

**ADDRESS BY
H.E. DR. LEONARDO SANTOS SIMAO
MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND
COOPERATION
OF THE REPUBLIC OF MOZAMBIQUE
AT THE FIRST MINISTERIAL MEETING
OF THE INDIAN OCEAN RIM – ASSOCIATION
FOR
REGIONAL COOPERATION**

**PORT LOUIS, MARCH 5-7, 1997
MAURITIUS**

**Mr. Chairman,
Honourable Ministers,
Ladies and Gentlemen,**

On behalf of the Government of the Republic of Mozambique and on behalf of my delegation I should like to, first and foremost, thank the hospitality granted to us by the Government and the people of Mauritius since our arrival to this beautiful city of Port Louis.

We would similarly like to seize this opportunity to commend the Government of Mauritius for having arranged all the necessary conditions to make this event a reality, with the quality all of us enjoy.

It constitutes a great honour for us to take part in this launching of the basis for a multilateral co-operation among the countries of the Indian Ocean Rim. This event is the beginning of a new era of co-operation between our countries and peoples.

Looking to the Plan of Action, the Charter and the IOR-ARC Projects we feel that such instruments indicate the concerns and wishes of our peoples.

Mr. Chairman,

We meet today to deliberate on the charter that will form the main instrument for our co-operation. With this charter to which Mozambique is committed, we are creating political and legal bases for the strengthening of the ties that link our peoples for centuries. In the millenar contacts between our peoples, economic, social and cultural relations were forged to last to our days and they will be much strengthened with the creation of the IOR-ARC. The Indian Ocean waters and resources have always played a vital importance in the promotion of relations between and among Africans, Asians and Australians. Through the Indian Ocean our peoples were able to know each other; they carried out trading activities, shared technological know-how, and strengthened their cultural values. The emerging of the IOR-ARC is very timely and it is the outcome of those millenar relations that exist between the peoples of the Indian Ocean.

The establishment of the IOR-ARC takes place at a time in which we see throughout the world the emerging of new forms of co-operation between countries that share common geographical space and same economic ambitions. Notwithstanding the differences of levels of economic development between states, they join efforts to build-up regional prosperity. This is the target we seek to achieve in this association.

Excellencies,

The fact of involving businessmen and academics in this association is the testimony of this organisation's acknowledgement that it has to include all sectors of the society. These sectors will surely give dynamism to the cooperation among us.

Mozambique is a country endowed with diverse natural resources. The richness of its soil and sub-soil most of which not explored yet, make the country potential market for new investments. The large fertile lands, adequate for agriculture, are a major attraction to investors in agriculture. Last year Mozambique and South Africa signed a co-operation agreement in the field of agriculture. We hope this agreement will allow the introduction of new agriculture technologies in Mozambique, which will increase the levels of production in the sector.

Yet very recently positive steps were made toward increasing co-operation with Mauritius and we are still committed to extend and strengthen our levels of co-operation with all Indian Ocean states.

Opportunities of investment in Mozambique are many. The approval of the investment law in Mozambique shows the importance my Government gives to private sector for the country's development. This instrument increases the confidence of the investors in the Government's commitment to promote private sector initiatives in the country. Therefore it is with satisfaction that we see the growing interest of businessman to invest in Mozambique.

Excellencies,

Some of the priority sectors of the Five-year programme of my Government and which are also parts of this association include: Transports and Communications, Industry, Trade, Travel and Tourism, Health and Education.

It is vital to note here that maritime transports which date from centuries back, still constitutes the most common means of transportation in our modern times. It is within this context that Mozambique with a coastal line of more than 2,700 Km becomes the main let out for imports and exports of our neighbouring countries such as South Africa, Zimbabwe, Malawi and Zambia.

It is therefore with great hope and expectation that we welcome the initiative to establish this association, because we see it as an instrument that will create new conditions for the Indian Ocean region to develop faster.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

The Maputo development corridor, an undertaking which is still in its initial phase, falls within the efforts of the Mozambique Government to turn a safe let out for our neighbours.

Apart from the main ports of Mozambique such as the Maputo, Beira and Nacala ports, Mozambique has also several small ports, which are in process of rehabilitation. These ports will in future become additional let outs to the sea and will thus contribute positively for regional development.

Trade development in the region will bring comparative advantages and will allow for our peoples to get access to a wide range of products and goods necessary for development and consumption.

In order to have a co-operation conducive to sustainable development we must deploy efforts toward combating against pollution and dishing of toxic waste, work toward conservation and protection of maritime species that are in danger of extinction, manage collectively natural disasters among other initiatives of common interest.

We should underline that a peaceful Indian Ocean must be the *conditio sine qua non* for the regional co-operation we want to achieve. Therefore, we must work toward finding mechanisms that ensure that the Indian Ocean is not a corridor of illegal activities and that it remains a nuclear free zone.

**Mr. Chairman,
Ladies and Gentlemen,**

Our Association is just starting. It will be our commitment to the Charter, our desire to work together that will enable us to consolidate the relationships among our countries and this requires time.

As other speakers have mentioned before me, there are still some outstanding issues to be addressed, like the Secretariat, funding and expansion of our Association. I believe that all of us are united by the same desire to have a smooth functioning organisation, not ridden with heavy bureaucracy and high administrative costs. On the other hand, my delegation shares the view that it is necessary to establish a working group to produce recommendation about more precise definition of Indian Ocean Rim and criteria of admission in the spirit of the Charter.

To conclude, I wish many successes to our Association over the years to come.

I thank you.