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Ad Hoc Committee on the Indian Ocean

Summary record of the 456th meeting

Held at Headquarters, New York, on Wednesday, 22 July 2015, at 3 p.m.

Temporary Chair: Mr. Percaya (Indonesia)

Chair: Mr. Perera (Sri Lanka)

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The meeting was called to order at 3.15 p.m.

Opening of the session

1. **The Temporary Chair** declared open the 2015 session of the Ad Hoc Committee.

Election of officers

2. **The Temporary Chair** said that the Chair, Mr. Kohona (Sri Lanka), had returned to his capital. The delegation of Sri Lanka had agreed to continue to provide the Chair of the Committee and had nominated Mr. Perera for the post. If there was no objection, he would take it that the Committee wished to elect Mr. Perera as Chair.

3. *Mr. Perera (Sri Lanka) was elected Chair by acclamation.*

4. *Mr. Perera (Sri Lanka) took the Chair.*

5. **The Chair** said that the former Vice-Chair of the Committee, the representative of Australia, had returned to her capital. He had been informed that the delegation of Australia wished to put forward Mr. Hansen for the post. If there was no objection, he would take it that the Committee wished to dispense with the nomination of candidates and to elect Mr. Hansen as Vice-Chair.

6. *Mr. Hansen (Australia) was elected Vice-Chair by acclamation.*

Adoption of the agenda (A/AC.159/L.145)

7. *The agenda was adopted.*

Report of the Chair of the Committee pursuant to paragraph 3 of General Assembly resolution 68/24

8. **The Chair** said that it was important to maintain a peaceful and prosperous environment in the Indian Ocean region, particularly given its geopolitical importance and its role in maintaining security and sustainable economic growth in littoral and hinterland States. While geopolitical realities had changed since the Cold War era in which the Committee had been established, its mandate to ensure peace, security and economic growth in the region remained relevant in light of new threats such as piracy, human trafficking, drug smuggling, arms trafficking, maritime pollution, climate change and illegal fishing activities, particularly since the Indian Ocean was at the

crossroads of global markets, where the world's rising powers were increasingly coming into contact.

9. Informal consultations with Member States had revealed that many were of the view that the core mandate of the Committee remained relevant. There was a broad sense that the new areas of concern must be taken into account in the future work of the Committee. Maritime safety and security was a key area, given the importance of the Indian Ocean for trade, and thus economic development, in the region. Specific issues highlighted during the consultations included piracy, terrorism, the safety of communications channels traversing the Indian Ocean and environmental concerns such as rising sea levels.

10. The establishment of bodies such as the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) had enhanced safety and security in the region by improving cooperation between States and substantially increasing their economic and military strength. The establishment of the Indian Ocean Rim Association had the potential to significantly enhance cooperation on maritime safety and security. While disarmament should remain the primary focus of the Committee's work, the possibility of increasing security and stability through greater economic cooperation should also be explored. The security and stability of the oceans would also be essential to the implementation of the proposed sustainable development goal concerning the conservation and sustainable use of oceans, seas and marine resources.

11. Recalling preambular paragraphs 6 and 7 of General Assembly resolution 68/24 on the implementation of the Declaration of the Indian Ocean as a Zone of Peace, he expressed his intention to consult extensively with Member States on the future direction of the Committee's work, as the engagement of all States, a consensual approach and a mutually beneficial dialogue would contribute to the enhancement of peace, security and stability in the Indian Ocean region.

12. **Ms. Wilson** (Australia) said that the Indian Ocean rim was home to nearly one third of the world's population and included some of the world's fastest growing economies as well as vast natural resources. It was also an important transit route for goods and oil. Major trade, investment and energy flows were creating a single strategic arc in the Indian and Pacific

Ocean regions, with the prosperity and stability of States becoming interlinked with those of others in the region.

13. Australia had sought to shape a more cooperative, connected and peaceful Indian Ocean region. Its strategic priorities in that regard were to strengthen regional architecture, ensure maritime security and achieve sustainable economic growth. It had sought to increase regional cooperation during its concurrent chairmanship of the Indian Ocean Rim Association and the Indian Ocean Naval Symposium. It hoped to strengthen ties between the Indian Ocean Rim Association and the United Nations, including by obtaining observer status for the Association in the General Assembly and working with the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime to establish an association between the Indian Ocean Forum on Maritime Crime and the Association.

14. Maritime security was vital for trade and investment. Collective efforts to combat piracy off the Horn of Africa and drug trafficking in the Indian Ocean had demonstrated that concerted international cooperation was necessary and effective. Ongoing naval operations, including those by the Combined Maritime Forces, would remain essential to maritime security in the short to medium term. The Indian Ocean Naval Symposium also had a crucial role to play in achieving a collaborative approach to maritime security. The Indian Ocean Rim Association could be a mechanism for cooperation to combat the trafficking of drugs, people and wildlife.

15. Her delegation had also been working to increase the engagement of the Indian Ocean Rim Association with the business community. The blue economy was a key driver of economic growth and job creation in all Indian Ocean Rim Association States members. Women's empowerment was another effective driver of economic growth and should be mainstreamed across the work of the Association.

16. **Mr. Sun Lei** (China) said that his delegation supported the efforts of the States of the Indian Ocean area to defend their sovereignty and independence, as well as peace, security and stability in the region. The Declaration should be implemented at an early date, which would require joint efforts by States both within and beyond the region. All permanent members of the Security Council and the main maritime users of the Indian Ocean should participate in the Committee's

work. Major powers outside the region should eliminate their military presence in the Indian Ocean area and refrain from threatening or interfering in the affairs of States in the region. His delegation would continue to support dialogue between the Chair and the relevant States.

17. **Mr. Zagaynov** (Russian Federation) said that his delegation had appreciated the non-confrontational approach taken by the delegation of Sri Lanka throughout its chairmanship of the Committee. It supported the aim of developing conditions of peace, security and stability in the Indian Ocean region and would focus on ensuring that the interests of all countries concerned were taken into account.

18. **Mr. Khoshroo** (Islamic Republic of Iran) said that maintaining peace and stability in the Indian Ocean region and its eventual establishment as a zone of peace was an objective shared by, and in the interests of, States within and beyond the region. Progress would require political determination, engagement in good faith and joint efforts from States around the world. All States in the region should observe the internationally recognized principles of non-aggression, peaceful coexistence and the peaceful settlement of disputes.

19. **Mr. Sareer** (Maldives) said that while the people of the Indian Ocean region had flourished in many ways since the adoption of the Declaration, the peace and security of the region was now threatened by new challenges such as growing economic disparities, transnational terrorism, maritime piracy, drug trafficking, energy insecurity, rising sea levels and ocean acidification. His country had been particularly affected by piracy. The large insurance premiums incurred as a result of the prevalence of piracy in the Indian Ocean had placed a huge burden on small economies. His country's legal framework had been insufficient to deal with newer aspects of piracy, but cooperation between States in the region had enabled them to develop and implement successful policies to combat the crime. Further joint efforts to address maritime crime, which impeded the movement of goods, would unlock the full potential of trade to foster economic growth and good relations between States.

20. States in the region were united by the fact that the Indian Ocean was the key to their development. The economies of many small island developing countries, including the Maldives, were particularly

dependent on the ocean and its resources. The management and sustainable use of the oceans was the responsibility of all States. For its part, his Government was fully committed to addressing issues such as ocean acidification, maritime pollution, overfishing and illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing. Through continued support, cooperation and mutual respect, it would be fully possible for States in the region to overcome the challenges they faced in a sustainable and peaceful manner.

21. **Mr. Singh** (India) said that it must be recalled that the Declaration had been anchored in the work of the Disarmament and International Security Committee. Shifting the emphasis of the Committee's work from disarmament to economic matters could dilute its disarmament efforts and render less effective its work to ensure conditions of peace, security and stability in the Indian Ocean region. While it was certainly important to combat piracy and terrorism, those issues should be discussed in the appropriate forums. Similarly, economic matters would best be addressed in the discussions on the implementation of the post-2015 sustainable development agenda. Any new proposals concerning the direction of the work of the Committee should be properly discussed before being included on its agenda. It would therefore be preferable to model the new resolution on the Declaration of the Indian Ocean as a Zone of Peace on the previous resolution, General Assembly resolution 68/24.

22. **Mr. Percaya** (Indonesia) said that the situation in the Indian Ocean region had changed significantly since adoption of the Declaration of the Indian Ocean as a Zone of Peace in 1971. The Cold War had ended, regional cooperation was flourishing and many States in the region were registering high levels of economic growth. However, the region was facing new challenges such as piracy, human trafficking and people-smuggling. Furthermore, a recent scientific study had concluded that the Indian Ocean had absorbed 70 per cent of the heat absorbed by global oceans as a result of global warming over the past decade. Rising sea temperatures would have an impact on coral and other marine species critical to economies in the region. They would also affect weather patterns on land and accelerate the rise in sea levels. In light of those complex challenges, which could have an enormous impact on many aspects of development, the need for cooperation was greater than ever. Before the

seventy-second session of the General Assembly, the Committee should carry out an analysis of the challenges, determine how best to respond and make concrete recommendations for its future work, taking into account any implications for the scope, focus and resources of the body. It should also propose measures to boost socioeconomic development in the Indian Ocean region. Tangible progress could not be made without the participation of all members of the Security Council and the major maritime users of the Indian Ocean.

23. His delegation was also fully committed and ready to work within the framework of the Indian Ocean Rim Association.

24. **The Chair** said that a stable and secure environment in the Indian Ocean region was essential in order to make the most of opportunities for trade and economic cooperation. The work of the Committee should retain its focus on disarmament while also taking into account new elements that had emerged. The Indian Ocean Rim Association and other subregional organizations could provide input to the Committee's future work.

Adoption of the report of the Committee to the General Assembly at its seventieth session (A/AC.159/L.146)

25. **Ms. Rajaonarivelo** (Madagascar), Rapporteur, introduced a number of amendments to the draft report of the Committee to the General Assembly at its seventieth session (A/AC.159/L.146). In paragraph 2, the date should be "22 July" instead of "6 July". Paragraphs 3 and 7 would be completed to reflect the statements made at the current meeting. Paragraph 8 now read: "During the meeting, an exchange of views was held on a range of issues relating to the work of the Committee." The first sentence of paragraph 9 had been replaced by the following: "The Committee reaffirmed the continuing relevance of the mandate of the Ad Hoc Committee in the light of new threats and challenges confronting the region. This included piracy, terrorism, trafficking in weapons, human trafficking and illicit drug smuggling. The importance of organizations such as IORA (Indian Ocean Rim Association) was viewed as being of particular significance in enhancing cooperation in maritime safety and security. The meeting also emphasized the need for continuing engagement in the process by

Member States, with a view to determining the future direction of the work of the Committee.”

Paragraph 1

26. *Paragraph 1 was adopted.*

Paragraph 2

27. *Paragraph 2, as amended, was adopted.*

Paragraphs 3 to 7

28. *Paragraphs 3 to 7 were adopted.*

Paragraph 8

29. *Paragraph 8, as amended, was adopted.*

Paragraph 9

30. **Mr. Sareer** (Maldives) suggested amending the second sentence of paragraph 9 of the draft report as amended by the rapporteur to read: “This included piracy, terrorism, trafficking in weapons, human trafficking, illicit drug smuggling, energy security, rising sea levels, ocean acidification, maritime pollution and illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing.”

31. **Mr. Khoshroo** (Islamic Republic of Iran) said that if a list of specific issues that had not been discussed were to be included in the draft report, paragraph 9 should be amended by replacing the words “This included” with the phrase “The Committee noted the views expressed by some members that these threats included”.

32. **Mr. Singh** (India) said that his delegation could not endorse such a change without further time for reflection.

33. **Ms. Wilson** (Australia) suggested removing the second sentence of paragraph 9 as amended by the rapporteur altogether.

34. *It was so decided.*

35. *Paragraph 9, as amended, was adopted.*

Paragraphs 10 to 14

36. *Paragraphs 10 to 14 were adopted.*

37. *Draft report [A/AC.159/L.146](#) as a whole, as amended, was adopted.*

Closure of the session

38. **The Chair** declared closed the 2015 session of the Ad Hoc Committee.

The meeting rose at 4.40 p.m.