Promoting the Indian Ocean Region

The Indian Ocean region has enormous potential. It is home to a third of the world's population. All world religions are joined by the Indian Ocean. From Kenya to India to Malaysia, economies are growing. Some experts even predict that in the upcoming decade the Indian Ocean region will become the world's strongest economic area. And all of this is being powered by the technological advances which are improving the everyday lives of so many people: in the last 10 years in East Africa alone, over 130 million people have gained access to mobile phone networks.

But, as in any dynamic region of the world, chances and challenges are closely interlinked. 90% of global trade is carried by sea. If the 21st century is to become a maritime century, then the Indian Ocean will become a key area for the international community. Many of the emerging economic powers of Asia are coastal states which depend on safe seas.

Crises such as those in Somalia, Yemen and the areas occupied by Islamic State could destabilise the Indian Ocean region, which is already home to 10 of the world's 20 most fragile states. How can we strengthen these countries? And how can we offer many millions of people prospects for the future which are preferable to setting out on a dangerous trip across the sea?

Rapid urbanisation is another challenge: in East Africa alone, by 2050 some 230 million more people will live in cities than do today. How can we enable these people to find a way to live good lives in cities, with decently paid work opportunities?

Whether we are neighbours on continents or island states, China, the US, Europe or Germany – we all have an interest in a peaceful and flourishing Indian Ocean region.