory meetings, today's launch and for the secretariat services.

It is appropriate at this juncture to single out the work of three distinguished representatives of the delegation of Mauritius, Mr. Manou Bheenick as the first Chairman of the Inter-Governmental Meeting of Experts and the First Working Group Meeting showed great skill in our work at the difficult stage of conceptualization. Mr. Krish Poonoosamy on assuming the mantle at the second Meeting of the Working Group in May, 1996, showed no less skill. His leadership qualities and understanding of all the nuances of the initiative have ensured that the initiative has been driven competently and with understanding towards the destination which we have successfully arrived today. Mr. Neewoor, Chairman of the just concluded Senior Officials Meeting, has carried the torch of our initiative just as ably to its logical conclusion.

Your Excellencies

Ladies and Gentlemen

Mr. Chairman permit me to say a few words touching on what Kenya perceives, expects and plans for the new Organization. The journey to this day has been for Kenya interesting, stimulating and ultimately fruitful.

Starting with an initiative to put into place an Organization which would ultimately bring together all the countries surrounding the Indian Ocean, in Africa, Middle East, Asia and it would have appeared to even the most optimistic observer to be a daunting, nay, impossible task. The immense diversity in economies, cultures, socio-economic

development and to an extent political ideologies in the countries of the region could have provided obstacles which may have proved difficult to surmount.

However, through a process of negotiation a workable framework for regional co-operation has been agreed upon.

The group of experts which was set up after the March, 1995 Inter-Governmental Meeting and composed of experts from Government, the private sector and the academic world has held three meetings here in Mauritius. It has worked diligently and tirelessly, ultimately producing what I believe is a unique and ingenious document – The Charter we launched yesterday.

Your Excellency

Ladies and Gentlemen

It is worthwhile to consider some of the reasons why this was possible

*First, was the commitment by the original Group of seven countries (The M7) towards the establishment of a regional organisation that straddled the Indian Ocean.

Today we are assailed by the drive towards globalisation. This has been accompanied by the emergence of regional economic organisation, such as the European Union, the North American Free Trade Area (NAFTA), ASEAN, COMESA, and in our neck of the woods, the revived East African Co-operation. The Primary objective is to foster faster and suitable economic growth.

For instance during the first two decades of Kenya's independence our trade relations were overwhelmingly linked to Western Europe. However due to increased cooperation between the countries of our region through the East African Cooperation as well as COMESA, today 48 percent of Kenya's exports have found markets in Africa.

The Indian Ocean Rim Organisation, we believe can further assist members to expand and diversify their trade links.

*Second, the idea of South-South co-operation needed to find a concrete base. The view of all the countries of the region was that this Organization would be a vehicle to concretise co-operation.

*Third, the diversity in economies and the differentiation of levels of development and growth provides an environment for developing our collective resources in a mutually beneficial manner. Some of the countries in the region are advanced economically. The belief is that a symbiotic relationship can be built is shared by all of us gathered here.

*Another reason is that, trade and investment have become hallmarks of economic relations in the world. There is a rising tide against traditional forms of economic co-operation; that of the giver and taker, with globalisation, liberalisation and other economic reforms, the world economy is now predicated on exploiting trade and investment links. The creation of the world Trade Organization epitomizes this trend.

Also, there was a realization that the Indian Ocean had yet to be a vehicle for Co-operation despite the long historic links between the countries of the region.

For example, Kenya has had trading links with the Middle East and the Indian sub-continent for over five centuries. The recognition that this needs to be revived and re-energized was expressed by all the countries.

We should not also forget the unique approach of combining Government business and academia presented interesting and real opportunities for us all to develop our Economies and to improve the quality of life of our peoples.

Mr. Chairman

Your Excellencies

Ladies and Gentlemen

I have outlined these reasons but these are by no means the only ones.

Although we are launching the initiative today, I am aware that we have not been idle. The second Track business forum met in Perth Australia in 1995, in New Delhi in 1996, and is scheduled to meet in Durban this month. Similarly, the Indian Ocean Research Network coordinated by Australia has been active. The quarterly news letter published by the network provides useful information. This is all in furtherance of the plan of action for the organization.

I understand also that a number of projects have been identified and agreed upon by the Inter-Governmental meeting. Indeed, Kenya is actively participating jointly with other countries on projects relating in Tourism and Port Development.

I am also aware that there are some outstanding issues that still require to be addressed. These include membership, funding and the proposed secretariat. I am informed that there has been significant progress recorded at the Senior Officials Meeting, which concluded its work on Tuesday. I am confident that the spirit that has permeated past negotiation will ensure speedy resolution at future meetings. We in Kenya have a saying - which I will accept to translate in English albeit imperfectly: "The end result or reward is the sweetest". This should in my view guide our deliberations in the future. Kenya is proud to have been a member of the initiative right at the outset. In our statement at that time, the Kenyan delegation compared the growth of the initiative as analogous to the result of throwing a pebble in a still pond. The concentric circles arising therefrom widen over so gradually to wash its shores. Kenya remains firmly committed to the widening of membership beyond the fourteen gathered today.

Finally, may I say that we have today collectively heaved a giant rock in the Indian Ocean. Its ripples shall surely be felt on all its shores and far beyond.

I thank you.

STATE HOUSE, P.O. BOX 40530, NAIROBI, KENYA
28th February, 1997

**MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT OF THE
REPUBLIC OF KENYA ON THE OCCASION OF THE
LAUNCHING OF THE INDIAN OCEAN RIM
ASSOCIATION FOR REGIONAL COOPERATION.**

On the occasion of the launching of the Indian Ocean Cooperation, I am pleased to send greetings and congratulations to the people of this region on behalf of the Government and people of Kenya and my own behalf. With the cultural and historical ties that bind us and given the vast resources available for exploitation, I am in no doubt that the cooperation will achieve its aims.

The dedication and commitment taken by the Government of Mauritius in the formation of the cooperation for the benefit of the Indian Ocean rim states is commendable. We in Kenya attach great importance to this initiative and are convinced that this will open the way for member states to improve the regions economic and social welfare and indeed enhance competitiveness in the global economy.

While success of the cooperation will to a great extent depend on the goodwill and commitment of regional leaders, a tripartite approach in which government, the private sector and academia work in partnership will no doubt make it broad based and more effective. Let us all therefore focus our thoughts and energy towards making this region economically viable in order to improve the living standards of our people.

Finally, let me assure you of my own personal commitment, that of the Government and the people of Kenya to this initiative and pledge our support and contribution to the growth of the Indian Ocean Regional Cooperation. I believe this organization will go along way in improving the lives of our people and wish it every success, now and in the future.

Long live Regional Cooperation.

SIGNATURE

**DANIEL. T. ARAP MOI
PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF KENYA**