

Remarks by Incoming Chair
VADM Ray Griggs, Chief of Navy Australia
4th Indian Ocean Naval Symposium
Perth 26th March 2014

Good Morning, Fellow Naval, Coastguard and Marine Police force chiefs from around the Indian Ocean, Colleagues from around the world, Distinguished Speakers and Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen

It is my great honour to welcome you to Australia and to Perth for the 2014 Indian Ocean Naval Symposium (IONS).

I would like to acknowledge the Whadjuk Noongar people, the traditional custodians of the land on which we are meeting, and acknowledge and respect their continuing culture and the contribution they make to the life of this city and this region.

The Royal Australian Navy has operated in the Indian Ocean since its foundation and of course this ocean has played an important part in European discovery of our Great Southern Land. We have strongly supported IONS since its inception and as such it is particular honour for Australia to host this event as it is for me, as Chief of Navy, to assume the role of Chair for the next two years.

I would like to pay tribute to the South African Navy and Vice Admiral Mudimu for the stewardship of IONS over the last two years. As the most recent Chair, he has played an important part in ensuring that we are able to establish what I believe will be one of the most significant pieces of security architecture in our region.

Rear Admiral Pillay, thank you for being here representing Vice Admiral Mudimu. I know he is busy handing over Vice Admiral Hlongwane and all of us here understand the demands of that process. As the incoming Chair, I would be grateful if you would pass on my deep and most sincere thanks on behalf of all the members and observers of IONS, to your Navy and its leaders for their stewardship. On behalf of those here I would like to express our best wishes to Vice Admiral Mudimu for whatever lies ahead in life after being Chief and also our best wishes to Vice Admiral Hlongwane for what also lies ahead of him in his new role.

We have already heard from Rear Admiral Pillay on the achievements of the last two years. I think the combined efforts of the three previous chairs, India, UAE and South Africa have got us to a crucial point in the evolution of IONS.

If there was ever an incident that shows us, the mariners of the Indian Ocean, of the need for this symposium and of the need to work collaboratively it is the search for the tragic loss of Malaysian Airlines flight 370. I offer my condolences to the families of those passengers and crew who have been lost. It remains a deeply troubling and sad time for them. The scale and breadth of the search operation has been unprecedented with search activities in the South China Sea, the Gulf of Thailand and throughout the Indian Ocean from the Bay of Bengal to the current focus some 1500 nm south west of

us here in Perth. If there are any significant developments in the search during the Symposium I will ensure that we bring them to your attention.

This combined search effort has shown the importance of collaboration and cooperation. It has underscored the importance of developing 'habits of cooperation.' If we have the habit, the mechanics of cooperation become easier, whether it be for this or for major international responses to natural disasters as we saw in the Philippines last year. At the core of these types of international responses are relationships, crucial relationships at the political level and for us relationships between our military forces. Events such as IONS are essential for the development of these relationships. I hope we can further develop relationships between navies and each other over the next few days so we can continue the important work we do.

At the heart of that work is the work we do at sea to protect our collective ability to trade. When you boil down most of our maritime security threats, it is their potential to disrupt our trade and our societies that stands out. The scale of the collective international response to piracy off Somalia is at the end of the day because of the fundamental importance of the trade route from the Bab El Mandeb to Malacca, the so called iron Highway.

In thinking about what we are trying to achieve with IONS, and what theme to give to this symposium I was searching for something that was of equal importance to all member states, no matter how big or small, and those who have a significant interest in this region; hence the theme *Protecting the Ability to Trade in the Indian Ocean Maritime Economy*.

I am pleased with the response to this theme as I am pleased with quality of the speakers we have been able to assemble for the next two days. Of course without good order at sea we cannot have a safe and efficiently functioning global maritime trading system. I suspect the importance of good order at sea and our collective role in maintaining it will be a recurring theme this week.

On Friday we will have the conclave of chiefs, for member states the conclave is an important activity as it sets out the work of IONS for the next two years. As I mentioned we are now at a crucial point in the development of IONS following much hard work. I am determined to ensure that Australia lives up to the responsibility of becoming the chair for the next two years.

At the conclave this year I have two aims.

- First is to gain agreement to the Charter of Business. This is something that is critical to us moving forward and further developing the structure of IONS. I think the very good work done in the last two years will enable us to achieve this important milestone. An important by product of the Charter of Business will be the ability to involve Observer countries more actively; I think this is something that is very important noting the valuable contribution they make in the Western Pacific Naval Symposium (WPNS) for example.
- The second aim is for us to accelerate the maturation process of IONS by using as much as we can from like institutions such as the Western Pacific Naval Symposium and the ASEAN Defence Ministers Meeting Plus Expert Working Group (EWG) construct: we will hear from Madam Suriani from Malaysia on the

ADMM Plus EWG. One way we are proposing to accelerate that maturation is that we consider the introduction of a system of IONS working groups. This is something some have been able to see in operation in the context of the ADMM Plus, where in just a couple of short years, a series of working groups have conducted a series of tabletop and even field exercises on issues which are of mutual benefit.

The working group concept is based on the premise that all IONS members, whether their nations are represented by national navies, coastguards or marine police, have skills, strengths and knowledge which can be contributed; and that through participation all nations will benefit from the activities of the working groups. You will see from the papers that we have suggested a number of potential Working Groups including Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief, Counter-Piracy and Information Sharing and Interoperability.

I am a firm believer in the great understanding which exists between mariners, who have seen the sea, experienced its vast distances and its enormous power. We know better than most that it is beyond the ability of any one nation to control the use of the sea, yet we also know how important it is that we maintain security in this domain. Institutions such as IONS are made up of many, many relationships. They develop over time and each one takes an act of conscious will at both the national and the personal level. What we undertake over the next few days will add to the stock of goodwill, which exists between the mariners of the Indian Ocean.

One final aspect that I would like to mention at this stage is the IONS Essay Competition. After I conclude speaking I will ask Rear Admiral Pillay to announce the winners of the last competition. And then the Director of the Sea Power Centre – Australia, Captain Justin Jones will brief you on the details of the competition that we will administer this year in 2014.

I strongly believe these essay competitions serve two great purposes. They encourage the entrants to learn more about their profession and the environment on which we depend so much. Even more importantly, they are a vehicle for a much wider number of people to learn more about our region through understanding regional nations and their interests. This education process is an important part of creating the environment, which supports our future security and prosperity by encouraging mutual understanding. It is in a way, a means of continuing the relationship building that we are undertaking here.

I seek your support to publicise and encourage members of your service to enter the competition – it would be a great achievement for IONS if there were to be an entry from every single member.

Colleagues, ladies and gentlemen, thank you for being here in Perth and I look forward to a very fruitful few days and a productive couple of years ahead as we take IONS forward together.