



S E S R I C

Research | Statistics | Training

# info REPORT

Volume 20

Number 75

October 2008

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## UPCOMING EVENTS

## RECENT PUBLICATIONS BY SESRIC

Attar Sokak, No. 4, 06700, G. O. P., Ankara – Turkey  
Tel.: (+90 312) 468 61 72 (4 lines) Fax: (+90 312) 468 57 26  
E-mail: oicankara@sesric.org Web site: www.sesric.org

## ANKARA CENTRE UPDATE

### Expert Group Meeting on Enhancing Intra - OIC Trade

The Experts Group Meeting (EGM) on Enhancing Intra-OIC Trade was jointly organized by the Statistical, Economic and Social Research and Training Centre for Islamic Countries (SESRIC), the International Islamic Trade Finance Corporation (ITFC) of the Islamic Development Bank (IDB), the Union of Chambers and Commodity Exchange (TOBB) of the Republic of Turkey and the Coordination Office of the Standing Committee for Economic and Commercial Cooperation (COMCEC) and held at the campus of the Economy and Technology University (ETU) of the TOBB in Ankara on 5-6 July 2008.

The Meeting aimed at exploring ways and means of facilitating the realization of the target to achieve 20% of intra-OIC trade by the year 2015 as stipulated by the OIC Ten-Year Programme of Action.

A total of 35 experts from OIC member countries, OIC institutions and OIC national trade promotion agencies and some regional and international organisations and academia participated in the meeting.

The meeting discussed the following main themes: trade financing, trade promotion, trade facilitation, trade capacity building and promoting and developing strategic

commodities originating from member countries.

The main highlights of the meeting were the Brainstorming Session in the second day in which all the participants involved in the discussion and exchanged their views on the possible effective and efficient ways and means of enhancing intra-OIC trade with the aim of preparing a Road Map on the subject, including specific recommendations, scenarios and modalities.

The final report, including the recommendations of the meeting will be submitted to and presented at the 24<sup>th</sup> Session of the COMCEC, which will be held in October 2008 in Istanbul, for consideration by the ministers of economy and trade of the OIC member countries.

Mr. Nabil Dabour, Senior Researcher at the Centre, addressed the meeting at the opening session on behalf of Dr. Savas Alpay, Director General of the Centre, and made a presentation on "Facilitating Trade through OIC Multilateral Agreements on Economic and Commercial Cooperation and Potential Gains from these Agreements" during the first session of the meeting on the theme "Trade Facilitation".

### Regional Workshop on DevInfo

The Regional Workshop on DevInfo took place on 7 - 10 July 2008 in the UN House in Beirut, Republic of Lebanon. The workshop was organized by the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) in

partnership with the United Nations Development Group (UNDG), United Nations country offices and the Statistical, Economic and Social Research and Training Centre for Islamic Countries (SESRIC). Mr. Atilla

Karaman, a Researcher, represented the SESRIC thereat and made a speech on behalf of Dr. Savaş Alpay, Director General of SESRIC, in the opening ceremony.

The objective of the workshop was to train the participants on DevInfo in order to build a field of expertise in compiling and managing databases, as well as to furnish them with the

most recent upgraded version of the software. The workshop participants were representatives from the National Statistical Offices and Ministries of Health of 13 OIC Member Countries. The participants had the opportunity to see the new features and tools of the "Users" and "Database Administration" interfaces of DevInfo.

## **OIC-UN General Coordination Meeting**

The UN Assistant Secretary General, Head of the Office of United Nations in Geneva, Mr. Sergei Ordzhonikidze and the OIC Assistant Secretary General for Science and Technology Ambassador Ali Akbar Salehi have officially opened the 2-day biennial UN-OIC General Meeting on Cooperation on July 8, 2008 in Geneva, Switzerland. The meeting, which was attended by high level delegations from both General Secretariat and Specialized Agencies of the OIC and UN, is an institutional framework of exchange of views, discussions and coordination between the two major international organizations. The Statistical, Economic and Social Research and Training Centre for Islamic Countries (SESRIC) was represented thereat by Mr. Mehmet Fatih Serenli, Acting Director of Training and Technical Cooperation Department, the OIC focal point for technical cooperation activities.

The joint and cooperation activities carried out by the two major international organisations during the lapped two years (July 2006-July 2008) have been evaluated together with the future partnership projects and programmes to be undertaken during the next 2-year period.

During the meeting SESRIC representative discussed and exchanged views with several participating UN Agencies, such as World Bank, UNWTO, WMO, ITU and UNEP, on the possibilities of cooperation and agreed to cooperate on developing and implementing capacity building and training programs, as well as sharing and exchanging information and data between the concerned institutions in the areas of finance and banking sector, poverty alleviation, micro finance, food security, water and sanitation, tourism and environment.

## **Workshop on Improving the Investment Climate in the OIC Member Countries**

The Workshop on "Improving the Investment Climate in the OIC Member Countries" was held in Jeddah, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia on 22-23 July 2008 in fulfillment of a recommendation of the 23rd Session of the COMCEC, held on 14-17 November 2007 in Istanbul, Turkey, which chose the topic of this Workshop as the theme of the 'Exchange of

Views' Session for the 24th Session of the COMCEC.

The Workshop was organized by the Investment Promotion Technical Assistance Programme (ITAP) of the Islamic Development Bank (IDB) Group in collaboration with the SESRIC (the

coordinating institution for the exchange of views sessions of the COMCEC).

The Workshop was attended by representatives of the National Investment Promotion Agencies (NIPAs) of Tunisia, Nigeria, Senegal, Djibouti, Egypt and Turkey. It was also attended by the representatives of the World Association of Investment Promotion Agencies (WAIPA), African Business Round Table (ABRT) and Brazil Trade and Investment Promotion Agency (APEX).

The representatives of the OIC General Secretariat, SESRIC, ICDT and the following IDB Group's institutions: International Islamic Trade Finance Corporation (ITFC), Islamic Corporation for the Development of Private Sector (IDD) and Islamic Corporation for the Investment of Insurance and Export Credit (ICIEC) were also attended the Workshop.

Following the inaugural session, five working sessions were devoted, during the two days of the Workshop, to discussing the presentations made by the representatives of the national investment promotion agencies, the OIC and IDB institutions as well as the international investment promotion agencies. The discussion during these working sessions tackled the following major themes: (i) Foreign Direct Investment: Recent Profile; (ii) Promoting Intra-OIC Investment: Progress and Challenges; (iii) Improving Investment Climate in the OIC Countries: Experiences and Useful Lessons; and (iv) Capacity Building for Promotion of Investment.

The Centre was represented at the Workshop by its Director General Dr. Savas Alpay and Mr. Nabil Dabour, Director of Economic and Social Research Department who presented a paper titled "Promoting Trade and Investment in the OIC Countries: The Role of Capacity Building". The paper assesses the recent performance of trade and investment in the OIC countries and highlights the role of capacity building in overcoming the obstacles that still hinder the efforts of those countries to increase their levels of trade and investment at both the national and intra-OIC levels.

Following a general deliberation in a summing-up session on all the themes of the Workshop, the participants agreed upon a set of recommendations with the overall aim of improving investment climate in OIC countries. These recommendations specify a set of actions that could be undertaken by the OIC member countries and institutions as well as the timeframe for each of these actions in the short, medium and long term.

The representative of the Centre, Mr. Nabil Dabour, Acting Director of Research Department, participated in the general debate on the recommendations and in preparing the final report of the Workshop.

The Workshop's final report, including the recommendations, will be submitted to the 24th Session of the COMCEC for consideration by the member countries during the Exchange of Views Session.

## **Making the eHealth Connection Conference**

Making the eHealth Connection: Global Partnerships, Local Solutions Conference took place at the Rockefeller Foundation's Bellagio Center in Bellagio, Italy on July 13 - August 8, 2008. The conference was

organized by the Rockefeller Foundation in collaboration with thirteen conveners internationally recognized in the fields of global health, international development and information & communications technology.

As the ultimate goal is to improve health outcomes for poor and vulnerable people through eHealth by uniting the global community, the following eight key issues have been tackled in the conference:

- The path to inter-operability
- Public health informatics and national health information systems
- Access to health information and knowledge-sharing
- eHealth capacity building
- Electronic health records
- Mobile phones and telemedicine

- Unlocking eHealth markets
- National eHealth policies

For stakeholders from the Global South, the conference was designed to provide answers to key eHealth issues and encourage investment commitments and build consensus about how to use eHealth to improve the access, efficiency and quality of health services, particularly in low-resource settings. Outcomes from the conference will inform both national and international eHealth agendas

## **6<sup>th</sup> and Final Meeting of the OIC Task Force on SMEs**

The 6<sup>th</sup> and Final Meeting of the OIC Task Force on SMEs was held at the Assumption University of Thailand, Bangkok on August 15-17, 2008. The Meeting was organized by the Islamic Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ICCI) in collaboration with the Islamic Development Bank (IDB), Thai Islamic Trade and Industrial Association (TITIA) and Assumption University of Thailand (AU). Dr. Savaş Alpay, Director General, represented the Centre thereat and participated in the deliberation sessions in which the main themes of the meeting were discussed.

The meeting was attended by about 100 participants including experts from national SMEs authorities, national chambers of commerce and industries and other public and private sector institutions of the 13 OIC member countries: Bahrain, Bangladesh, Egypt, Iran, State of Kuwait, Lebanon, Malaysia, Pakistan, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, Sudan, Syria, Turkey, UAE; in addition to participants from the host country, Kingdom of Thailand, which is an observer state of the OIC and one non-member country of the OIC, namely, Philippines.

In addition to the Islamic Development Bank (IDB) and Islamic Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ICCI), three subsidiary organs of the OIC: the Statistical, Economic and Social Research and Training Centre for Islamic Countries (SESRIC), the Islamic University of Technology (IUT) and the Islamic Centre for Trade Development (ICDT) were also represented at the meeting together with the Islamic Chamber Research and Information Centre (ICRIC).

The Special Unit for South – South Cooperation of the United Nations Development Programme (SUSSC/UNDP), New York, was also represented together with the South – South Global Assets and Technology Exchanges System (SS-GATES) Project. Two specialized agencies of the United Nations: United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) and World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO) were also represented at the meeting.

A total of 36 thematic and country papers were presented at the meeting. The meeting held the following four working sessions and four exchange – of – views sessions on:

- (i) The Role of SMEs Institutions
- (ii) The Role of International Agencies and OIC Institutions
- (iii) The Role of SMEs Financing Institutions
- (iv) The Role of Incubation Centers and the Importance of Linkages with Educational Institutions.

For more information and details on the Conclusions and Recommendations of the 6<sup>th</sup> and Final Meeting of the OIC Task Force on SMEs visit the following web site:

<http://www.comcec.org/EN/belge/24comcece n/%c4%b1cc%c4%b1/Report-OIC-TF.doc>

The meeting concluded with a closing session at which it adopted its report and a consolidation of the main recommendations of its six sessions. Based on these recommendations, the Meeting adopted the Strategic Plan for the Promotion and Development of SMEs Sector in OIC Member Countries. This document was submitted to the 24<sup>th</sup> Session of the Standing Committee for Economic and Commercial Cooperation of the OIC (COMCEC), held in Istanbul, Turkey on October 20-24, 2008.

## OIC NEWS

### **OIC Symposium on Muslim Communities and Minorities in East and Southeast Asia**

The symposium on Muslim minorities in Asia, organized by the OIC in coordination with the Federation of Korean Muslims, on July 4-6, 2008 in Seoul, Republic of South Korea, has discussed in-depth reports on the current status and future prospects of Muslim communities throughout the Asian continent.

A key issue that enlisted much debate was the way socio-economic and political developments unraveling across Asia are affecting Muslim communities. To many participants in the Symposium, the 21st century is poised to be the century when interfaith matters have to be addressed for the sake of future peace and security, not just in Asia but throughout the world. The need to engage in a constructive dialogue is acute in Asia as Muslim minorities live in a religiously complex region.

Many delegates recognized OIC's keenness to help Muslim minorities in getting really involved in the societies in which they live and, in return, enjoy equitable treatment,

which would encourage them to partake in the economic advancement of their countries in a secure social environment for them and for the future generations.

Ambassador Atta al-Mannan Bakheet, OIC Assistant Secretary General, pinpointed that the Organization seeks to cooperate closely with Muslim and minorities in Asia to develop their communities, eliminate poverty and illiteracy and maintain a clean environment. He added that the OIC looks forward for Muslim communities to put up an exemplary model of Islamic behavior grounded in Islamic noble values and driven by the respect of the sovereignty of their countries.

In its closing session, the Symposium issued a final communiqué setting out a number of key recommendations to ensure the implementation of a host of strategies likely to help build up a better political and socio-economic future for Muslim minorities across Asia.

Highlighting major political conflicts affecting Muslim communities in some Asian countries, namely the Philippines, Myanmar, Thailand and Sri Lanka, the final communiqué appealed to the General Secretariat of the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC) to continue its efforts to resolve the lingering conflicts in this part of the world.

The communiqué also lauded the efforts the OIC Secretary General, Prof. Ekmeleddin Ihsanoglu, has invested in reactivating the peace process in Southern Philippines and the positive contacts he has initiated with the government of Thailand in order to reach a peaceful settlement to the dispute.

While calling on Islamic banks, Muslim businessmen and investors to invest in least-developed countries with Muslim minorities, the communiqué called for measures to be taken in order to alleviate the plight of Muslim refugees and internally displaced people.

Furthermore, the communiqué emphasized the need to empower and motivate women to take on a more substantial role in the development of their countries through their communities.

Recognizing that the lack of proper understanding of Da'wa activities in the region gives rise to conflicts, the Symposium called upon the OIC to uphold its engagement in inter-faith and intra-faith dialogue in countries with Muslim minorities.

The Symposium also pointed up the need to upgrade the education system in Asia and recommends that the OIC, Islamic Development Bank (IDB) and the Islamic Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (ISESCO) to set up a modern university in South-East Asia. In the same vein, the communiqué called for greater networking to boost information exchange among Muslim communities in non-Muslim and Muslim countries.

### **1st Meeting on Implementation of Dakar-Port Sudan Railways Project**

The Committee for implementing the Dakar-Port Sudan Railways Line Project held its First Meeting at the headquarters of the General Secretariat of the Organisation of The Islamic Conference (OIC) in Jeddah, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, on July 19-20, 2008. The meeting was devoted to the discussion of the implementation of the project.

The meeting commenced on a welcome note delivered by Mr. Ahmed Lajimi, Adviser to the Secretary-General, on behalf of the Secretary General of the Organization, Prof. Ekmeleddin Ihsanoglu, who pointed out that the meeting falls within the framework of a road map for the implementation of the resolutions of the 11th Islamic Summit Conference held last

March in Dakar, Senegal, and the 35th Session of the Council of Foreign Ministers held on June 18-20, 2008 in Kampala, the capital city of the Republic of Uganda, regarding the Dakar-Port Sudan Railways Line Project. Prof. Ihsanoglu added that the projected railway line will connect West African states with East African ones, stressing the vital importance for transit states, which will be of vital importance for each country it crosses and promote greater economic integration among them. The success of this project will be reflected in facilitating the movement of people and goods, and foster the bonds of regional cooperation among OIC African Member States by contributing to the creation of integrated partnerships and providing employment opportunities, enhancing intra-

OIC trade and contributing to the prosperity of tourism and economic development as well as strengthening relations among the peoples of these countries.

The Secretary General expressed his conviction that this project should be one of the main catalysts for intra-OIC economic and commercial cooperation, which will ultimately serve the purpose of implementing the Ten-year Program of Action adopted by the Third Extraordinary Islamic Summit held in Makkah in 2005. The project will, likewise, contribute in a

palpable manner to achieving the UN Millennium Development Goals.

The Secretary General emphasized that the Organization, out of its keenness to promote the spirit of cooperation to serve growth and prosperity of the Member States, will spare no effort in supporting the project.

During the meeting, a bureau was elected for the current term with the Republic of Sudan holding the chairmanship and both the Republic of Niger and the Federal Republic of Nigeria jointly holding the vice-chairmanship while the Republic of Senegal will act as Rapporteur.

## **19<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Board of Trustees of the AIC**

The Board of Trustees (BOT) of the Chicago-based American Islamic College (AIC) held on Monday 8 September 2008 its 19<sup>th</sup> Meeting Session at the Headquarters of the Organisation of the Islamic Conference (OIC).

The meeting's agenda covered deliberations on the prospects for future action and the five-year plan to reinvigorate the educational mission of the College, in particular postgraduate studies of Arabic language and Islamic studies and the project to establish an Islamic waqf (endowment) to benefit the College, including a mosque, a modern library and an Islamic museum.

The OIC Secretary General, Professor Dr. Ekmeleddin Ihsanoglu, who also chairs the AIC Board of Trustees, delivered a speech at the meeting. He pointed out that the OIC has managed to put the AIC back on the right track, as over 70 percent of the

violations pinpointed by the mayor of Chicago have been properly settled thanks to AIC's self-generated income.

The Secretary General exhorted the BOT to develop an integrated vision capable of stimulating the role of the College, as the stature of any academic institution is intimately linked to its ability to manage and maintain the endowment. The endowment does not merely relieve the financial pressure felt by the College, but it also projects a positive image of the College as an institution of academic elite.

This 19th meeting session is the second AIC Board of Trustees meeting after the BOT took over the administration of the College through a legal settlement clinched thanks to the efforts of Prof. Ihsanoglu. The AIC has been since 1987 outside the administrative fold of the Board of Trustees.



## **63<sup>rd</sup> Session of UN General Assembly**

The UN General Assembly opened its 63<sup>rd</sup> Session at the UN Headquarters in New York, United States of America, on Sept. 16, 2008 with its new president Mr. Miguel d'Escoto Brockmann saying that the issues of global food crisis, UN reform and climate change are among the key themes of its one-year work.

He said that, as the root of the problem of world hunger is the unequal distribution of purchasing power within and between countries, the central focus of the UN efforts should be on the reduction of the inequalities in the world's food production system rather than concentrate on increasing food production as a single solution.

On this occasion, the OIC Secretary General, Prof. Ekmeleddin Ihsanoglu, met with the UN Secretary General, Ban Ki-moon, on September 19, 2008 in New York. The two secretaries-general discussed the means of furthering cooperation and coordination between the two major organizations. Ban Ki-

moon expressed his satisfaction concerning the scope of cooperation between the UN and the OIC and stressed the importance of institutionalizing the relationship between the two organizations. He also highlighted the importance of cooperation and coordination between the UN and the OIC with regard to issues related to the Middle East, including the issues of Darfur, Somalia, Palestine, Iraq and Afghanistan. With regard to Iraq, Ban Ki-moon stressed that the OIC could play a larger role to help Iraqis overcome the dilemma facing their country.

For his part, Prof. Ihsanoglu commended the closer cooperation between the OIC and the UN, and asked the UN Secretary General to use his good offices to fight religious hatred against Muslims around the world. He suggested that the UN can reinforce its efforts to fight religious defamation and build more powerful bridges of understanding between the different religions.

## **OIC Foreign Ministers' Coordination Meeting in New York**

The OIC Foreign Ministers held their annual coordination meeting in New York on 26<sup>th</sup> September 2008 under the chairmanship of Mr. Sam Kutesa, Foreign Minister of Uganda.

Discussions during the meeting focused on various issues related to the Joint Islamic Action in the light of successive shifts and developments witnessed on the international scene. The meeting expressed its support for a number of economic, social and cultural reforms in the UN Member States.

The meeting also condemned the rising phenomenon of Islamophobia and discrimination exercised against Muslims and

reiterated its support to the Initiative for the Alliance of Civilisations which seeks, on the contrary to Islamophobia, to achieve concord and mutual understanding through the reaffirmation of the common values shared by all cultures and religions, and urged the international community to back up this initiative.

The meeting also focused on the international food crisis and its impact on the least developed countries and called on the international institutions and the advanced countries to step up their assistance and technical support for the agricultural sector in

the developing countries so as to stimulate food production there.

The OIC Secretary General, Prof. Ekmeleddin Ihsanoglu, delivered a statement to the meeting in which he highlighted the scope of the world food crisis and stressed the need to combat poverty, to support health and climate change projects and to focus on development and arms control.

The Secretary General also cautioned against the phenomenon of Islamophobia which has taken on a racist form, and in this respect, referred to the reports by Western observers

on Islamophobia having crossed the confines of mere dislike for a particular culture, and turned into a new form of racial discrimination. Indeed, a new strand of this phenomenon has appeared at the level of institutions, which has led certain European specialized agencies to avoid the use of certain terms in their reports such as racism and substituting them with "Islamophobia" in an attempt to water down and alter the racist character of this phenomenon, as the use of those terms would call for sanctions and legal prosecutions under the prevalent international legislation.

## UPCOMING EVENTS FOR LAST QUARTER OF 2008

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### OCTOBER

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- Alliance of Civilizations' Focal Points Meeting, Oct. 2-3, 2008, *Paris*, France
- Fourth Islamic Conference of Ministers of Higher Education and Scientific Research (ICMHESR-4), Oct. 6-8, 2008, *Baku*, Azerbaijan
- 30th Meeting of the Board of Directors of SESRIC, Oct. 9-10, 2008, *Istanbul*, Turkey
- 2nd Expert Meeting on Women Issues, Oct. 11-13, *Jeddah*, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia
- International Conference on 30th Anniversary of Almaty Declaration of WHO/UNICEF on Primary Health Care Development, Oct. 15-16, 2008, *Almaty*, Kazakhstan
- Forum on "Common World: Progress through Diversity (Muslim World and West)", Oct. 17, 2008, *Astana*, Kazakhstan
- 2nd Meeting of the "OIC Member States' Stock Exchanges Forum", Oct. 18-19, 2008, *Istanbul*, Turkey

- 1st Project Committee Meeting on Cotton, Oct. 19, 2008, *Istanbul*, Turkey
- Fostering Dialogue among Cultures and Civilizations through Concrete and Sustainable Activities, Oct. 21-22, 2008, *Copenhagen*, Denmark
- 24th Session of the COMCEC, Oct, 20-24, 2008, *Istanbul*, Turkey
- 12th MUSIAD International Trade Fair and 12th International Business Forum, Oct. 22-26, 2008, *Istanbul*, Turkey
- High Level Expert Group Meeting of ECO NSOs, Oct. 26-28, 2008, *Tehran*, Iran
- Seminar on “Emergence of E-Commerce and its Impact on Economies of OIC Member Countries”, Oct. 27-29, 2008, *Istanbul*, Turkey
- 3rd Islamic Conference of Ministers of Environment, Oct. 29-31, 2008, *Rabat*, Morocco

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## NOVEMBER

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- ISESCO’s 8th Session of the Consultative Council on the Implementation of the Cultural Strategy of the Islamic World, Nov. 1-28, 2008, *Tehran*, Iran
- 4th Forum for Businesswomen, Nov. 2-4, 2008, *Damascus*, Syria
- 22nd Convocation Ceremony and 34th Meeting of the Governing Board of Islamic University of Technology (IUT), Nov. 3, 2008, *Dhaka*, Bangladesh
- International Conference on “The Impact of Information and Integrated Statistical Systems on Socio-Economical Development”, Nov. 8-10, 2008, *Ras Al-Khaimah*, UAE
- 37th Session of the Permanent Finance Committee (PFC), Nov. 10-12, 2008, *Jeddah*, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia
- 16th Session of the Arab Ministerial Conference on Culture, Nov. 16-17, 2008, *Damascus*, Syria

- World Health Organisation Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (WHO FCTC), the 3rd session of the Conference of the Parties, Nov. 17-22, 2008, *Durban*, South Africa
- 2nd Conference on Women, Nov. 24-25, 2008, *Cairo*, Egypt
- First Annual Meeting of French Speaking Countries' Trade Promotion Organs, Nov. 26-27, 2008, *Conakry*, Guinea

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**DECEMBER**

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- Benin Symposium on Economic Development of Africa, Dec. 1-31, 2008, *Cotonou*, Benin
- 4th Meeting of the Intergovernmental Group of Experts (IGGE) on the Review and Rationalization of OIC Agenda Items and Resolutions, Dec. 1-12, 2008, *Jeddah*, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia
- 8th Session of the Islamic Conference of Information Ministers, Dec. 20-23, 2008, *Rabat*, Morocco

## RECENT PUBLICATIONS BY SESRIC

### Economic Cooperation and Development Review

Economic Cooperation and Development Review is an annual periodical of SESRIC which will feature interviews with eminent personalities, short articles on selected issues of economic growth, development and cooperation which are of immediate interest to the member countries, summaries of selected papers and reports prepared by the Centre itself, brief papers and news on current economic developments in individual member countries, interviews with eminent personalities in the Islamic world and elsewhere, and a section on titles and reviews of recently published books.

The Review targets primarily economic policy-makers, government officials, academicians, researchers and other interested readers in the OIC and other developing countries. The contributions from academicians, researchers and professionals in universities, government offices, research institutions and regional and international organisations focus on different issues of economic development and cooperation that are of primary interest and benefit to the member countries.

The Review will be circulated widely within the OIC community and elsewhere, particularly at the highest levels of the governments of the member countries, including the heads of states, ministries, economic policy-makers, senior officials, academicians, *et al.* In so doing, the Economic Cooperation and Development Review will be an effective means for enhancing the efforts of SESRIC to provide the necessary and up-to-date information and knowledge that would make the member countries better informed of each other's capacities and needs as well as challenges and potentials towards higher economic integration.

*Publishing Date: October 2008*

*Language(s): English, Arabic*

*ISBN: 978-975-6427-18-7*

*Order your copy through: [pubs@sesric.org](mailto:pubs@sesric.org)*

### Microfinance Institutions in the OIC Member Countries

Microfinance has been developed around the world as a popular poverty reduction strategy. Many pioneering Microfinance Institutions (MFIs) all over the world have demonstrated that these institutions can deliver financial services to the poor that otherwise would not have access to these services. Various impact studies have reported the successful outcomes of microfinance programs in improving the incomes and reducing the vulnerability of the poor. Yet, despite the successful implementation of microfinance programs all around the world, millions of poor still cannot get access to the services provided by the microfinance institutions. In order to improve the outreach, scale and further growth of microfinance industry new financing ideas are needed.

This Report presents detailed analysis of the performance of MFIs in the OIC regions. It analyzes the workings of different types of MFIs according to their productivity, efficiency, scale and outreach and provides a review of various impact studies of these institutions in improving the overall welfare of poor in the OIC member states.

This Report deliberates on some of the innovative financing mechanisms to support the MFIs in this regard. It proposes establishment of a special microfinance social investment fund within the OIC framework. And through equity like financial instrument or quasi-equity, which is like a subordinated loan, the fund can be utilized to support financial requirements of MFIs. Quasi-equity approach has several advantages. It can be tailored according to the needs of microfinance institutions. Furthermore, the repayments can be re-invested to further help the growth of MFIs. Donor agencies, private business firms and individuals can invest in this fund.

The report also recommends measures to develop a reliable rating system and database of MFIs in the OIC regions. This will provide a useful platform for the donors, private investors and banks to support MFIs. It will help improving the flow of funds to the microfinance sector and will improve the quality and performance of MFIs.

*Publishing Date: October 2008*

*Language(s): English*

*ISBN: 978-975-6427-3*

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### **Education: Prospects and Challenges in the OIC Member Countries**

In the rapidly changing world of today, with sweeping developments taking place in all facets of life, education is fundamental to the future prospects of most of the developing countries. Clearly, a good education policy must extend far beyond formal education, encompassing areas such as social policy, health policy and economic policy as well. Education does, however, remain at the core of human capital formation. The benefits of a good quality education not only provide returns to the individuals educated, but it also helps in alleviating poverty, facilitates economic growth and brings other social benefits to the society.

According to the modern growth theory, the accumulation of human capital is an important contributor to economic growth. There are also many studies that have shown a positive relationship between education and productivity. The worldwide recognition of the importance of education has led to significant improvements in providing wider access to formal education in many developing countries. The international commitment reflected in the Millennium Development Goal that relates to the achievement of universal primary education has undoubtedly contributed to this development, especially in increasing the school enrolments.

Like in many other developing countries, the education systems in some OIC member countries face a myriad of challenges, such as insufficient financing and staff development, scarce skill-based training, low quality of teaching, and lack of proper research facilities. Therefore, there is an urgent need to develop awareness among the OIC member countries about the critical role and impact of education in socio-economic development and in equipping the future generations with new skills and knowledge.

Given this state of affairs, this Report provides an evaluation of the recent developments relating to the various dimensions of education in the member countries. It discusses the current situation in the OIC member countries and the progress made to ensure access to primary education and its completion and examines the developments in secondary and higher education. The Report also explores the commitments of the member countries to invest in education at various levels. It highlights some of the achievements of the member countries in improving the quality of education and their contributions to research in various fields of academic interest. Finally the report contains a section including comprehensive country profiles of the member countries on various education-related variables and a brief review of the progress made by the OIC member countries towards the achievement of the Millennium Development Goal of universal primary education.

*Publishing Date: October 2008*

*Language(s): English, French, Arabic*

*ISBN: 978-975-6427-15-6*

*Order your copy through: [pubs@sesric.org](mailto:pubs@sesric.org)*

### **International Tourism in the OIC Countries: Prospects and Challenges**

The substantial growth of the international tourism activity is one of the most remarkable economic and social phenomena of the past century. According to the World Tourism Organisation, the number of international tourist arrivals increased from 25.3 million in 1950 to 846 million in 2006, corresponding to an average annual growth rate of 6.6 percent. The revenues generated by those tourists, i.e. international tourism receipts, grew by 11.3 percent per annum over the same period. This rate of growth was significantly higher than that of the world economy as a whole making international tourism one of the largest categories of international trade.

International tourism activity is also characterized by a continuing geographical spread and diversification of tourist destinations. Although tourism activity is still concentrated in the developed regions of Europe and the Americas, a substantial proliferation of new tourist-receiving markets is also observed in the developing regions. According to the World Tourism Organisation, the two traditional tourist-receiving regions of Europe and the Americas attracted, together, 96 percent of the world's total tourist arrivals in 1950. Yet, by 2006, this figure fell to 70.5 percent in favour of the developing regions of Asia and the Pacific, the Middle East and Africa.

International tourism has become one of the main economic activities and an important source of foreign exchange earnings and employment in many countries of these regions. It has therefore been given much attention in the national development strategies of many developing countries and placed on the agenda of many recent international conferences on sustainable development. Failing to include tourism in these strategies is to overlook the fact that it presents one of the biggest and, undoubtedly, the most diversified and creative economic activity of all.

Considering their rich and diverse natural, geographic, historical and cultural heritage assets, the OIC countries, as a group, have in fact a high potential for the development of a sustainable international tourism sector. However, considering the modest share of the OIC region in the world tourism market and the concentration of the tourism activity in only a few OIC countries, it seems that a large part of the tourism potential of the OIC region remains unutilized. The problems facing tourism and the development of a sustainable international tourism sector in the OIC countries are diverse as each country has its own tourism features, level of development and national development priorities and policies.

Given this state of affairs, this Report attempts to assess the performance and economic role of the international tourism sector in the OIC member countries. It analyses the two traditionally used indicators in measuring international tourism, i.e. international tourist arrivals and international tourism receipts. The analysis is made at both the individual country and the OIC regional levels. The Report also sheds light on some issues and challenges of tourism development and cooperation in the OIC countries and proposes a set of recommendations to serve as policy guidelines to which the attention of the member countries needs to be drawn.

*Publishing Date: June 2008*

*Language(s): English, French, Arabic*

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