

COMESA and the Indian Ocean Community (IOC) will in mid 2015 celebrate a decade of close and intense cooperation. The two institutions signed a Memorandum of Understanding in July 2005 which has since underpinned an era of brotherly cooperation and mutual assistance in support of regional cooperation and integration in the Eastern and Southern Africa and Indian Ocean region.

Secretary-General Sindiso Ngwenya has revealed that IOC has created a model of functional cooperation across a wide array of sectors. This has been fully complementary to the COMESA mandate which fundamentally supports regional economic integration.

“We are thus, together, giving some empirical answers to detractors of overlapping memberships who are not alive that there are specificities that are unique to COMESA Island Member States that are Members of IOC,”

“It is against these dynamics of evolving regional cooperation and integration that I extend a hearty congratulation to the IOC for achieving Observer Status at the UN General Assembly. I do hope that with the support of COMESA Member States, IOC’s request for Observer Status at the AU will be approved,” Mr Ngwenya pointed out.

COMESA and IOC, together with the East African Community (EAC) and the Intergovernmental Authority for Development (IGAD), have been working very closely together for the past twelve years through the IRCC (Inter-Regional Coordinating Committee) mechanism.

With the support from the EU, the four regional economic communities have been allowed to best manage and use resources allocated in favour of regional integration and co-operation under the 9th and 10th European Development Fund. IOC has scored success in designing and implementing EDF funded programmes in maritime and island-specific issues.

COMESA has been leading the 9th and 10th EDF Regional Integration Support Programmes (RISP I, II and III) and the Regional Integration Support Mechanism (RISM I and II) among others.

Regarding infrastructure development, Mr Ngwenya was pleased to note that the IOC has developed the concept and political ownership of its SEGANET project. SEGANET will potentially link all the island Member States via submarine fiber optic cable for more affordable and higher capacity broadband connection.

Under the RISP II and Trademark resources facilitated by COMESA, IOC has rallied its stakeholders to launch a comprehensive study that complements IOC studies on the development of the IOC maritime transport corridor. RISP II has further supported IOC in its renewed role to underpin regional tourism development.

Mr Ngwenya made these remarks when he addressed the 28th Meeting of the IOC Council of Ministers in Seychelles on Thursday, 17 January 2013.