

# **Part I**

## **Indian Ocean Rim Association for Regional Cooperation—past, present and future—challenges and opportunities**

In Part I of this report, the committee considers the Indian Ocean Rim Association for Regional Cooperation (IOR-ARC). This association is the key piece of regional architecture in the Indian Ocean rim region. The committee examines the launch of the association, its 16-year history, its achievements, regional and international profile, relationship with other subregional and regional groupings, its present challenges and future opportunities. It looks at the level of interest in, and commitment to, the association and the forces at work in the region that both hinder and favour its development.

Australia is due to become chair of IOR-ARC in 2013 and the committee explores the opportunity for Australia to shape the direction of IOR-ARC in partnership with India (as the previous chair) and Indonesia (as the future chair) in the troika leadership arrangement which is specific to IOR-ARC.



# Chapter 3

## IOR-ARC—beginnings

Let us be frank with ourselves. Either the organization is worth preserving, in which case it is worth promoting and sustaining, or it must be allowed to wither away and die.<sup>1</sup>

### Proposed Indian Ocean Association for Regional Cooperation

3.1 During the 1990s, a group of seven countries (Australia, India, Kenya, Mauritius, the Sultanate of Oman, Singapore and South Africa) envisaged the establishment of a regional organisation to enhance economic co-operation amongst the countries of the Indian Ocean rim.<sup>2</sup> They could see mutual benefits in setting up a common platform for discussing economic cooperation. The idea, strongly advocated by Mauritius, would complement the multilateral or bilateral obligations of member states.<sup>3</sup> Indeed, in 1994 Mauritius proposed the formation of an Indian Ocean rim association as a means of bringing to life the concept of regional cooperation and making it workable.<sup>4</sup> In March 1995, the first inter-governmental meeting was held in Mauritius to discuss this proposal for an Indian Ocean Rim association.<sup>5</sup> The Prime Minister of Mauritius explained that when his country took the initiative to launch the process after consultations with some countries, 'the concept of cooperation between countries of the region was still nebulous'. He explained:

Very little had been done to promote cooperation at the level of the region in spite of the call for South-South Cooperation over the last few decades. Indeed, the few attempts made in the past to stimulate region-wide cooperation did not have the desired success mainly for lack of resources and the inability of the participating countries to leverage on international relations.<sup>6</sup>

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- 1 Statement by the Hon Rohitha Bogollagama, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Democratic Republic of Sri Lanka, Eighth Meeting of the Council of Ministers of the Indian Ocean Rim Association for Regional Cooperation, Tehran, Islamic Republic of Iran, 4 May 2008.
  - 2 Statement by the Hon Dr H. Manduku, Assistant Minister of Foreign Affairs, Kenya, First Ministerial Meeting of the Indian Ocean Association for Regional Cooperation, 6 March 1997.
  - 3 Statement by H.E. Raharisoa Juliette Joelson, Minister for Tourism of the Republic of Madagascar, First Ministerial Meeting of the Indian Ocean Association for Regional Cooperation, 6 March 1997.
  - 4 Statements by H.E. Yusuf bin Alawi bin Abdullah, First Ministerial Meeting of the Indian Ocean Association for Regional Cooperation, March 1997, and the Hon V. Bunwaree, Minister of Finance and Leader of the Mauritius Delegation, First Ministerial Meeting of the Indian Ocean Association for Regional Cooperation, March 1997.
  - 5 IOR-ARC, 'Formation', <http://www.iorarc.org/about-us/formation.aspx>, (accessed 3 May 2013).
  - 6 Opening Address by Dr the Hon Navinchandra Ramgoolam, Prime Minister of Mauritius, First Ministerial Meeting of the Indian Ocean Association for Regional Cooperation, 5 March 1997.

### *Launch of IOR-ARC, 1997*

3.2 On 6 March 1997, representatives from 14 countries gathered in Mauritius to launch 'a regional framework for closer trade, economic and other cooperation to the benefit of all countries reliant on the Indian Ocean'. The countries—Australia, India, Indonesia, Kenya, Madagascar, Malaysia, Mauritius, Mozambique, Oman, Singapore, South Africa, Sri Lanka, Tanzania and Yemen—adopted a charter by acclamation formally establishing the new Indian Ocean Rim Association for Regional Cooperation—IOR-ARC.<sup>7</sup> The fundamental principle of IOR-ARC, as set down in the Charter, was to 'facilitate and promote economic co-operation, bringing together representatives of government, business and academia'.<sup>8</sup>

3.3 The launch of IOR-ARC was heralded as an 'important turning point in the history of cooperation among countries of the Indian Ocean Rim'.<sup>9</sup> The association recognised the diversity in their economies, cultures, socio-economic development and political ideologies.<sup>10</sup> Despite their differences, they managed to negotiate and agree upon a 'workable framework for regional cooperation'.<sup>11</sup> At the time, one representative observed:

...it is indeed surprising that the Indian Ocean region which can boast of a combined GDP of US\$1 trillion and 31% of the global population should have lagged so far behind. One is indeed constrained to enquire why this should be so, given the vast natural and human resources this region is endowed with, and also the 'commonalities' that we share in many historical and cultural domains...<sup>12</sup>

3.4 The member states were to build and expand understanding among themselves through a consensus-based approach:

Co-operation within the framework of the Indian Ocean Rim is based on the respect for the principles of sovereign equality, territorial integrity, political

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7 IOR-ARC, 'Formation', <http://www.iorarc.org/about-us/formation.aspx>, (accessed 3 May 2013); Charter of the Indian Ocean Association for Regional Co-operation (IOR-ARC), ratified 3 March 1997.

8 Article 2, Charter of the Indian Ocean Association for Regional Co-operation (IOR-ARC), ratified 3 March 1997.

9 Statement by the Hon V. Bunwaree, Minister of Finance and Leader of the Mauritius Delegation, First Ministerial Meeting of the Indian Ocean Association for Regional Cooperation, March 1997.

10 See for example, Opening Address by Dr the Hon Navinchandra Ramgoolam, Prime Minister of Mauritius, First Ministerial Meeting of the Indian Ocean Association for Regional Cooperation, 5 March 1997.

11 Statement by the Hon Dr H. Manduku, Assistant Minister of Foreign Affairs, Kenya, First Ministerial Meeting of the Indian Ocean Association for Regional Cooperation, 6 March 1997.

12 Statement by the Hon Lakshman Kadirgamar PC, MP, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Sri Lanka, First Ministerial Meeting of the Indian Ocean Association for Regional Cooperation, 6 March 1997.

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independence, non-interference in internal affairs, peaceful co-existence and mutual benefit.<sup>13</sup>

3.5 The Prime Minister of Mauritius described the IOR-ARC Charter as 'a modest and flexible framework for cooperation'. He stated that the association was:

...not meant to be a grand prescription for a closed and protective club of nations, seeking the economic power to entrench themselves against the currents and trends which are sweeping the world.

The grouping was intended to be 'a free and open association of sovereign nations', requiring 'a commitment to progressive cooperation and collaboration'.<sup>14</sup>

3.6 The Charter made clear that bilateral and other issues likely to generate controversy and impede regional co-operation efforts would be excluded from the association's deliberations.<sup>15</sup> The association was deemed to be complementary to other regional blocs.<sup>16</sup> His Excellency, Mr Ali Alatas, Minister for Foreign Affairs, Republic of Indonesia, believed that it was feasible for IOR-ARC to work in concert with existing sub-regional organisations such as the Association for South East Asian Nations (ASEAN), South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC), Cooperation Council for the Arab States of the Gulf (GCC), the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA) and the Southern African Development Community (SADC).<sup>17</sup>

### *Membership*

3.7 Article 4 of the Charter provided that all sovereign states of the Indian Ocean Rim would be eligible for membership, but they must adhere to the principles and objectives enshrined in the charter.<sup>18</sup> Member states would decide on the expansion of the association. In this regard, most supported the admission of new members to

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13 South African Government Information, Minister Sue Van Der Merwe, to attend Meeting of the Council of Ministers of the Indian Ocean Rim Association for Regional Co-operation, 26–27 August 2004, Colombo, Sri Lanka.

14 See for example, Opening Address by Dr the Hon Navinchandra Ramgoolam, Prime Minister of Mauritius, First Ministerial Meeting of the Indian Ocean Association for Regional Cooperation, 5 March 1997.

15 Charter of the Indian Ocean Association for Regional Co-operation (IOR-ARC), ratified 3 March 1997.

16 Statement by H.E. Mohammed A. Al-Junaïd, Minister of Finance, Republic of Yemen, First Ministerial Meeting of the Indian Ocean Association for Regional Cooperation, March 1997.

17 Statement by His Excellency, Mr Ali Alatas, Minister for Foreign Affairs, Republic of Indonesia, First Ministerial Meeting of the Indian Ocean Association for Regional Cooperation, 6 March 1997.

18 Charter of the Indian Ocean Association for Regional Co-operation (IOR-ARC), ratified 3 March 1997.

follow an evolutionary fashion that would allow the organisation 'to learn to make the first steps before it starts running'.<sup>19</sup>

### *Tripartite approach*

3.8 Established under the Charter, a Council of Ministers were to meet once in two years or more often as mutually agreed. A committee of senior officials, composed of government officials of member states, would be created and assemble as often as mutually decided. The association also included two bodies—the Indian Ocean Rim Business Forum and the Indian Ocean Rim Academic Group, which were to be 'an important and integral part of the development of the Association'.<sup>20</sup> The Senior Officials Committee was to review decisions taken by the Council of Ministers and in cooperation with the Business Forum and Academic Group establish priorities of economic co-operation, develop, monitor and co-ordinate work programs and mobilise resources for financing the programs.<sup>21</sup>

3.9 Many of the representatives present at this first meeting approved of the close involvement of the business community and academia.<sup>22</sup> For example, the leader of the Mauritius delegation was of the view that this tripartite arrangement would place the association on a 'sound and result-oriented perspective'. He said:

We believe that this process would be encouraged by the active role of Governments as a facilitator and catalyst by creating an enabling and conducive environment for the economic operators.<sup>23</sup>

3.10 His Excellency, Professor S. Jayakumar, Minister for Foreign Affairs and Law, Republic of Singapore, stated that the real value of such meetings 'lay in the contact and networks being built up between our business and academic leaders'.<sup>24</sup>

19 Statement by the Hon Lakshman Kadirgamar PC, MP, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Sri Lanka, First Ministerial Meeting of the Indian Ocean Association for Regional Cooperation, 6 March 1997. See also, statement by His Excellency, Mr Ali Alatas, Minister for Foreign Affairs, Republic of Indonesia, First Ministerial Meeting of the Indian Ocean Association for Regional Cooperation, 6 March 1997. Mr Ali Alatas held the view that membership should be open to all countries in the region but also recognised the evolutionary approach to IOR-ARC membership expansion.

20 Charter of the Indian Ocean Association for Regional Co-operation (IOR-ARC), ratified 3 March 1997.

21 Charter of the Indian Ocean Association for Regional Co-operation (IOR-ARC), ratified 3 March 1997.

22 See for example, statements by H.E. Dr Leonardo Santos Simao, Minister of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation of the Republic of Mozambique; His Excellency, Professor S. Jayakumar, Minister for Foreign Affairs and Law, Republic of Singapore; the Hon Jakaya Kikwete, MP, Minister for Foreign Affairs and Regional Co-operation of the United Republic of Tanzania, H.E. Mr Ali Alatas, Minister for Foreign Affairs, Republic of Indonesia; and Mr Tim Fisher, Deputy Prime Minister of Australia, and Minister for Trade, First Ministerial Meeting of the Indian Ocean Association for Regional Cooperation, March 1997.

23 Statement by the Hon V. Bunwaree, Minister of Finance and Leader of the Mauritius Delegation, First Ministerial Meeting of the Indian Ocean Association for Regional Cooperation, March 1997.

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### *Secretariat*

3.11 The Charter provided for a secretariat that would 'co-ordinate, service and monitor the implementation of policy decisions and work programmes as laid down'.<sup>25</sup> The meeting discussed the make-up of this secretariat, including its size, composition and funding arrangements.<sup>26</sup> Some supported the proposal to establish a secretariat with a permanent headquarters.<sup>27</sup> Others were wary of creating a bureaucracy with the associated high administrative costs though they accepted the importance of having a working group or small unit to continue the work.<sup>28</sup> Some suggested that institutional support systems such as a secretariat could be built up gradually.<sup>29</sup> Mr Ali Alatas agreed with the recommendation to establish a pilot mechanism of an 'appropriately modest size and manned by personnel voluntarily seconded by members'.<sup>30</sup> In his view, the mechanism could then evolve gradually 'in step with the development and the inevitable enlargement of the requirements and initiatives' of the association.<sup>31</sup>

3.12 A Pilot Co-ordination Mechanism, known as the PCM, was set up as an interim arrangement to 'co-ordinate, service and monitor the implementation of policy decisions and work programmes'.<sup>32</sup> A director from Mauritius headed the PCM with an Assistant Director from the Sultanate of Oman.

### *Pace*

3.13 Most ministers recognised that a regional forum takes time to develop and favoured a steady incremental and measured approach to building on the work of the

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24 Statement by His Excellency, Professor S. Jayakumar, Minister for Foreign Affairs and Law, Republic of Singapore, First Ministerial Meeting of the Indian Ocean Association for Regional Cooperation, March 1997.

25 Charter of the Indian Ocean Association for Regional Co-operation (IOR-ARC), ratified 3 March 1997.

26 Opening Address by Dr the Hon Navinchandra Ramgoolam, Prime Minister of Mauritius, First Ministerial Meeting of the Indian Ocean Association for Regional Cooperation, 5 March 1997.

27 Statements by H.E. Mohammed A. Al-Junaid, Minister of Finance, Republic of Yemen, and Shri I.K. Gujral, External Affairs Minister of India, First Ministerial Meeting of the Indian Ocean Association for Regional Cooperation March 1997.

28 Statements by H.E. Dr Leonardo Santos Simao, Minister of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation of the Republic of Mozambique, and the Hon Lakshman Kadirgamar P.C., M.P., Minister of Foreign Affairs, Sri Lanka, First Ministerial Meeting of the Indian Ocean Association for Regional Cooperation, 6 March 1997.

29 Statement by His Excellency, Professor S. Jayakumar, Minister for Foreign Affairs and Law, Republic of Singapore, First Ministerial Meeting of the Indian Ocean Association for Regional Cooperation, March 1997.

30 His Excellency, Mr Ali Alatas, Minister for Foreign Affairs, Republic of Indonesia, First Ministerial Meeting of the Indian Ocean Association for Regional Cooperation.

31 His Excellency, Mr Ali Alatas, Minister for Foreign Affairs, Republic of Indonesia, First Ministerial Meeting of the Indian Ocean Association for Regional Cooperation.

32 Report by H.E. Dr Leonardo Santos Simao, Minister of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation of the Republic of Mozambique and Chairman of the Council of Ministers, Muscat, 7 April 2001.

meeting. For example, Professor S. Jayakumar urged the new association to take the first steps at 'a pace that is both comfortable for the less mature economies and also satisfactory to the more developed ones'. He said:

There need be no embarrassment in modest beginnings...a small but effective and realistic start will stand the IOR-ARC in good stead for the long run.<sup>33</sup>

3.14 This sentiment was echoed by other ministers who similarly saw the need to be pragmatic and realistic in nurturing the association and pacing its activities.<sup>34</sup> Mr Ali Alatas counselled 'Let us make haste judiciously, guided by a realistic sense of what is possible'.<sup>35</sup>

### ***Second meeting, 1999***

3.15 By the time of the second meeting in 1999, interest in the association had grown with eight more countries eager to join and some other nations and organisations applying for dialogue partner and observer status.<sup>36</sup> The Indian Ocean Rim Academic Group and the Indian Ocean Rim Business Forum had developed networks throughout the region. According to the Chairman of the Second Council Meeting, the association had the 'critical mass necessary for it to take up the challenges resulting from globalisation and the internationalisation of economies'. He said:

Various projects of a regional character in the fields of trade, tourism, technology diffusion, human resource development, maritime transport, insurance, information technology and standards and accreditation, among others have been identified. These projects are currently being implemented on a voluntary basis by member-states.<sup>37</sup>

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- 33 Statement by His Excellency, Professor S. Jayakumar, Minister for Foreign Affairs and Law, Republic of Singapore, First Ministerial Meeting of the Indian Ocean Association for Regional Cooperation, March 1997.
- 34 Statement by H.E. Mr Ali Alatas, Minister for Foreign Affairs, Republic of Indonesia, First Ministerial Meeting of the Indian Ocean Association for Regional Cooperation, 6 March 1997.
- 35 Statement by H.E. Mr Ali Alatas, Minister for Foreign Affairs, Republic of Indonesia, First Ministerial Meeting of the Indian Ocean Association for Regional Cooperation, 6 March 1997.
- 36 Statement by the Hon Manou Bheenick, Minister of Economic Development, Productivity and Regional Development of Mauritius and Chairman of the IOR-ARC Council of Ministers, Second Council of Ministers Meeting of the Indian Ocean Rim Association for Regional Cooperation, 30–31 March 1999.
- 37 The Hon Manou Bheenick, Minister of Economic Development, Productivity and Regional Development of Mauritius and Chairman of the IOR-ARC Council of Ministers, Second Council of Ministers Meeting of the Indian Ocean Rim Association for Regional Cooperation, 30–31 March 1999.



3.16 By 2000, Bangladesh, Iran, Seychelles, Thailand and the United Arab Emirates had joined the association and Egypt, Japan, China and the United Kingdom welcomed as dialogue partners.<sup>38</sup>

### *Third and fourth meetings, 2001 and 2003*

3.17 In April 2001, the Chairman of the Council of Ministers announced that the association had agreed to upgrade the Pilot Co-operation Mechanism to a Co-operation Secretariat with 'a lean bureaucracy'. He noted that the association needed to give the Secretariat the human and financial resources so that it could discharge its duties.<sup>39</sup> In his assessment, the matter deserved serious attention:

Our Association has to-day a different dimension and it cannot continue to be run by a Director and an assistant Director alone. We need to face the realities of the time and be pragmatic on this issue.<sup>40</sup>

3.18 The Chairman also urged the association to adopt 'a modest, practical and outcome focused trade and investment policy Action Plan. This plan would 'reflect the three pillars of trade liberalisation, trade facilitation and economic and technical co-operation'.<sup>41</sup> He noted that while the business of the association had generally been on schedule, tangible results were yet to be seen.<sup>42</sup>

3.19 A High-Level Task Force was established to examine and make recommendations on matters such as the future direction of the IOR-ARC and the existing organisational structure and efficiency of, and funding arrangements for, the Secretariat. The task force was also to consider raising the international profile of the association within and outside the Indian Ocean rim region.<sup>43</sup> Indeed, at the fourth Meeting of the Council of Ministers in 2003, the Chairman designate again highlighted the need to raise IOR-ARC's profile not only among the rim countries but more broadly. Notably, he stressed the importance of member states taking suitable

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38 Report by H.E. Dr Leonardo Santos Simao, Minister of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation of the Republic of Mozambique and Chairman of the Council of Ministers, Muscat, 7 April 2001.

39 Report by H.E. Dr Leonardo Santos Simao, Minister of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation of the Republic of Mozambique and Chairman of the Council of Ministers, Muscat, 7 April 2001.

40 Report by H.E. Dr Leonardo Santos Simao, Minister of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation of the Republic of Mozambique and Chairman of the Council of Ministers, Muscat, 7 April 2001.

41 Report by H.E. Dr Leonardo Santos Simao, Minister of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation of the Republic of Mozambique and Chairman of the Council of Ministers, Muscat, 7 April 2001.

42 Report by H.E. Dr Leonardo Santos Simao, Minister of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation of the Republic of Mozambique and Chairman of the Council of Ministers, Muscat, 7 April 2001.

43 IOR-ARC Council of Ministers Chairman's Report, H.E. Yusuf bin Alawi bin Abdullah, Minister Responsible for Foreign Affairs, the Sultanate of Oman, 12–13 October 2003, Sri Lanka.

action to enhance their own people's interest in, and understanding of, the association.<sup>44</sup>

### ***Fifth meeting, 2004***

3.20 By 2004, a number of member states were expressing concerns about the association's loss of momentum.<sup>45</sup> The Hon Lakshman Kadirgamar, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Sri Lanka, said:

...it is a well recognized fact that no inter-governmental organization moves forward unless there is constant political commitment to its progress on the part of member States. The expertise available in the region cannot be harnessed and deployed usefully unless governments constantly reiterate and unmistakably demonstrate their commitment to the organization.<sup>46</sup>

3.21 Once again member states stressed the need to concentrate on practical projects that would be of common benefit to members and, rather than add more projects, embark on priority ones.<sup>47</sup> The Indian Minister of State for External Affairs stated that the association must demonstrate the required political will to support the organisation's activities.<sup>48</sup> He underscored the need 'to develop projects or commission studies that provide tangible benefits to Member states and dialogue partners'. In his view, only then could the association 'expect a matching level of interest from headquarters'.<sup>49</sup> He said:

...we should organise workshops on issues having direct relevance to our trade and industry sectors or for our developmental activities or for the good of civil society. There are many areas where we can benefit by sharing each other's development experiences, technologies, traditional knowledge or best practices...we should encourage the three working groups—the Academic Group, the Business Forum and the Working Group on Trade

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44 Address by the Hon Tyronne Fernando, PC, MP, Minister of Foreign Affairs at the inauguration of the Fourth Meeting of the Council of Ministers' of the Indian Ocean Rim Association for Regional Cooperation (IOR-ARC), 12 October 2003.

45 Statement by H.E. Joseph Salalang, Deputy Minister, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Malaysia; Address by the Hon. Lakshman Kadirgamar, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Sri Lanka, Fifth Council of Ministers Meeting, Indian Ocean Rim Association for Regional Cooperation, Colombo, Sri Lanka, 26 August 2004.

46 Address by the Hon. Lakshman Kadirgamar, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Sri Lanka, Fifth Council of Ministers Meeting, Indian Ocean Rim Association for Regional Cooperation, Colombo, Sri Lanka, 26 August 2004.

47 Statement by H.E. Joseph Salalang, Deputy Minister, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Malaysia; Address by the Hon. Lakshman Kadirgamar, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Sri Lanka, H.E. Mr Kia Tabatabaee, Director-General for Multilateral Economic Cooperation, Islamic Republic of Iran, Fifth Council of Ministers Meeting, Indian Ocean Rim Association for Regional Cooperation, Colombo, Sri Lanka, 26 August 2004.

48 Statement by the Minister of State for External Affairs, India, H.E. Mr E. Ahamed, Fifth Meeting of the Council of Ministers of IOR-ARC, Colombo, 26 August 2004.

49 Statement by the Minister of State for External Affairs, India, H.E. Mr E. Ahamed, Fifth Meeting of the Council of Ministers of IOR-ARC, Colombo, 26 August 2004.

and Investment (WGTI) to come forward with such tangible proposals as would have relevance and interest for a majority of our membership.<sup>50</sup>

3.22 Concerned that the Secretariat could not make headway by itself, the Council of Ministers considered the need for member states to support it. The Sri Lankan Foreign Minister referred to the Secretariat's inadequate funding:

...it is still the wish of member States that the Secretariat should not be enlarged; rather the States would wish to see the existing secretariat rising, almost impossibly, to the daunting challenge of re-invigorating the organization even without adequate personnel and resources. This is undoubtedly a huge burden placed on the secretariat. They are being called upon with the services of a few to do the work that needs to be done by many.<sup>51</sup>

### *Sixth meeting, 2006*

3.23 Just over a year after the tsunami of December 2004, which caused widespread devastation in the region, the association highlighted the emergence of disaster mitigation and management as a significant area of international cooperation.<sup>52</sup> At this 2006 meeting, the Council of Ministers also recognised piracy along the Kenya–Somalia coastline as a growing and major challenge to trade facilitation.<sup>53</sup>

3.24 Yet again, members were reminded of the central importance of enthusiasm to the success of IOR-ARC.<sup>54</sup> His Excellency Datuk Joseph Salang, Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs, Malaysia, spoke of the limited achievements and the need to focus resources on projects that were realisable.<sup>55</sup> Another Minister, His Excellency Dr Abdul Razak Noormahomed voiced the same sentiments, suggesting a revision of

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50 Statement by the Minister of State for External Affairs, India, H.E. Mr E. Ahamed, Fifth Meeting of the Council of Ministers of IOR-ARC, Colombo, 26 August 2004.

51 Address by the Hon Lakshman Kadirgamar, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Sri Lanka, Fifth Council of Ministers Meeting, Indian Ocean Rim Association for Regional Cooperation, Colombo, Sri Lanka, 26 August 2004.

52 See Statement by the Minister of State for External Affairs, H.E. Shri E. Ahamed, Statement by South African Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs, Ms Sue Van Der Merwe, Sixth Meeting of the Council of Ministers of IOR-ARC, Iran, Tehran, 21 February 2006.

53 Speech by Hon Raphael Tuju MP, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Kenya, Sixth Council of Ministers Meeting of the Indian Ocean Rim Association for Regional Cooperation, Tehran, Iran, 21–22 February 2006.

54 Speech by the Hon Raphael Tuju MP, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Kenya, Sixth Council of Ministers Meeting of the Indian Ocean Rim Association for Regional Cooperation, Tehran, Iran, 21–22 February 2006.

55 Statement by H.E. Datuk Joseph Salang, Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs, Malaysia, Sixth Council of Ministers Meeting of the Indian Ocean Rim Association for Regional Cooperation, Tehran, Iran, 21 February 2006.

projects so that the association would concentrate on those with 'a great potential and in which we have comparative advantage'.<sup>56</sup>

3.25 He also acknowledged that member states 'must allocate the necessary financial resources and provide IOR-ARC with a stable budget for its activities and for the proposed projects'.<sup>57</sup> The South African Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs told the meeting that members needed to raise the organisation's international profile; rebuild confidence in its operations; and reinvigorate its enormous potential to members' collective gain.<sup>58</sup>

***Seventh meeting, 2007—decade of talk***

3.26 In 2007, a decade after the association's creation, members reflected on the lack of visible results and again called for clear and concrete proposals to re-energise the organisation.<sup>59</sup> The emphasis was on bringing forward practical and result-oriented projects.<sup>60</sup> His Excellency Mr Primo Alui Joelianto, Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs, Indonesian Head of Delegation, said:

IOR-ARC has produced abundant number of initiatives. However, it is necessary for us to explore innovative ways and mechanism to ensure that these initiatives be implemented and be completed in due course.<sup>61</sup>

3.27 Malaysia was of the view that IOR-ARC could achieve more if each member state made serious efforts to achieve the association's goals.<sup>62</sup> The meeting decided to

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56 Statement by H.E. Datuk Joseph Salang, Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs, Malaysia, Sixth Council of Ministers Meeting of the Indian Ocean Rim Association for Regional Cooperation, Tehran, Iran, 21 February 2006.

57 Statement by H.E. Datuk Joseph Salang, Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs, Malaysia, Sixth Council of Ministers Meeting of the Indian Ocean Rim Association for Regional Cooperation, Tehran, Iran, 21 February 2006.

58 Statement by South African Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs, Ms Sue Van Der Merwe, Sixth Council of Ministers Meeting of IOR-ARC, Iran, Tehran, 21 February 2006.

59 Statement by Deputy Minister Aziz Pahad, Seventh Meeting of the Council of Ministers of the Indian Ocean Rim Association for Regional Cooperation, Tehran, Islamic Republic of Iran, 7 March 2007.

60 Statement by the Minister of State for External Affairs, H.E. Shri E. Ahamad, Seventh Meeting of the Council of Ministers of the Indian Ocean Rim Association for Regional Cooperation, Tehran, Islamic Republic of Iran, 7 March 2007.

61 Remarks by H.E. Mr Primo Alui Joelianto, Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs, Indonesian Head of Delegation, Seventh Meeting of the Council of Ministers of the Indian Ocean Rim Association for Regional Cooperation, Tehran, Islamic Republic of Iran, 7 March 2007.

62 Statement by H.E. Datuk Joseph Salang, Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs, Malaysia, Seventh Meeting of the Council of Ministers of the Indian Ocean Rim Association for Regional Cooperation, Tehran, Islamic Republic of Iran, 7 March 2007.

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develop a four-year plan of action to guide the work of the Secretariat and the member states.<sup>63</sup>

3.28 At this seventh meeting, Madagascar drew attention to the natural disasters that had occurred in the region—floods in Indonesia, cyclones in Mozambique and Mauritius.<sup>64</sup> Malaysia referred to the University Mobility Indian Ocean Rim Consortium as an 'enduring tour de force of multilateral cooperation between higher education institutes among IOR-ARC member states'.<sup>65</sup> The Council adopted Sri Lanka's proposal that 2007 be declared the IOR-ARC's year of tourism.<sup>66</sup>

***Eighth meeting, 2008—Action Plan***

3.29 In 2008, delegates to the meeting of the Council of Ministers again expressed disappointment and frustration with the organisation's lack of progress: its 'very modest success'; its 'failure to show any tangible results'.<sup>67</sup> The Deputy Minister for Industry, Trade and Marketing, Kenya, stated that:

If we continue along this painfully slow pace we will soon cease to be relevant.<sup>68</sup>

3.30 He called on delegates to 'move beyond rhetoric and embark on the path of concrete actions' and 'to rediscover the enthusiasm and political will that characterised

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63 See comments by the Hon Moses Wetang'ula, Minister for Foreign Affairs, Republic of Kenya, Eighth Meeting of the Council of Ministers of the Indian Ocean Rim Association for Regional Cooperation, Tehran, 4 May 2008. The Committee of Senior Officials adopted the Action Plan which provided policy guidelines on the six priority areas identified by the association.

Statement by His Excellency Ambassador Syed Munshe Afdzaruddin, Ambassador of Malaysia to the Islamic Republic of Iran, Eighth Meeting of the Council of Ministers of the Indian Ocean Rim Association for Regional Cooperation, Tehran, 4 May 2008.

64 Statement of H.E. Mr Ranjeva Marcel, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Madagascar, Seventh Meeting of the Council of Ministers of the Indian Ocean Rim Association for Regional Cooperation, Tehran, Islamic Republic of Iran, 7 March 2007.

65 Statement by H.E. Datuk Joseph Salang, Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs, Malaysia, Seventh Meeting of the Council of Ministers of the Indian Ocean Rim Association for Regional Cooperation, Tehran, Islamic Republic of Iran, 7 March 2007.

66 H.E. Mr Manouchehr Mottaki, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Islamic Republic of Iran and Chairperson of IOR-ARC, Seventh Meeting of the Council of Ministers of the Indian Ocean Rim Association for Regional Cooperation, Tehran, Islamic Republic of Iran, 7 March 2007.

67 See for example, Statement by the Hon Rohitha Bogollagama, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Democratic Republic of Sri Lanka; Statement by the Hon Dr Cyril Chami MP, Deputy Minister for Industry, Trade, and Marketing, Republic of Tanzania, Eighth Meeting of the Council of Ministers of the Indian Ocean Rim Association for Regional Cooperation, Tehran, Islamic Republic of Iran, 4 May 2008.

68 Statement by the Hon Dr Cyril Chami MP, Deputy Minister for Industry, Trade, and Marketing, Republic of Tanzania, Eighth Meeting of the Council of Ministers of the Indian Ocean Rim Association for Regional Cooperation, Tehran, Islamic Republic of Iran, 4 May 2008.

the birth of the IOR-ARC'.<sup>69</sup> Member states reinforced the messages from previous meetings—especially the need to concentrate on implementing projects that were doable, practical and well-targeted so that members could enjoy the benefits of cooperation.<sup>70</sup> Some suggested pursuing only projects that could be sustained, add value and were unique to the group.<sup>71</sup> Members saw the need for the organisation to produce tangible proposals based on complementarities and common goals of the organisation and its working groups having concrete shape and providing direction.<sup>72</sup> The Minister of Foreign Affairs, Sri Lanka, reminded delegates of an observation by the chair of the Council of Ministers meeting in Colombo four years earlier about the importance of political will and commitment:

This organization belongs to member states. They have built a valuable structure for cooperation with the inclusion of the academic and business communities. If the organization falters or fails, it will be because the member States had by default, let it happen.

Let us be frank with ourselves. Either the organization is worth preserving, in which case it is worth promoting and sustaining, or it must be allowed to wither away and die.<sup>73</sup>

3.31 The meeting approved the Action Plan discussed at the previous meeting, with its six priority areas—trade, finance and investment, training and technology, fisheries, tourism, natural disasters and information technology.<sup>74</sup> It also undertook to re-examine and amend the IOR-ARC Charter and to look at ways to strengthen the

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69 Statement by the Hon Dr Cyril Chami MP, Deputy Minister for Industry, Trade, and Marketing, Republic of Tanzania, Eighth Meeting of the Council of Ministers of the Indian Ocean Rim Association for Regional Cooperation, Tehran, Islamic Republic of Iran, 4 May 2008.

70 See for example, Statement by Mr Paul Tighe, First Assistant Secretary, DFAT, Australia; Statement from H.E. Primo Alui Joelianto, Republic of Indonesia; Statement by His Excellency Ambassador Syed Munshe Afdzaruddin, Ambassador of Malaysia to the Islamic Republic of Iran, Eighth Meeting of the Council of Ministers of the Indian Ocean Rim Association for Regional Cooperation, Tehran, Islamic Republic of Iran, 4 May 2008.

71 See for example, Statement by H.E. Shri E. Ahamed, Minister of State for External Affairs, Republic of India; Statement by the Hon Moses Wetang'ula, Minister for Foreign Affairs, Republic of Kenya, Eighth Meeting of the Council of Ministers of the Indian Ocean Rim Association for Regional Cooperation, Tehran, Islamic Republic of Iran, 4 May 2008.

72 See for example, Statement by H.E. Shri E. Ahamed, Republic of India, Minister of State for External Affairs, Eighth Meeting of the Council of Ministers of the Indian Ocean Rim Association for Regional Cooperation, Tehran, Islamic Republic of Iran, 4 May 2008.

73 Statement by the Hon Rohitha Bogollagama, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Democratic Republic of Sri Lanka, Eighth Meeting of the Council of Ministers of the Indian Ocean Rim Association for Regional Cooperation, Tehran, Islamic Republic of Iran, 4 May 2008.

74 See observations made in statement by H.E. Mr Sayed Amir Mansor Borgheai, Islamic Republic of Iran, Tenth Meeting of the Council of Ministers of the Indian Ocean Rim Association for Regional Cooperation, Sana'a, Republic of Yemen, 5 August 2010.

Secretariat, including its financial capacity, structure, salary and allowances of its personnel.<sup>75</sup>

***Ninth meeting, 2009—declaratory to action phase***

3.32 The 2009 Council of Ministers Meeting took place during a period of global economic turbulence and uncertainty. At this time, the increasing incidents of piracy in the Indian Ocean highlighted the need for a coordinated effort. Indeed, Oman's representative noted this 'alarming phenomenon' and urged member states 'to intensify collaboration and strengthen their capacity to combat this development'.<sup>76</sup> Sri Lanka also stated that the growing instances of maritime piracy in the region were a matter of grave concern.<sup>77</sup>

3.33 Members supported the review of the organisation's charter 'to better address the association's changing needs'.<sup>78</sup> Indonesia urged member states to 'make haste judiciously guided by a realistic sense of what is possible and within the limits of the association's resources'.<sup>79</sup> The Council of Ministers agreed to appoint a review panel to 'prioritize and review the projects submitted to the different fora of IOR-ARC and to abandon projects which did not show any progress during the last two years'. The decision to jettison a project was to be taken after consultation with the lead coordinator member state.<sup>80</sup>

*Role of Dialogue partners and need to strengthen the Secretariat.*<sup>81</sup>

3.34 Members continued to press the importance of implementing decisions and repeated their concern about slow progress with many projects in 'cold storage'.<sup>82</sup> The

75 Tehran Communique, Eighth Meeting of the Council of Ministers of IOR-ARC, 4 May 2008.

76 Statement by H.E. Sayyid Badr bin Hamad Albusaidi, Secretary General, Oman, Ministry of Finance, Ninth Meeting of the Council of Ministers of the Indian Ocean Rim Association for Regional Cooperation Sana'a, Republic of Yemen, 25 June 2009. See also, Statement by H.E. T.M. Hamzah Thayeb, Head of Delegation of the Republic of Indonesia, Ninth Meeting of the Council of Ministers of the Indian Ocean Rim Association for Regional Cooperation, Sana'a, Republic of Yemen, 25 June 2009.

77 Statement by the Hon Hussain Bhaila Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs, Sri Lanka, Ninth Meeting of the Council of Ministers of the Indian Ocean Rim Association for Regional Cooperation, Sana'a, Republic of Yemen, 25 June 2009.

78 Sana'a Communique, Ninth Meeting of the Council of Ministers of the Indian Ocean Rim Association for Regional Cooperation, Sana'a, Republic of Yemen, 25 June 2009.

79 Statement by H.E. T.M. Hamzah Thayeb, Head of Delegation of the Republic of Indonesia, Ninth Meeting of the Council of Ministers of the Indian Ocean Rim Association for Regional Cooperation, Sana'a, Republic of Yemen, 25 June 2009.

80 Sana'a Communique, Ninth Meeting of the Council of Ministers of the Indian Ocean Rim Association for Regional Cooperation, Sana'a, Republic of Yemen, 25 June 2009. Yemen endorsed the proposal 'to focus on a few priority areas which entails the adoption of a modest yet relevant Action Plan rather than an ambitious one.'

81 See for example, Statement by H.E. T.M. Hamzah Thayeb, Head of Delegation of the Republic of Indonesia, Ninth Meeting of the Council of Ministers of the Indian Ocean Rim Association for Regional Cooperation, Sana'a, Republic of Yemen, 25 June 2009.

emphasis was again on implementing a limited number of 'well thought out and effective projects'.<sup>83</sup> Australia stated its view that IOR-ARC should 'focus on a small number of practical and achievable activities to demonstrate progress and build confidence in the organisation'—it needed to 'get runs on the board'.<sup>84</sup>

***Tenth meeting, 2010—implementing spirit of revised IOR-ARC Charter***

3.35 At the 2010 Council of Ministers Meeting, Malaysia described the fourteen-year old IOR-ARC as:

...akin to a teenager approaching early adulthood and much guidance is necessary in order that the teenager does not go astray. As such, detailing the future direction of IOR-ARC encompassing among others, practical work programmes must be put in place as a blueprint to drive the Association forward.<sup>85</sup>

3.36 The meeting placed a special emphasis on implementing the spirit of the revised Charter of IOR-ARC and of the Action Plan adopted in 2008. Intended to revitalise the association, the revised charter restated, with minor amendments, the fundamental principles and objectives adopted in 1997. Its guiding principle remained unaltered, which was to facilitate and promote economic, co-operation, bringing together inter-alia, representatives of member states' governments, businesses and academia. The association sought 'to build and expand understanding and mutually beneficial co-operation through a consensus-based, evolutionary and non-intrusive approach'.<sup>86</sup>

3.37 The main changes to the Charter were to institutional mechanisms. A 'Troika' comprising the Chair, Vice Chair and previous Chair would report to the member states on important matters including a review of progress and policy direction to the association's institutions. The new charter also set down the responsibilities, composition and functions of the Secretariat in greater detail. For example, the Secretariat was to prepare the Budget for each year to be submitted to the Committee of Senior Officials for its consideration and recommendation for adoption by the Council of Ministers. A Secretary-General, appointed by the Council of Ministers,

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82 Statement by Ambassador M Fazlul Karim, Bangladesh, Ninth Meeting of the Council of Ministers of the Indian Ocean Rim Association for Regional Cooperation, Sana'a, Republic of Yemen, 25 June 2009.

83 Statement by H.E. Mr Kevin Magee, Ambassador of Australia, Ninth Meeting of the Council of Ministers of the Indian Ocean Rim Association for Regional Cooperation, Sana'a, Republic of Yemen, 25 June 2009.

84 Statement by H.E. Mr Kevin Magee, Ambassador of Australia, Ninth Meeting of the Council of Ministers of the Indian Ocean Rim Association for Regional Cooperation, Sana'a, Republic of Yemen, 25 June 2009.

85 Statement by the Hon Datuk Richard Riot Anak Jaem, Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs, Malaysia, Tenth Meeting of the Council of Ministers of IOR-ARC, Sana'a, Yemen, 5 August 2010.

86 Charter of the Indian Ocean Rim Association for Regional Co-operation (IOR-ARC), <http://iorarc.org/charter.aspx> (accessed 3 May 2013).



was to head the Secretariat for a term of three years renewable for one additional term. He/she would be assisted by Directors or experts on voluntary secondment from member states.<sup>87</sup>

3.38 The Council of Ministers also highlighted, among other things, the following priorities:

- cooperating in the struggle against communicable diseases and natural disasters, and in meeting the challenges emanating from climate change;
- actively advancing project-driven and research oriented initiatives;
- supporting initiatives for combating piracy in the region;
- enhancing private sector involvement in the association in business, trade and economic cooperation; and
- lending greater support for the activities of the IOR-ARC Academic Group.<sup>88</sup>

*Eleventh meeting, 2011—six priority areas*

3.39 The 2011 Council of Ministers welcomed back the Republic of Seychelles as a member. This meeting in Bengaluru brought together many of the themes that had been evolving over the life of IOR-ARC. At this time, members continued to voice their concerns about the menace of piracy in the region which, according to the meeting's communique, had assumed 'alarming proportions'. The meeting agreed that in this area the organisation could serve as 'an effective vehicle for sharing information, experience and best practice'.<sup>89</sup>

3.40 The devastation caused by the 2004 tsunami and the most recent occurrence of cyclones, floods and other natural disasters as well as the threat of oil spills and marine pollution was also at the forefront of the meeting's consideration. In this regard, members endorsed the sharing of experiences and best practices through workshops and capacity building. They also recognised the importance of the fisheries and marine resources in the region and of deepening cooperation among members, including in the management and sustainable harvesting of fish stocks. Ministers were also of the view that consolidating cooperation under IOR-ARC would assist to combat illegal fishing and minimise the use of damaging fishing techniques. The meeting suggested that the IOR-ARC Fisheries Support Unit, set up under the aegis of the Sultanate of Oman, could function as a 'nodal institution to respond to the interests and requirements of member states'.<sup>90</sup>

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87 Charter of the Indian Ocean Association Co-operation (IOR-ARC).

88 Sana'a Communique, Tenth Meeting of the Council of Ministers of IOR-ARC, Sana'a, Yemen, 5 August 2010. Matters singles out tourism, marine pollution and ocean related disaster management, rising sea levels and fisheries—see H.E. Dr Abubaker Abdulla Al-Qirbi, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Republic of Yemen and Chair of IOR-ARC; Statement by Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Thailand, Mr Chavanond Intarakomalyasut, Tenth Meeting of the Council of Ministers of IOR-ARC, Sana'a, Yemen, 5 August 2010.

89 Eleventh Meeting of the Council of Ministers of IOR-ARC Bengaluru communiqué.

90 Eleventh Meeting of the Council of Ministers of IOR-ARC Bengaluru communiqué.

3.41 The member states expressed a particular interest in infrastructure building and trade facilitation and, as underscored in previous meetings, the region's tourism potential as an attractive means for regional socio-economic growth and development. They were of the view that the whole IOR-ARC academic effort needed 'close attention with a recalibration of methodology and approach'. The meeting concluded:

We need to understand our region and our shared maritime domain better, we need to look at the development of technologies relevant to our peoples' needs. Meteorology and the study of the monsoons, marine biology and management of our coastal zones are all areas of relevance, so also are energy efficient and renewable energy technologies, capacity building in ICT, analytical studies on investment promotion etc.<sup>91</sup>

3.42 Member states recognised the value in cultural exchanges that promote people-to-people links and agreed to consider a new name for the organisation. India assumed the role of chair of the association and Australia became the vice-chair.

*Twelfth meeting, 2012—fifteenth anniversary*

3.43 In May 2012, the Government of Mauritius opened new 'state-of-the-art' facilities for the IOR-ARC Secretariat. It viewed the inauguration of the new premises as completing a process of rejuvenation started with the adoption of a new charter in 2010, the appointment of a 'seasoned diplomat', Ambassador K.V. Bhagirath, as the new Secretary-General and of India becoming the new chair.<sup>92</sup> The Secretary-General stated that when he took charge, the Secretariat had been 'in search of a spark to spring it back into action'. In his view, during the first half of 2012 there were encouraging signs that the Secretariat had indeed sprang into action. In addition to moving into new premises, the Secretariat had organised a meeting on Culture, a Meeting of the Senior Officials of IOR-ARC and received a contribution of US\$1m from India.<sup>93</sup>

3.44 Later that year at the their annual council meeting, the Ministers' referred back to the six priority areas identified the previous year—maritime security and piracy; disaster risk reduction; trade and investment facilitation; fisheries management; academic and science and technology cooperation; tourism and cultural exchanges. They were of the view that the Bengaluru meeting had helped bring greater focus to the association's work and noted the number of useful cooperation initiatives being implemented in these areas.

3.45 A number of member states supported a regional initiative towards combating piracy along the waters of the Gulf of Aden.<sup>94</sup> Many looked to develop stronger cooperation in the field of education and disaster risk management. The meeting noted

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91 Eleventh Meeting of the Council of Ministers of IOR-ARC Bengaluru communiqué.

92 Speech by the Hon Dr Arvin Boolell MP, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade, Mauritius, 7 May 2012.

93 Intervention by H.E. Mr Anund Priyay Neewoor, Secretary for Foreign Affairs, at the Handing Over Ceremony of India's Contribution to IOR-ARC Special Fund, 26 June 2012.

94 Statement by Hon Amb. Prof. Sam K. Ongeru, Minister for Foreign Affairs, Kenya, Twelfth Meeting of IOR-ARC, Gurgoan, India, 2 November 2012.

that enhanced connectivity could have 'a catalytic effect on economic integration by drastically reducing the costs of doing business'. In this context it recognised that the development of port and harbour infrastructure in the region assumed critical importance. The meeting directed the Working Group on Trade and Investment to 'explore the potential of cooperation in this sector, including investment in and upgrading of shipping infrastructure and logistic chains in the region'.

3.46 The meeting noted that IOR-ARC had developed valuable institutions including the Fisheries Support Unit, Maritime Transport Council and the regional Centre for Science and Technology Transfer. The Ministers wanted the institutions 'to develop into nodal centres of excellence and to network with other institutions in their respective fields in the region'.<sup>95</sup>

## Conclusion

3.47 Although from the beginning IOR-ARC member states were conscious of the need to proceed with small but steady steps, they increasingly became frustrated and disappointed that projects failed to deliver tangible results. Over an extended period, they highlighted the need for their association to have a clear sense of direction to guide its destiny. They argued that the organisation should focus on a small number of viable, practical, and key projects to be completed by the organisation so it could demonstrate progress and build confidence in its ability 'to get runs on the board'.<sup>96</sup> Member states accepted that they must strive for realistic and achievable results; act with decisiveness, greater focus and commitment; and make cooperation more concrete and the benefits more tangible.<sup>97</sup> In 2011, the member states nominated six priority areas of cooperation—maritime safety and security; trade and investment facilitation; fisheries management; disaster risk reduction; academic and science and technology; and tourism and cultural exchanges.<sup>98</sup>

3.48 Member states also recognised that the tripartite approach of bringing together government, the private sector and academia was one of association's strengths. In particular, they understood that while the private sector was the engine of growth, greater interaction among the business communities was required.<sup>99</sup> The three

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95 Twelfth Meeting of the Council of Ministers of IOR-ARC Gurgaon communiqué, 2 November 2012, paragraph 16.

96 Statement by Mr Paul Tighe, First Assistant Secretary, DFAT, Australia, Eighth Meeting of the Council of Ministers of the Indian Ocean Rim Association for Regional Cooperation, Tehran, 4 May 2008; Statement by H.E. T.M. Hamzah Thayeb, Head of Delegation of the Republic of Indonesia, Ninth Meeting of the Council of Ministers of the Indian Ocean Rim Association for Regional Cooperation, Sana'a, Republic of Yemen, 25 June 2009.

97 Statement by Mr Chavanond Intarakomalyasut, Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Thailand, Tenth Meeting of the Council of Ministers of IOR-ARC, Sana'a, Yemen, 5 August 2010.

98 *Committee Hansard*, 17 August 2012, p. 3.

99 See for example, Statement by the Hon Hussain Bhaila Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs, Sri Lanka, Ninth Meeting of the Council of Ministers of the Indian Ocean Rim Association for Regional Cooperation, Sana'a, Republic of Yemen, 25 June 2009.

Working Groups—the Academic Group, the Business Forum and the Working Group on Trade and Investment—would be central to providing the incentive and direction needed for greater cooperation.

3.49 The association went through a renewal period when it amended its Charter and adopted a Plan of Action, but after fifteen years it was still endeavouring to lay a more substantial platform for cooperation. The tone of the 2012 Council of Ministers communique, however, was positive and conveyed a message of growing confidence and determination to strengthen institutions within IOR-ARC and their capacities. It referred to a number of useful cooperation initiatives that were being taken in each of the priority areas and drew attention to the work being done in the Fisheries Support Unit, Maritime Transport Council and the Regional Centre for Science and Technology Transfer. There was also talk of developing nodal centres of excellence.

3.50 The ministers emphasised the important role that the IOR-ARC Troika could have in coordinating cooperation through regular interaction among its members. The Secretariat, led by Ambassador K.V. Bhagirath, appeared to have engendered a clearer sense of purpose.

3.51 Australia as deputy chair and chair in waiting will be a part of the Troika and central to driving this cooperation. In the following chapter, the committee considers the potential for IOR-ARC under Australia's stewardship to realise its ambitions in the coming years.