

# Chief of Navy Address at the Indian Ocean Naval Symposium

Security Vision for the Indian Ocean

Iran

April 2018

Ladies and Gentlemen.

Good Morning — it is a pleasure to be here today.

I would first like to thank the Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs of The Islamic Republic of Iran Dr. Araghchi for the opportunity to speak this morning.

It is through symposiums such as this one, that we are able to explore, as maritime stakeholders, how we can increase maritime co-operation amongst the navies which face the Indian Ocean by providing an open and inclusive forum for discussion of regionally relevant maritime issues.

In doing so it seeks to generate a flow of information between naval professionals so as to improve good order at sea in our region so as to reduce the potential for miscalculation.

I would also like to acknowledge my fellow panellists the Commander of the Islamic Republic of Iran Navy, Rear Admiral Dr. Hossein Khanzandi, and the Indian Chief of the Naval Staff Admiral Sunil Lanba. We are fortunate to have their insights.

The subject of this session is of the utmost importance for all of us who lead and serve in the region's maritime forces, and I am very pleased to have the opportunity to speak on Australia's 'Security Vision for the Indian Ocean'.

In Australia, we are increasingly focussed on the Indo-Pacific as the strategic and economic system on which Australia's future security and prosperity depends.

We increasingly understand that the Indian Ocean matters to Australia and countries on the Indian Ocean rim.

Over 40 per cent of the world's population call the Indian ocean home, and as power balances have shifted to the Indo-Pacific, the Indian Ocean is now centre-stage of global geopolitics.

What is striking about the Indian Ocean is its diversity; states that adjoin this ocean are differentiated by their varying political ideologies, by the God they pray to, by the language they converse in, by their history and their race.

Despite the differences, the Indian Ocean region shares a common feature, the sea. With this brings a direct and strategic interest for all states in the Indian Ocean and what it delivers.

The Indian Ocean provides major sea routes to key markets in the Middle East, Europe and the Americas and is home to around 40 per cent of the world's population.

The Indian Ocean has significant oil and precious metal reserves, an estimated forty per cent of the world's oil come from the region, with sixty per cent of the global oil reserves and approximately fifty per cent of the gas reserves located within the Persian Gulf region of this important ocean.

Each year, about 100,000 vessels pass through the Indian Ocean region, as do two thirds of the world's oil tankers and one third of its container traffic.

50% of Australia's exports by sea depart from ports on our Indian Ocean coast, and a large portion of imports also follow these routes with merchandise trade between Australia and IORA countries being worth at least \$80 billion

And Australia's offshore oil and gas resources are concentrated in our Indian Ocean maritime jurisdiction.

With this in mind you would expect the Australian Foreign Policy White Paper published in 2017 and the Defence White Paper published in 2016 to have a decidedly maritime focus. They do and will for the foreseeable future.

They reflect Australia's concern for changes in the maritime security situation in the Indo-Pacific region – a region which is undergoing a period of significant geostrategic, economic and technological change.

This is creating new opportunities for increased prosperity throughout the region, while also increasing the complexity and contested nature of our shared strategic environment.

Some example we are seeing are:

- major power relationships continue to be characterised by a mix of cooperation and competition.
- many regional countries continue to invest in advanced naval and civil maritime capabilities which means many forces will be able to operate at a greater range and with more precision generating new opportunities for sophisticated cooperation, but also has the potential to increase strategic competition.
- terrorists and other criminals are increasing using the relatively porous maritime boundaries of the Indo-Pacific as transit routes

- abundant fisheries may come under more pressure from long-range fishing operations.
- decision-makers needing to continue to grapple with rapidly evolving, non-geographic threats such as those in the cyber and space domains.

Australia wants to work with our Indian Ocean partners to develop a strong, rules-based culture in the region and address maritime security challenges.

It is vital we work together to ensure Indian Ocean facing states have the capacity to deal with strategic and security developments affecting our region.

Into the future Australia will increase its investments in maritime security capacity building and enhance regional training on maritime domain awareness, protection of the marine environment and adherence to international law.

Australia will seek to work with our Indian Ocean partners to deliver practical initiatives which enhance stability and prosperity through hosting workshops and funding collaborative activities in aquaculture, fisheries, ocean forecasting and climate adaption.

We will seek to deepen joint exercises and build maritime domain awareness across the region and collaborate on maritime safety and security with our Indian Ocean partners.

We will promote confidence-building measures and cooperation among regional coast guards and maritime enforcement bodies, assist in efforts to counter terrorism and offer to support regional states to develop comprehensive national maritime strategies.

Through our diplomatic and operational engagement, we will strive to ensure international law, especially UNCLOS, is respected and implemented to protect freedom of navigation and uphold the sovereign rights of coastal states in their exclusive economic zones.

We will continue to exercise our rights to freedom of navigation and overflight, consistent with long-standing policy, and conduct cooperative activities with other countries consistent with international law.

We will seek to deepen our engagement with regional partners to build shared capacity to resist disruptions that threaten regional stability and the rule-based order.

We will strive for strong relationships at all level with our Indian Ocean Partners to demonstrate we are a reliable security partner, and we will continue to support our Indian Ocean Partners capacity to contribute to cooperative security in the region.

As part of these commitments the Australian Navy will seek to find new and innovative opportunities to more regularly participate in increasingly complex multinational exercises and to make more effective and meaningful contributions during those exercises.

We will also, as part of this broader effort of the Australian Defence Force, expand our cultural understanding and language capabilities to increase our effectiveness when operating in the near region and collaborating with our Indian Ocean partners.

And using these expanded cultural and language capabilities the number of Defence personnel posted overseas will increase to conduct more liaison, capacity building, training and mentoring with partner defence and security forces.

Each of these steps will enable the Australian Navy and the Australian Defence Force to strengthen our regional and international partnerships, and to meet shared security challenges.

Before closing let me again thank the Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs of The Islamic Republic of Iran Dr Araghchi for the opportunity to share my thoughts on Australia's 'Security Vision for the Indian Ocean'.

I would normally say at this point that I look forward to working with each and every one of you over the coming years as the nation's which face the Indian Ocean seek to improve good order at sea in our region so as to reduce the potential for miscalculation.

However, I will be retiring in June and the next Australian Chief of Navy will take up the privilege of working with you to increase maritime co-operation amongst our navies.

I have every expectation that the next Australian Chief of Navy will only be too pleased to do so as I know they will be just as committed to ensuring regional maritime stability, and open and reliable maritime trade.

Thank you.