

3rd Bi-Annual Meeting of the Committee of Senior Officials (CSO)
Le Canonnier Hotel, Mauritius
20-21 August 2013

Opening remarks by Secretary (ER)

H E Mr.Pinak Chakravarty

His Excellency, Secretary-General, IOR-ARC, Amb. K.V.Bhaghirath,
Senior Officials of IOR-ARC countries,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

1. I am delighted to welcome all participants at this 3rd Bi-Annual Committee of Senior Officials. I would like to reiterate my sincere thanks to the Government of Mauritius for hosting the IORARC Secretariat in Mauritius. I also wish to thank the IORARC Secretariat and my own High Commission in Mauritius for making the arrangements for this meeting on behalf of the Government of India.

2. Our Association has come a long way since its inception in 1997 and has emerged as a dynamic grouping for promoting economic and trade relations, based on our objective of promoting sustainable growth and balanced development of the region as a whole. The commitment of all members of IORARC has helped our Association to establish itself as the apex Association in the Indian Ocean region. During the last couple of years, IORARC has seen expansion with Seychelles re-joining and Union of Comoros joining as a new member. There are only a few countries left on the Rim which have yet to join the Association and become part of this fraternity. The spirit of IORARC Charter shall remain the determining factor while considering any new application for IORARC membership.

3. The Indian Ocean region is taking centre stage in the global economic and strategic space. The IORARC is committed to occupy even greater salience in the strategic perspective of the region. Unlike in the last two centuries, when the rich natural resources of the Indian Ocean littoral states powered the industrial growth of the West, today they move increasingly in the direction of the economies in the Indian Ocean region itself.

4. The last meeting of the Council of Ministers in November 2012 in Gurgaon, India, reviewed the activities and achievements of the Association over the last 15 years of its existence. We have undertaken activities to enhance our engagements in various key areas by cooperating and sharing experiences for value addition in our human resource development and capacity building programmes. This is being done through various workshops/seminars and regional projects. We need concerted efforts to meet the developmental, energy and food security needs of IORARC members as well as enhanced connectivity to facilitate greater trade and investment among Member-States.

5. The IORARC, has demonstrated that it is playing constructive and efficient role to achieve our objectives enshrined in its Charter. To achieve those, I would urge Member-States to participate actively in the activities which are being organised under the already identified priority areas. I would suggest that some events could be institutionalised by making them annual/biennial or as convenient. This would help maximum participation which is necessary to make any IORARC event successful and delivery oriented. On a separate note, I would like to point out that the IORARC Charter already has a well-defined role for Dialogue Partner and the issue has already been deliberated in the 11th Council of Ministers meeting. It might be useful to discuss in detail any new role for Dialogue Partner in IORARC programmes.

7. India as the current Chair of the IORARC is deeply committed to its agenda. This has been demonstrated by successful organisation of several events during India's Chairmanship. Some more activities have been announced which would be discussed in the course of this meeting. With the support of Member-States and in a spirit of cooperation, I am confident that these activities will provide the required impetus to our Association to become an effective apex organisation in the Indian Ocean Region.

8. This is the last meeting senior officials under India's Chairmanship. On behalf of the Government of India, I thank all Member-States for their fullest cooperation in shaping our agenda of regional cooperation and success of all the activities during the last nearly two years. India would like to see the continuation of the agenda which has been developed so far in cooperation with all Member-States.

9. I take this opportunity to compliment Secretary-General, IORARC, Ambassador Bhagirath, Director Manish Agrawal, on secondment from India and Director Graham Anderson, on secondment from South Africa, and his colleagues for their untiring effort in keeping the agenda of IORARC dynamic and to cater to the requirements of Member-States.

10. As for today's meeting, we have a comprehensive agenda in front of us. The meeting gives us an opportunity to take stock and plan our future programmes before the next Council of Ministers Meeting at Perth, Australia. I take this opportunity to wish Australia all success in organising the next Council of Ministers Meeting.

11. Look forward to making our deliberations productive and fruitful.