

# **Statement**

**by**

**Ambassador Rajiv K. Bhatia**

Director General, ICWA

**at**

**Opening Session of 2nd Round of  
Trilateral Dialogue on Indian Ocean**

**at**

**Canberra  
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It is a pleasure to return to Canberra within less than six months. We thank and congratulate the Australian Strategic Policy Institute (ASPI) to host the 2nd Round of Trilateral Dialogue on Indian Ocean (TDIO). We are confident that this meeting will continue, consolidate and expand the very valuable collaborative work we had initiated together at the 1st Round which the Indian Council of World Affairs (ICWA) had the privilege to organise in September 2013.

2. Much has happened since then. IOR-ARC has assumed a new name – Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA). It stands rejuvenated under the Chairmanship of Australia, as a sequel to the notable dynamism shown by the institution during India's tenure as Chair in 2011-13. The Declaration of Perth Principles and the contents of the Perth Communiqué, issued in November 2013, are highly relevant to our deliberations here. Further, we need to factor in an array of strategic, political, security, economic and other developments affecting the Indian Ocean region which have unfolded since we met a year ago. It is noteworthy that each of our three countries, for example, has or will shortly have a new Government.



*Ambassador Rajiv K Bhatia, DG, ICWA with delegation members of Australia and Indonesia.*

## **Salience of Indian Ocean**

3. What has not changed is the trend towards the increasing salience of the Indian Ocean for world economy, sustainable development, security and peace. Today the Indian Ocean has become a vital economic highway in the world, and a global 'centre of gravity'. Notably about 60% of the world's oil shipments, 33% of the bulk cargo, and 50% of the world's container trade pass through the waters of the Indian Ocean. Hence a safe and secure shipping environment, against the general backdrop of intensifying strategic competition as well as the emergence of traditional and non-traditional threats, must remain one of our top priorities.

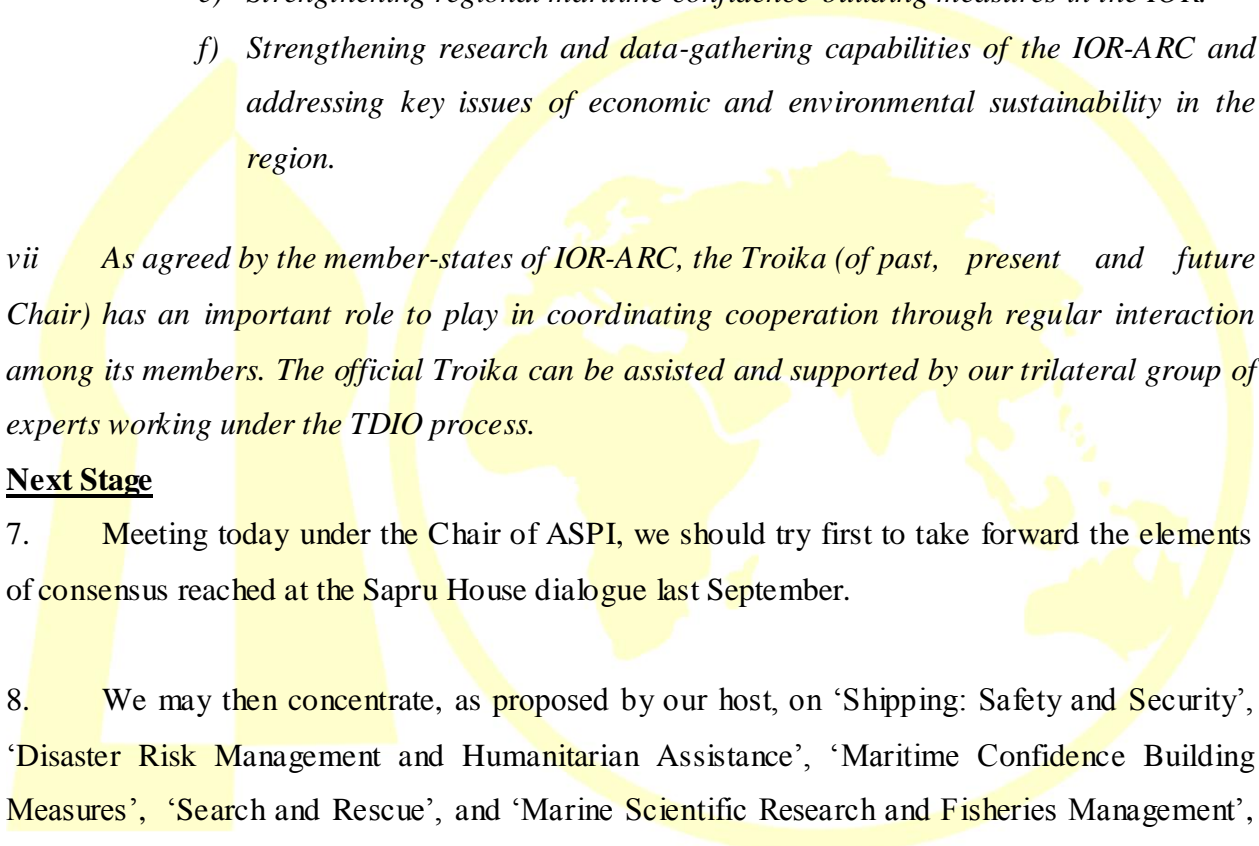
4. Moreover, the region's diversity represents both an opportunity and a challenge. We need to leverage diversities and concentrate on developing the full potential of our common bonds and shared interests.

## **TDIO journey so far**

5. In conceptualising TDIO, we had given ourselves four tasks, as below:
- i. Review of geopolitical, economic and security developments in the Indian Ocean region with a view to supporting forces and factors that favour stability, security, peace, economic development and prosperity.
  - ii. Assessment of the status of development IOR-ARC, now IORA, with a view to devising a blueprint for strengthening the Association and enhancing its effectiveness. In this context, we drew inspiration from official-level agreement that the Troika could play a coordinating role.
  - iii. Crafting modalities for (a) increasing public awareness about key issues concerning the Indian Ocean and IOR-ARC, and (b) sharing new ideas and giving recommendations of scholars to the governments concerned.
  - iv. Consideration of any other idea relating to the central theme on which there is agreement among the three interlocutors.

6. Starting from this commonality among our three institutions, we worked diligently and creatively. As a result, we succeeded in crafting consensus in New Delhi on the following main points:

- i. *The Indian Ocean forms part of our 'collective destiny.' Having reviewed various relevant developments, we dedicate ourselves to support forces and factors that favour peace, prosperity, stability and security in the region.*
- ii. *The Indian Ocean region faces a complex set of challenges as well as a range of attractive opportunities for the welfare of the peoples in the region and beyond. We intend to study and evaluate them further with a view to promoting maritime cooperation as well as inclusive and sustainable development.*
- iii. *We envision IOR-ARC as a premier institution in the Indian Ocean region. IOR-ARC, now IORA, has benefitted considerably from new and valuable initiatives taken during the pro-active tenure of India as the Chair. Given significant changes in the international environment during the past 16 years, the IOR-ARC needs to be strengthened and empowered further, and we are confident this will happen under the chairmanship of Australia and vice-chairmanship of Indonesia in the next two years.*
- iv. *For the above-mentioned purpose, we reviewed a number of proposals mentioned by the participants, including adding new aspects of cooperation to be inserted under the existing six priority areas of cooperation. The subject will be further studied and discussed at the next TDIO meeting.*
- v. *We emphasise the need for stock taking of the existing cooperation and initiatives in the region that deal with matters of common concern and build upon the existing mechanisms within the Indian Ocean region.*
- vi. *We identify the following areas as being of particular value for further study and policy development:*

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- a) *Developing a 'best practice' approach to HADR challenges in the IOR-ARC.*
  - b) *Developing strategies to raise awareness of the work of the IOR-ARC and to promote better understanding of the IOR-ARC among media professionals.*
  - c) *Strengthening the participation and role of the private sector in IOR-ARC activities.*
  - d) *Working to define the interests and leadership roles of our elected representatives with regard to IOR-ARC initiatives.*
  - e) *Strengthening regional maritime confidence-building measures in the IOR.*
  - f) *Strengthening research and data-gathering capabilities of the IOR-ARC and addressing key issues of economic and environmental sustainability in the region.*

vii *As agreed by the member-states of IOR-ARC, the Troika (of past, present and future Chair) has an important role to play in coordinating cooperation through regular interaction among its members. The official Troika can be assisted and supported by our trilateral group of experts working under the TDIO process.*

#### **Next Stage**

7. Meeting today under the Chair of ASPI, we should try first to take forward the elements of consensus reached at the Sapru House dialogue last September.

8. We may then concentrate, as proposed by our host, on 'Shipping: Safety and Security', 'Disaster Risk Management and Humanitarian Assistance', 'Maritime Confidence Building Measures', 'Search and Rescue', and 'Marine Scientific Research and Fisheries Management', the specific subjects to which individual sessions have been proposed. Our approach, I hope, will be practical and action-oriented so that concrete, agreed recommendations may emerge.

9. Further, we may pay special attention to the results of the Perth Meeting of the Foreign Ministers of IORA, held in November 2013. Several of its outcomes seem to be of considerable significance. According to our reading, the key ones are:

- Recognition of the important contribution of the conservation and sustainable use of the Indian Ocean and its resources to poverty eradication, sustained economic growth, food security and creation of sustainable livelihoods of the decent work. This formulation of the ‘Perth Principles’ has been duly reflected in the Perth Communique which highlights IORA’s role in addressing the development, security, resource and environmental challenges facing our region;
- Need to align IORA’s work on maritime security and safety and disaster management with possible IONS initiatives in these areas;
- Desirability of developing closer people-to-people links, including through tourism, education, business and enhancement of the sense of regional identity.
- Invitation extended to IORA Dialogue Partners to involve themselves with six priority areas of activity, including the possibility of holding a formal post-Meeting dialogue between IORA Member-States and Dialogue Partners in order to leverage opportunities for increased mutual engagement; and
- Agreement on extending IORA’s ties with other international and regional institutions in order to build synergies and forge coordination.

10. Moreover, we can exchange views on the strategic aspects of evolving relations among the Indian Ocean Powers and extra-regional Powers, the impact of turmoil and turbulence in West Asia and parts of Africa, and the unfolding geopolitics in East Asia. In the process, we may be in a position to develop a shared view among our three institutions and explore possibilities of enhanced political, economic, security and other cooperation involving our three countries.

11. Finally, a few logical issues of some consequence will need to be addressed as below:

- i) We may re-visit the idea whether we should expand TDIO in order to include one or two more countries.
- ii) We should also work out the timing for the 3rd Round of TDIO; and

iii) Following the conclusion of the first cycle of three Rounds, we should be ready with a detailed Report (including a package of our recommendations). This should be transmitted to our governments for their consideration. The modalities of preparing the Report and its transmission will need to be worked out as well.

12. In the end, let me assure you, Mr. Chairman, that my delegation will listen, with due attention, to what the other two delegations have to say. We are ready and willing to play a constructive role in these deliberations.

