

COUNTRY STATEMENT
By
Hon. Ms. Nomaindiya Mfeketo, Deputy Minister

Thank you, Hon. Minister and Chair.

Firstly allow me to again congratulate you and Indonesia on your appointment as IORA Chair, and to thank you for the wonderful reception and hospitality that you and your team have accorded us – it is sincerely most appreciated. Indeed we have high expectations as IORA member states of Indonesia's helm as Chair, particularly as it will be under your leadership that IORA will be celebrating 20 years of existence.

Secretary General of the IORA, Ambassador Bhagirath, it is befitting to convey our appreciation to you and your team for the outstanding arrangements for this 15th meeting of the Council of Ministers and related meetings.

Colleagues,

IORA is growing in numbers and scope. Our challenge today and going forward is to define the strategic outlook for IORA beyond 20 years. In doing so we need to find ways in which we, together with our Dialogue Partners, can take the Association forward by enhancing the level, quantity and quality of cooperation.

On Organizational Strengthening

South Africa reiterates its commitment to strengthening the Association. Since 2011, under India's Chairship, IORA has been charting a new path to adopt a more focused approach to identify the priority areas which have become the epicenter of our engagements over the years. As a consequence, we were very pleased to be at the forefront of the establishment of the Blue Economy Core Group and look forward to consolidating its work.

We can be more efficient and must continue to seek further avenues for cooperation. I am therefore pleased with the work done by Secretary-General Bhagirath in seeking avenues strengthen the capacity of the Secretariat and of engagement with other global organizations. In this regard, we are very pleased to have co-sponsored the UN General Assembly resolution in pursuit of IORA Observer status, and look forward to IORA strengthening ties with other organizations, including the African Union.

Colleagues,

On Maritime Peace and Security

The Indian Ocean Sea Lanes remain the most preferred for trade, with the result that the Rim is not immune to challenges and threats to peace and security. As IORA States, there's a continuous need for us to reflect on the paradigm shifts emanating from the eminent changes in the global environment. To this end, the issue of Maritime Safety and Security has been prominent in our discussions and is gaining in prominence - as it rightly should. We must strive to deepen our cooperation to ensure that the Indian Ocean Rim remains open and conducive for trade.

On the Blue Economy and Africa

We have identified that the Blue Economy is the new frontier for the revival of African economies. To this end we take note that the African Union has declared 2015 to 2025 as the Decade of African Seas and Oceans. The strategic context of this initiative is the 2050 Africa Integrated Maritime Strategy which intentionally we call the 2050 "AIM" Strategy to highlight the fact that it is Result-oriented. Consequently, it will be imperative that our approach to the governance of the African seas generates wealth in a sustainable manner. Africa has to be central to the optimization of the blue economy as our common source of growth and innovation towards ensuring food security and job creation for all our citizens.

In partnerships we can harness capacities towards the envisioned economic cooperation to enhance trade and investment. More attention and focus could be given to initiatives that empower and capacitate the people of the region to develop and take advantage of the burgeoning economic opportunities coming from the region and the ocean economy. In this regard, training programmes aimed at building skills and capacity of Member states must continue being explored as they present low hanging fruits in this context. Significantly, the 2nd Indian Ocean Expedition presents the opportunity for scientific collaboration, knowledge sharing among IORA Member States and Dialogue Partners.

In conclusion,

As we move forward, let us continue to be guided by IORA's core principles and objectives to create opportunities for mutual gains, and contribute to capacity building activities to enable optimal exploitation of sources for the welfare for our peoples. Jointly, we can do more to respond to, especially, socio-economic challenges in order to advance our developmental aspirations.

Thank you