

**Remarks by Mr. Ryo Nakamura, Minister of the Embassy of Japan in
Indonesia at the Opening Session of IORA Council of Minister's
Meeting, on 23 October, 2015**

Madam Chair,
Distinguished Ministers,
Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

On behalf of the Government of Japan, I would like to congratulate Ibu Retno for the successful holding of the fifteenth Meeting of the Council of Ministers of the Indian Ocean Rim Association, and express my deep gratitude for the warm hospitality.

First, let me state that the issue of highest priority for IORA, I believe, is the pursuit of economic prosperity of the countries in the region. The development of this region, which has great economic potential as a new center for world growth, is a common interest of the world. It is important that the Indian Ocean will function as an open, peaceful, and stable global commons for the enhancement of regional cooperation and economic relations throughout the regions of the Middle East, Africa, Asia and the Indian Ocean rim. Japan, as a dialogue partner since 1999, is firmly committed to strengthen cooperation with IORA and its member countries.

To this end, it is important to reinforce the three principles of the rule of law at sea, which was proposed by Prime Minister Shinzo Abe at the Shangri-La Dialogue in May 2014. That is, states shall make and clarify claims based on international law; states shall not use force or coercion in trying to drive claims; and states shall seek to settle disputes by peaceful means.

Since coming into office in December 2013, Prime Minister Abe held numerous meetings with leaders of the IORA member states including the incoming and outgoing countries Indonesia and Australia, and shared with them the importance of the freedom of navigation and overflight. Moreover, Japan is promoting security measures of Asian and African countries, by providing patrol vessels and other equipment as well as by building capacity.

In this context, Japan strongly hopes that IORA will play an active role in promoting security, safety and the rule of law in the maritime field, in the Indian Ocean.

Madam Chair,
Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Being home to almost one third of the world's population, this region has great potential to become the next world growth center. At the same time, one of the future challenges in the region will be the advancement of integration while utilizing its diversity.

Another important aspect for further development will be enhancing the role of women.

This is already taken up by IORA, and we appreciate it.

As for the integration and enhancing connectivity, Japan is making efforts to support these endeavors in South Asia and Africa. In fact, we are supporting the East-West and Southern Economic Corridor Plan of ASEAN as well as the Maritime Economic Corridor Plan by measures worth 800 billion yen, that is around 7 billion US dollars. We are supporting the connectivity of South Asian countries with roughly the same amount. We are supporting the 5 corridors' plan of Africa with around 200 billion yen.

As for the proactive role of Women, The World Assembly for Women, WAW! 2015, was held in Tokyo this August. One of the main discussions was on "Women and the Economy." Prime Minister Abe announced the implementation of over 42 billion yen of assistance in the field of girls' education over a three-year period, which is key to the empowerment of women.

With these measures, Japan is committed to enhance its contribution towards much stronger connectivity and more active roles of women in the countries facing the Indian Ocean.

Thus, Japan hopes that IORA's active roles in various fields will lead to the growth of the whole region.

In conclusion, I have every confidence that this year's IORA meetings will be an opportunity for IORA to take the next leap forward and enhance mutual understanding and ties among the members and dialogue partners.

Thank you.