

**Opening Remarks by
H.E. Retno L.P. Marsudi,
Chair of the 16th Meeting of the Council of Ministers
Thursday, 27 October 2016, Bali, Indonesia**

Honorable Nomaindiya Mfeketo, Deputy Minister of International Relations and Cooperation of South Africa,
Honorable Julie Bishop, Minister of Foreign Affairs and Trade of Australia,
Your Excellency K.V. Bhagirath, Secretary General of IORA
Excellencies Ministers from IORA Member Countries,
Distinguished Delegates,

A year ago we met in Padang to strengthen the intra-regional cooperation in the Indian Ocean. The meeting also kick started Indonesia's chairmanship of IORA, under the theme "Strengthening Maritime Cooperation in a Peaceful and Stable Indian Ocean".

Since then, we have seen many global developments that has immediate impact to our region. The world agreed on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). They also adopted the Paris Agreement on Climate Change.

At the same time, the world is also facing growing challenges. Internal conflicts as well as inter-state disputes and various tension continue in many parts of the world. Resulting in increasing flow of irregular migration.

At the same time, global economic growth remains sluggish and disrupts efforts to alleviate poverty and increase prosperity. There is also increasing challenges from non-traditional threats such as terrorism and radicalism, as well as IUU fishing. These challenges impact our joint endeavor to sustain peace, stability and prosperity in our region.

Excellencies,
Distinguished delegates,

Indonesia believes that IORA is strategically placed to help our region in meeting today's challenges. It is for this reason that under Indonesia's chairmanship, we are pursuing efforts to strengthen the organization, enhance cooperation among its members and broaden our external engagement with partners.

Our close collaboration have yield substantial activities to bolster our collective capacities, bolster our institutions and strengthen regionalism in the Indian Ocean.

To sustainably utilize our Indian ocean for the benefit of our people, we have strengthen our collaboration through various activities: the 3rd Indian Ocean Dialogue, 14-15 April 2016 which produced the Padang Consensus to address maritime security challenges in the Indian Ocean through enhanced regionalism; the Training Programme on Marine Aquaculture, Madagascar, 2-3 May 2016; the 2nd Blue Economy Core Group Workshop, Qingdao, 12-14 July 2016.

To enhance our business cooperation in our region, we have continue our endeavour to engage our business, among others through IORA Economic and Business Conference, Dubai, 11-12 April 2016; and the Meeting of IORA Heads of the Free Trade Zones Authorities, Chabahar, 19-20 May 2016.

To increase our capacity in the area of renewable energy we have established a forum to identify and enhance IORA cooperation on Renewable Energy, Abu Dhabi, 21 January 2016.

To fully utilize our historical and cultural ties as a modality for our cooperation, we have organized IORAG Track Two Regional Workshop on “Intersection of Culture in the Indian Ocean Region”, Jakarta, 11 October 2016.

And also of great importance to chart our future cooperation, we have organized an IORA International Symposium in Yogyakarta last September, to welcome the upcoming 20th anniversary of our association next year.

In addition to the past year activities, under Indonesia’s chairmanship, Indonesia is currently working on an IORA Business Innovation Centre.

While next year, Indonesia will host the 2nd Blue Economy Conference in 2017 to strengthen blue economy cooperation.

Excellencies,
Distinguished delegates,

In addition to such collaborations, for the past year we have deliberated upon an IORA Concord, a long term vision that aims:

- to build the political momentum for a stronger, closer, more effective and efficient Association;

- to strengthen regional architecture that will ensure peace and stability in the Indian Ocean;
- to enhance our collective capacities in pursuit of mutually beneficial cooperation for prosperity; and
- to determine the way forward for IORA collaboration.

Today, we will listen on the progress made by our officials in concluding the draft IORA Concord for our positive consideration.

I hope that we will be able to agree upon the draft Concord today so we can propose it to our Leaders for adoption at the IORA 20th Anniversary Commemorative Leaders' Summit in March 2017.

Our officials have also discussed on the IORA Action Plan that lays out the strategic goals and concrete actions to be achieved for the coming decades.

The carved out programs and activities in the Action Plan will result in concrete benefits for our respective communities.

I believe that the IORA Concord and Action Plan will enable our association to better set the course in achieving our future goals and objectives.

I therefore seek your full support on this essential stage of our association to advance our cooperation further.

Colleagues,

Allow me also take this opportunity to welcome and convey appreciation towards our Dialogue Partners who are here today with us.

Your increased engagement with IORA is hoped to result in mutual benefits for our people.

Thank you.