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ANKARA CENTRE UPDATE

Official Launch of OIC-VET Programme

The Vocational Education and Training Programme for OIC Member Countries (OIC-VET) has been officially launched by H.E. Abdullah Gül, President of the Republic of Turkey and Chairman of the COMCEC, at the COMCEC Economic Summit on 9 November 2009. The launch event, which included an introductory cinevision about the OIC-VET Programme, was one of the most spectacular events that took place during the 25th Session of the COMCEC and the COMCEC Economic Summit.

On the launching occasion, H.E. Abdullah Gül expressed his appreciation for this significant programme developed by the Statistical, Economic and Social Research and Training Centre for Islamic Countries (SESRIC) for the benefit of OIC member countries. H.E. Gül, underlined the importance of vocational education and training in the formation of high skilled labour force coping with global competitiveness and rapid changes in technology. Emphasising the need to establish strong cooperation and collaboration among member countries for enhancing vocational education and training systems, H.E. Gül, articulated his belief towards the vision of this programme to improve the quality of human capital resources and realize socio-economic development in OIC Member Countries.

H.E. Abdullah Gül further stressed that the programme requires the support and active participation of member countries in order to generate tangible outcomes and to produce long run impacts. In this regard, he called upon the relatively advanced member countries to provide financial assistance for low income countries, and urged Islamic Development Bank to provide technical and financial assistance for the projects prepared under the framework of the programme.

In his address to the heads of states and governments, Dr. Savaş Alpay, the Director General of SESRIC, outlined the overall

aspirations and objectives of the Programme, and underlined the significance of the vocational education and training as an important developmental tool in today's information age when the high global competitiveness, rapid changes in technology and new modes of work organisation have led to skills intensifications and an increase in the demand for higher skilled labour force against the global challenges. He also briefed the august gathering about the recent activities and undertakings realized by the SESRIC in its capacity as the Executive Organ of the Programme since the endorsement of the OIC-VET Programme at the 24th Session of the COMCEC in 2008, including the OIC-VET Portal and OIC-VET Partners Database.

The OIC-VET is a programme originally prepared by SESRIC in order to improve the quality of vocational education and training (VET) in the public and private sectors with the aim of supporting and enhancing the opportunities for individuals in the member countries to develop their knowledge and skills and thus to contribute to the development and competitiveness of the economies. It aims at improving the competencies and skills of the people according to the needs and priorities of labour markets through intra-OIC partnerships at institutional level. The Programme focuses on increasing accessibility and raising the quality of VET, and provides an opportunity for organizations involved in VET to build OIC partnerships, exchange best practices, increase the expertise of their staff and develop the skills and competencies of the participants.

The OIC Ten-Year Programme of Action to Meet the Challenges Facing the Muslim Ummah in the 21st Century, which was adopted by the Third Extraordinary Session of the Islamic Summit Conference held in Makkah Al Mukarramah, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, in December 2005, emphasizes the need to make optimal use of the human, natural and economic resources of the Muslim world in order to promote the existing cooperation. Inspired by

the OIC Ten-Year Programme of Action, the idea of initiating the OIC-VET Programme was first proposed by SESRIC and welcomed by the 23rd Session of COMCEC in 2007. Later, the 24th Session of the COMCEC held in Istanbul on 20-24 October 2008 approved the proposed implementation mechanism of OIC-VET Programme prepared by the SESRIC and called upon the member states to incorporate their

vocational training programs into the OIC-VET Programme, thereby, generating a common OIC platform for the benefits of the OIC Member Countries in this area.

For more information, please visit:

<http://www.oicvet.org>

Meeting of the Central Banks and Monetary Authorities of the OIC Member Countries on: "Impacts of the Current Crisis on OIC Member Countries"

The Meeting of the Central Banks and Monetary Authorities of the OIC Member Countries was held in Istanbul, Republic of Turkey, on October 3, 2009 on "Impacts of the Current Crisis on OIC Member Countries". The Meeting was organized jointly by the Central Bank of the Republic of Turkey and the Statistical Economic and Social Research and Training Centre for Islamic Countries (SESRIC) on the occasion of the 40th anniversary of the Organization of the Islamic Conference and the 25th anniversary of the OIC Standing Committee for Economic and Commercial Cooperation (COMCEC). The Meeting was attended by H.E. Mr. Ali Babacan, Minister of State and Deputy Prime Minister of the Republic of Turkey, Governors of Central Banks and Monetary Authorities of OIC Member Countries, the OIC General Secretariat, COMCEC Coordination Office and the SESRIC.

At the opening session, Mr. Ahmet Yaman, Deputy Undersecretary of the State Planning Organization of the Republic of Turkey, read the Message of H.E. Abdullah Gül, President of the Republic of Turkey and Chairman of the COMCEC. In his Message, President Gül expressed his pleasure that the Governors of the Central Banks of friendly and brotherly OIC Member Countries are gathered in Istanbul to discuss and exchange their precious experiences on current economic and financial developments. President Gül also expressed his strong believe that this initiative will provide opportunities for OIC Member Countries to further strengthen cooperation and collaboration among their Central

Banks and Monetary Authorities. President Gül concluded his Message by expressing his wishes for the full success of the Meeting and by extending his congratulations for all participants and organizers of such an important initiative.

In his statement at the opening session, Dr. Savaş Alpay, Director General of SESRIC, dwelled briefly on the current global financial crisis and its negative impacts on the world economy in terms of continuous slowdown of economic growth and high unemployment rates in many countries around the world. Dr. Alpay said that many developed and developing countries are still struggling to curb the adverse impacts of the global recession and, in particular, to reduce the burden of unemployment on their economies. In this context, he mentioned that the biggest and real cost of the crisis is still the opportunities lost for restructuring the current international financial system and that leaving this system as is will, undoubtedly, lead to repetition of financial crisis in the future. In this context, Dr. Alpay said that the current financial crisis has raised many voices which call for rethinking of other alternative financial systems. Among these alternatives, he mentioned that a financial system based on Islamic principles, (such as equity-based financing and real activity-based transactions) has attracted the attention of many. Dr. Alpay said that the conventional financial instruments such as collateral debt obligations (CDOs) and credit default swaps (CDSs), which stand at the heart of the current crisis, are either not allowed or regulated very tightly in a financial system based

on Islamic principles, and, thus, many researchers come to argue that the current global financial crisis could have been avoided if such a system had been in place. In this connection, Dr. Alpay mentioned that the OIC Community can make a significant contribution to the international community by presenting the financial system based on Islamic principles that would function as an effective intermediary for real sector and thus, undue financial crisis can be avoided in the future.

In his statement at the opening session, Mr. Durmuş Yılmaz, Governor of the Central Bank of the Republic of Turkey, welcomed the participants and expressed his pleasure to host this event and such distinguished participants in Istanbul. He highlighted the negative impacts of the global financial crisis since the last quarter of 2008. Mr. Yılmaz mentioned that the unprecedented policy reactions, which have been so far taken by the governments and central banks worldwide, have very recently managed to stabilize the financial conditions of banks, reduce funding pressures, decrease liquidity risks and ease the tension in international markets. Yet, he said that although emerging market equities have rapidly gained ground, bond spreads have narrowed and volatility in exchange rates came down, the fragility in the financial sector and reluctance in consumption and investment is likely to continue in the near future. Mr. Yılmaz mentioned that global problems require global solutions where coordination is especially needed in terms of better regulation and supervision of financial market instruments. In this context, he emphasized that the success of the OIC member countries depends on the formation of measures to increase trust and establishment of a close cooperation in economic and commercial areas. He underlined the importance of sharing the experiences on financial policies and central banking in the member countries and mentioned that annual meetings of the Governors of the Central Banks of the member countries will be very important in terms of catching up with the world's agenda and following up the recent global developments as well as enhancing the functioning of the active mechanisms of communication in international platforms.

The Meeting proceeded with two consecutive panel discussion sessions on the theme "Impacts of the Current Crisis on Member Countries: The Precautions and Outcomes". The sessions were chaired by Mr. Durmuş Yılmaz, Governor of the Central Bank of the Republic of Turkey. Dr. Muhammad Al-Jasser, Governor of Saudi Arabian Monetary Agency; Dr. Zeti Akhtar Aziz, Governor of the Central Bank of Malaysia; Dr. Darmin Nasution, Acting Governor of Bank Indonesia; Mr. Grigoriy Aleksandrovich Marchenko, Governor of the National Bank of Kazakhstan; Mr. Sultan Bin Nasser Al Suwaidi, Governor of the Central Bank of the UAE; and Mr. Philippe-Henri Dacoury-Tabley, Governor of the Central Bank of West African States participated as panelists.

The Meeting was followed by a keynote address by H.E. Mr. Ali Babacan, Deputy Prime Minister of the Republic of Turkey. H.E. Mr. Babacan briefed the meeting on the crisis and the various measures taken worldwide to overcome it. He mentioned that the crisis was rooted in the developed countries and that none of the developing countries could be blamed on the causes of the crisis. Minister Babacan said that there should be a global exit strategy for the crisis and that the involvement of emerging and developing countries in the efforts towards this exit is very important. In this context, he briefed the meeting on the efforts which have been taken within the framework of the G20 and mentioned that Turkey is willing to represent the views of the member countries who are not involved in the G20 and ready to promote and support their interests in this fora. Minister Babacan also briefed the meeting on the impacts of the crisis on the Turkish economy and the various policy measures taken to ease these impacts. In particular, he talked about the reform programmes which the government has been taking since the 2001 crisis. Minister Babacan concluded his address by emphasizing the importance of such meetings among the Central banks and Monetary Authorities of the member countries and mentioned that the regular meetings of these important institutions would undoubtedly come

up with very fruitful ideas of cooperation among the member countries in this vital area.

Inspired by the agreements they reached, the Governors of the Central Banks and the Heads of Delegations adopted the Final Communiqué in which they decided to convene the Meeting of the Central Banks and Monetary Authorities of the OIC Member Countries on an annual basis. They

also decided that the next Meeting of the Central Banks and Monetary Authorities of the OIC Member Countries shall be held in Turkey in September 2010.

For more information, please visit the Activities Section of the SESRIC Web Site at: http://www.sesric.org/index_activities.php

31st Meeting of the Board of Directors of SESRIC

The 31st Meeting of the Board of Directors of the Statistical, Economic and Social Research and Training Centre for Islamic Countries (SESRIC) was held in Istanbul, Republic of Turkey, on 8-9 October 2009. The Meeting was attended by Mr. Mohanna A. Al Mohanna (delegate of Kingdom of Saudi Arabia), Mr. Omer Toprak (delegate of Republic of Turkey), Mr. Mohammad Hossein Amini Moslehabadi (delegate of Islamic Republic of Iran), Dr. Hassan Ibrahim Al-Mohannadi (delegate of State of Qatar), Ms. Hissah Ibrahim Janahi (delegate of State of Kuwait), Mr. Rovshen Najaf (delegate of Republic of Azerbaijan) and Mr. Sogué Diarisso (delegate of Republic of Senegal). Dr. Savas Alpay, Director General of SESRIC, and the representative of the OIC General Secretariat Ambassador Hameed A. Opeloyeru, Assistant Secretary General for Economic Affairs, attended the Meeting as *ex officio* members of the Board. The Meeting was also attended by some Staff Members of the Centre.

The Director General, Dr. Savaş Alpay, expressed his pleasure to have the Board Members gathered once again to evaluate the work done by the Centre during the past year since the last meeting of the Board in October 2008 and to deliberate on the Centre's future activities.

The representative of the OIC General Secretariat, Ambassador Hameed A. Opeloyeru, Assistant Secretary General for Economic Affairs, read the Message of H.E. Prof. Ekmeleddin İhsanoğlu, Secretary General of the OIC to the Meeting. In his Message, the Secretary General paid homage to the Government of Turkey for hosting the Centre and to the efforts of the Board Members and the

Director General of the Centre for their astuteness in pursuing the noble cause of the OIC for greater economic cooperation. He also highly acknowledged the role which the Centre plays in preparing the necessary research studies and background reports on the main issues on the agenda of different OIC fora in the area of economic affairs as well as the statistical and training services the Centre provides the member countries with.

The Meeting started its working with reviewing the Report of the Director General of the Centre, in which he highlighted some major developments and achievements that have taken place since the last meeting of the Board in October 2008. In this context, the Director General briefed the Board on the latest preparations related to the construction of the new Headquarters of the Centre. He mentioned that the construction of the building will start very soon and that the State of Kuwait, the State of United Arab Emirates, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and the Republic of Turkey contributed to the construction budget of the new Headquarters of the Centre. He expressed his profound gratitude and deep appreciation to these member countries for their generous financial contributions.

On the other hand, the Director General informed the Board Members that the Centre has exerted its efforts to further extend its services to the member countries in the areas of research, statistics and training, where in addition to the regular activities, the Centre has initiated and started new projects and activities. In this connection, he briefed the Board on some of the initiatives and activities

taken by the different technical departments of the Centre.

Following the presentations made by the heads of the departments of the Centre on the activities of their respective departments, the Board Members commended the Director General and the staff of the Centre for the volume and quality of the work that has been accomplished in the three fields of the Centre's mandate: statistics, research and training. In this context, the Board Members commended the Centre's efforts for hosting and managing a high quality database on the member countries, which they deemed better than the database of most prudent international institutions such as the World Bank and others, in terms of the coverage of various socio-economic indicators and the website techniques used for visual presentation and dissemination of the data. They also made various concluding remarks and recommendations to be considered by the Centre in its future work programmes.

Following the presentation made on the financial position of the Centre since the last meeting, the Board Members approved the proposed Budget of the Centre for the Financial Year 2010 and recommended its adoption by the relevant OIC authorities. They also approved the work programme of the Centre for the Financial Year 2010 and encouraged the Centre to make every

effort to implement all of the activities contained therein. On the other hand, they urged the member countries which had not yet done so, to clear their arrears and to start regularly and promptly paying their annual mandatory contributions to the budget of the Centre.

On the other hand, the Board of Directors approved the proposed amendments on paragraph (F) under the Rule 04.04 "Appointment of Contractual Staff" of Article IV "Appointments" of the Internal Rules and Regulations of the Centre as follows: "The staff member who is employed as contractual staff shall undergo a probationary period of one year, starting from the date of his joining the duty, during which he/she shall be paid the full contractual salary. The Director General shall have the right to terminate his/her services, during this period or upon its completion, if his/her aptitude for the post is not confirmed or for other reasons as may be determined by the Director General".

It was also decided that the date and venue of the 32nd Meeting of the Board would be determined in consultation with the permanent members of the Board and announced well ahead of the meeting date. At the closing session, the Board adopted the Report of the Meeting together with its annexes.

Training Course in the United Arab Emirates

The Centre organised a training course on "Health Statistics" at the Central Statistics Department of the United Arab Emirates, on October 12-14, 2009. The course was provided by Ms. Azhar Abdelaal Mokhtar, expert from the Central Agency for Public Mobilization and Statistics (CAPMAS) of the Arab Republic of Egypt and was attended by 20 staff members of the Central Statistics Department of the United Arab Emirates.

The training course on "Health Statistics" mainly covered the following subjects:

- Health Statistics (Introduction and Definitions)
- Sources of Health Statistics
- Errors and Obstacles in Health Statistical Data Compilation
- The Role of Health Statistics in Development and the MDGs.
- Measurements and Indicators of Mortality Rates, Various Diseases, and Health Vulnerability

- Measurements and Indicators of Health Services and Health Systems
- Applications on various Health Measurements and Indicators

The training course was accomplished following the assessment of the responses the Centre had received on its specially designed Questionnaire on Statistical

Capacity Building Programme (CBP) circulated to the National Statistical Organizations of the OIC Member Countries

The training course has, thus, contributed towards raising the statistical capacity and performance of the Central Statistics Department of the United Arab Emirates on “Health Statistics”.

Training Course in Yemen

The Centre organised a training course on “Web-based Data Compilation Techniques” and “Electronic Forms (Questionnaires)” at the Central Statistical Organisation of the Republic of Yemen, on October 12-14, 2009. The course was provided by Ms. Zeinab Zoheir Hosny, expert from the Central Agency for Public Mobilization and Statistics (CAPMAS) of the Arab Republic of Egypt and was attended by 20 staff members of the Central Statistical Organisation of the Republic of Yemen.

The training course on “Web-based Data Compilation Techniques” and “Electronic Forms (Questionnaires)” mainly covered the following subjects:

- Web-based Data Compilation
- Electronic Data Exchange System
- Techniques used in eGovernment
- Administrative Measurement Techniques and Surveys
- Information Technology and Techniques of the Century

- Databases
- Databases Management System
- Data Compilation System
- Raising Public Awareness in Statistics
- Applied Technologies in the 2006 Census
- Contents of Main Samples of Electronic Data Exchange
- Study on the Design of the Survey
- Study on the Design of a Private Company Data Entry

The training course was accomplished following the assessment of the responses the Centre had received on its specially designed Questionnaire on Statistical Capacity Building Programme (CBP) circulated to the National Statistical Organizations of the OIC Member Countries. The training course has, thus, contributed towards raising the statistical capacity and performance of the Central Statistical Organisation of the Republic of Yemen on “Web-based Data Compilation Techniques” and “Electronic Forms (Questionnaires)”.

Director General of SESRIC Participated in OIC/COMCEC Business Forum

Dr. Savaş Alpay, Director General of SESRIC, participated in the OIC/COMCEC Business Forum which was organized by the Union of Chambers and Commodity Exchanges of Turkey (TOBB) and the Independent

Industrialists and Businessmen’s Association (MUSIAD) on 5-6 November 2009 in Istanbul,

Turkey, on the sidelines of the 25th Session of the COMCEC.

During the first session of the Forum moderated by Ömer Cihat Vardan, president of MUSIAD,

Dr. Alpay briefed the audience on the impacts of the current global financial crisis and its impacts, in particular, on OIC member countries. He noted that the average growth for OIC countries

is expected as a result of this crisis to decelerate to 1.5% in 2009, compared to 5.1% in 2008.

Noting the sharp fall in export demand and commodity prices, Dr. Alpay said that “Open economies, exporters of a small range of products, and dependants on markets of major economies, mainly the US and the EU, will be most affected.”

Sharp drops in private capital inflows, interruption in flows of official development assistance (ODA) and remittances, deterioration in current account balances, and increase in unemployment and poverty were the other major effects of the crisis that Dr. Alpay highlighted in his speech.

Elaborating on the real causes of the crisis rooted in the practices of the conventional banking and financial system, Dr. Alpay drew attention to Islamic banking and finance as a potential solution to the economic and financial crises. He suggested that “If global banking practices adhere to the principles of Islamic finance, which are based on noble ideas of entrepreneurship and transparency, the current global crisis would have been prevented.”

For more information, please visit the Activities Section of the SESRIC Web Site: http://www.sesric.org/index_activities.ph

Training Course in Malaysia

The Centre organised a training course on “Statistical Data Analysis: Projections and Forecasting” at the Department of Statistics of Malaysia, on December 14-16, 2009. The course was provided by Dr. Ali Said, expert from the BPS-Statistics Indonesia and was attended by 30 staff members of the Department of Statistics of Malaysia.

The training course on “Statistical Data Analysis: Projections and Forecasting” mainly covered the following subjects:

- Importance of Forecasting and Projection
- Methods of Forecasting
- Quantitative Method
- Time Series
- Components of Time Series
- Steps of Time Series Analysis
- Questions of Matter

- Measures of Forecast Accuracy
- Using Growth Rate for Forecasting
- Trend Models
- Smoothing Procedures
- Modern Approach to Forecasting
- Population and Labour Force Projection
- Using Regression Model in Forecasting

The training course was accomplished following the assessment of the responses the Centre had received on its specially designed Questionnaire on Statistical Capacity Building Programme (CBP) circulated to the National Statistical Organizations of the OIC Member Countries. The training course has, thus, contributed towards raising the statistical capacity and performance of the Department of Statistics of Malaysia on “Statistical Data Analysis: Projections and Forecasting”.

International Conference on eGovernment: Sharing Experiences (eGovSharE2009)

The Statistical, Economic and Social Research and Training Centre for Islamic Countries (SESRIC), the eGovernment Centre (eDEM) of the Public Administration Institute for Turkey and Middle East (TODAIE), the Turkish International

Cooperation and Development Agency (TIKA) and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) co-organized the “International Conference on eGovernment: Sharing Experiences (eGovSharE2009)” in

Antalya, Republic of Turkey, on 8-11 December 2009. The SESRIC delegation to the conference was headed by Dr. Savaş Alpay, Director General, and included Mr. Hüseyin Hakan Eryetli, Director of Publication and IT Department, Mr. Haytham Zeinelabdin, Research Assistant, and Mr. Tagelasfia Eltayeb, Translator.

The main objective of the conference was to provide a platform for leaders, public managers and professionals, researchers as well as academicians from all over the world to share their practices, ideas and research results. The conference also tried to explore collaboration potentials through the exchange of practical experiences in eGovernment project implementations within the region.

The opening session of the conference was honored by the participation of H.E. Binali Yıldırım, Minister of Telecommunication and Transportation of the Republic of Turkey and H.E. Imad Sabouni, Minister of Communications and Technology of the Syrian Arab Republic. Following the speeches made by the ministers, welcome speeches were made by Their Excellencies heads of the co-organizing institutions; Dr. Savaş Alpay, Director General of SESRIC, Prof. Dr. Eyyup Günay İsbir, Director General of TODAIE, Dr. Musa Kulaklıkaya, President of TİKA and Ms. Ulrika Richardson Golinski, UNDP Resident Representative in Turkey.

In his opening statement, Dr. Savaş Alpay took the participants through the enormous steps taking place in the field of Information Technology and which have been paving the way for access to information on an unimaginable scale. Following the brief on the performance and readiness of the OIC Member Countries in the area of eGovernment application, he encouraged the participants to get use of each opportunity arise during the conference since the experiences of the others will absolutely guide towards avoiding the hard teachings of trial and failure. Thus, the conference is a valuable opportunity to start and increase cooperation and capacity building

efforts among both OIC Member Countries and other nations. He also informed the participants that the SESRIC undertakes strong and close cooperation with the most relevant international and regional organizations with a view to promote the cooperation level up and far to the best through providing training and capacity building programmes to the OIC member countries.

The Conference resumed its proceedings in six sessions, three sessions for country cases and four working groups. In the first day of the conference keynote speeches were presented on the theme of “eTransformation in Public Administration” by four panelists. The themes of the sessions, working groups and country cases are provided hereunder respectively:

- Challenges to eGovernment
- Knowledge Management
- Legal Security and Trust Issues in eGovernment
- Measuring eGovernment
- eGovernance
- mGovernment

The working groups deliberated on:

- Administration Reform Process and eGovernment
- eGovernment Project Management
- eGovNet
- eGovernment Portal

The papers presented under Country Cases Sessions tackled the following subjects:

- eIdentity, eRegistration and eJustice
- eHealth, eSocial and Health Insurance, Social Aid and eEducation
- eCustoms, eConsulate and eMunicipality

Hüseyin Hakan Eryetli, Director of Publications and IT Department of SESRIC, presented a paper titled “eGovernment Readiness: The Performance of the OIC Member Countries.” In his presentation Mr. Eryetli stopped on the status of the OIC Member Countries evaluating it with reference to the data drawn up during 2005-2007 period. The data was collated and processed to build up the composite

eGovernment Readiness Index (ERI) of the OIC Member Countries based on Web Measurement (WMI), Telecommunication Infrastructure (TII), and Human Capital (HCI) indices. The presentation came out with three sets of recommendations suggested to make e-government initiatives successful at the OIC level. The first set of recommendations deal with setting the foundation for the e-government transformation and the second set of recommendations focus on the efforts for shaping an effective and sustainable e-government environment in the public sector of the OIC Member Countries, while the third and last one expresses the cooperation methods at the OIC level to enhance the capacity building of the Member Countries in e-government applications, and increase the productivity and quality of the e-government applications.

The detailed recommendations of these sets emphasized, inter alia, on the development of one comprehensive strategic plan to lead the efforts of the OIC Member Countries in making their e-government programs successful and serve as a clear methodology for the current and

prospective e-government programs. With such a developed strategic plan, the decision makers can track their progress on carrying the current applications to the digital platform. In addition to that, an electronic common platform for sharing e-government experiences among the OIC Member Countries should be established to assist for the exchange of information, technologies, and experiences on e-government strategies and initiatives. To foster an overall capacity-building of the OIC Member Countries in their e-government initiatives, a review at the OIC level should be made to bring out the training needs. In this respect, the Training and Technical Cooperation Department of the SESRIC can organise activities oriented towards e-Government Capacity Building through its Capacity Building Programme (CBP) based on the aforementioned review.

For more information please visit the Activities Section at: of the SESRIC Web Site: <http://www.sesric.org> web site

The official conference web site is accessible through: <http://edem.egovshare2009.org/>

SESRIC's Meeting with the Representatives of OIC Member Countries on the Sideline of the 'International Conference on eGovernment: Sharing Experiences (eGOVshare2009)'

The Statistical, Economic and Social Research and Training Centre for Islamic Countries (SESRIC) conducted a sideline meeting on December 9, 2009 with the representatives of the Member Countries of the Organisation of the Islamic Countries (OIC) in the International Conference on eGovernment: Sharing Experiences (eGovShare2009), which was co-organized by the SESRIC, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the eGovernment Centre (eDEM) of the Public Administration Institute for Turkey and Middle East (TODAİE) and the Turkish International Cooperation and Development Agency (TİKA) during December 8-11, 2009 in Antalya, Republic of Turkey.

SESRIC, as the main organ for technical cooperation and training among the OIC Member Countries, coordinator of eGovernment applications which is one of the main agenda items of the Standing Committee for Economic and Commercial Cooperation of the OIC (COMCEC) and coordinator of OIC Vocational Education and Training Programme (OIC-VET), organized this meeting to stop closely on the obstacles and challenges faced by the member countries in the field of eGovernment applications and exchanged views and ideas regarding the construction of an OIC platform for eGovernment applications in the OIC Member Countries.

The meeting was moderated by Mr. Hüseyin Hakan Eryetli, Director of Publications and ICT Department of SESRIC. Mr. Haytham Zeinelabdin, Research Assistant, made a prefatory presentation, wherein he furnished the participants with the mandates of SESRIC. Mr. Tagelasfia Eltayeb, Translator, took the minutes of the deliberations made on the issues raised during the meeting.

The meeting was attended by 40 participants from both public and private sectors in 14 OIC member countries; namely: Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Iran, Jordan, Kuwait, Kyrgyz Rep., Lebanon, Morocco, Pakistan, Palestine, Qatar, Sudan, Syria and Turkey. Full of aspirations and cognizant with the concerns relevant to eTransformation in public administration and eGovernment applications, the participants conducted a rich and vigorous debate, wherein they expressed their ideas, exchanged views and voiced some practical suggestions.

Hereunder are the proposals raised during the meeting:

Unanimously, the participants stressed that an impregnable digital security system for eGovernment applications is a matter of high importance to overcome the demerits of on-line governance. The issue of digital security is a crucial one, and should be taken as a key building block of eGovernment applications. The SESRIC could organise an event on, and/or publish practical guidelines on the "what?" and "how?" of digital security. In doing so, legislations should be made to enable the OIC Member Countries to adopt one common information and security standards. In this regard, SESRIC could prepare a listing of the headings and sub-headings of the Legislation that is essential to start and spread eGovernment uses. Besides, a Data Protection Act should be made available for the protection of the shared databases. In support of the above mentioned, the laws and regulations should morally suit the Islamic precepts.

With regard to the priorities of eGovernment applications, some of the participants indicated

that some of the newly introduced OIC Member Countries to the area of ICT applications do not know exactly from where to start. In this context, the participants proposed that SESRIC could develop guidelines and draw the attention of the member countries to the available materials and help in defining what could be adopted. With regard to these facts the participants emphasized the importance of investment in human resources development. This has also recalled the importance that should be attached to education and capacity building programmes to grasp the sought level of technical know-how. Bearing this in mind, the participants suggested that SESRIC could assume or undertake the necessary research and build up a tool-kit or mechanism on and for the benefit of the OIC Member Countries in the area of eGovernment.

Some of the projects proposed at the OIC level during the meeting are as follows:

1. Establishment of an OIC ePractice community
2. Establishment of sub-regional technical cooperation groups for sharing eGovernment experiences
3. Establishment of a follow-up committee to meet regularly and come out with recommendations pertinent to eGovernment applications
4. Creation of Information Portal by SESRIC whereby members can share problems and solutions
5. Establishment of some working groups with the view to work on different aspects of eGovernment, such as:
 - a. Norms and standards of OIC-eGovernment Applications and Practices
 - b. eSecurity
 - c. eLearning
6. Establishment of an International Islamic ICT Union
7. Initiation of ICT fellowship programme
8. Organization of annual OIC meetings on eGovernment applications

Expert Group Meeting on the Establishment of the OIC Development Assistant Committee

The Experts Group Meeting on the Establishment of the OIC Development Assistance Committee (OIC-DAC) was organised by SESRIC and held in Ankara, Republic of Turkey, on 22-23 December 2009.

The Meeting was attended by representatives of the following Development Cooperation Institutions (DCIs) of the OIC Member Countries (in alphabetical order):

- The Indonesian Coordinating Committee for International Technical Cooperation, Republic of Indonesia
- Cooperative Development Bank (TTBank, Ministry of Cooperatives), Islamic Republic of Iran
- Kuwait Fund for Arab Economic Development (KFAED), State of Kuwait
- State Ministry for International Cooperation, State of Qatar
- The Saudi Fund for Development (SFD), Kingdom of Saudi Arabia
- Turkish International Cooperation and Development Agency (TİKA), Republic of Turkey
- Abu Dhabi Fund for Development (ADFD), State of the United Arab Emirates

The Meeting was also attended by representatives of the OIC General Secretariat, IDB, COMCEC and SESRIC.

At the opening session of the Meeting, Dr. Savaş Alpay, Director General of SESRIC, made a statement in which he welcomed the participating delegations and thanked them for accepting the invitation to participate in this important meeting. In his statement, Dr. Alpay also explained the aim and the task as well as the expected outcome of this Experts Group Meeting. He mentioned that, being among the leading donor countries in the world; OIC

Member Countries have a significant capacity to support the least developed countries. In this connection, he stressed the vital role of the Development Cooperation Institutions (DCIs) of these OIC Member Countries in alleviating poverty at the OIC level. He said that this role could be enhanced and strengthened if these institutions increase cooperation and collaboration in their activities and programmes.

The representative of the OIC General Secretariat, Ambassador Hameed A. Opeloyeru, Assistant Secretary General for Economic Affairs, read the message of H.E. Prof. Ekmeleddin İhsanoğlu, Secretary General of the OIC. In his message, Prof. İhsanoğlu expressed his sincere appreciation to the Director General and staff members of SESRIC for the excellent arrangements made for the convening of the meeting. He mentioned that their expeditious action in calling for this meeting as a follow-up to the First Meeting of the DCIs of the OIC Member Countries, held in Istanbul in May 2009, is worthy of note and appreciation. He also mentioned that the OIC General Secretariat places high premium on the work of this Experts Group Meeting as well as the work of the proposed OIC-DAC. He said that the issue of cooperation and joint action among the various DCIs of the OIC Member Countries is at the core of the objective of fostering genuine Islamic solidarity and brotherliness among members of the Muslim Ummah.

The representatives of the participating DCIs and the IDB also made statements at the opening session of the Meeting in which they expressed their thanks and appreciations to the Director General and staff members of SESRIC for their expeditious efforts in organising the meeting. They welcomed and appreciated the initiative of establishing the OIC-DAC as a forum for dialogue, consultation, cooperation, exchanging information and sharing experiences and best practices among the DCIs of the OIC Member

Countries for the benefit of the OIC and other developing countries. They also briefed the meeting on their institutions and the activities/programmes they undertake in the area of development cooperation and assistance in other countries.

The Meeting, then, elected the representative of the Turkish International Cooperation and Development Agency (TİKA) as Chairman, the representative of Abu Dhabi Fund for Development (ADFD) as Vice Chairman, and SESRIC as the Secretariat and Rapporteur of the Meeting.

The working sessions of the Meeting started with a presentation by SESRIC on the “Draft Operational Framework for the OIC Development Assistance Committee (OIC-DAC)”, which has been prepared by the Centre to be reviewed and discussed by the Experts Group Meeting pursuant to the recommendations contained in the Istanbul Declaration, which was adopted at the First

Meeting of the Development Cooperation Institutions (DCIs) of the OIC Member Countries held in Istanbul in May 2009.

The participants extensively discussed and deliberated on the various contents of the “Draft

Operational Framework for the OIC-DAC”, including the objectives, the membership, the structure and rules of procedures, the meetings, the Chairmanship, the Secretariat and the working groups of the Committee.

Following a general debate, the participants finally approved the “Draft Operational Framework for the OIC Development Assistance Committee (OIC-DAC)” and decided to submit it, for consideration and adoption, to the Second Meeting of the DCIs of the OIC Member Countries, which will be hosted by Abu Dhabi Fund for Development (ADFD) and held in the State of the United Arab Emirates in 2010. The participants also discussed and deliberated on some proposed issues for the Agenda of the Second Meeting.

The Meeting also included a working session on collection and dissemination of aid statistics. In this session a presentation on aid statistics was made by the Turkish International Cooperation and Development Agency (TİKA). The presentation included introduction to the general statistical variables and concepts of the OECD-DAC questionnaire on aid, particularly the Official Development Assistance (ODA) statistics as well as the experience of TİKA in collecting statistical data and information on aid.

OIC NEWS

Workshop for the Arab Countries on Tourism Statistics and Tourism Satellite Accounts (TSA)

The Workshop for the Arab Countries on Tourism Statistics and Tourism Satellite Account (TSA) was held on 12-15 October 2009 in Damascus, Syria. The workshop was co-organized by SESRIC in collaboration with Arab Institute for Training and Research in Statistics (AITRS) and World Tourism Organization (WTO). 26 participants attended the workshop from 12 Arab states; namely Jordan, Iraq, United Arab Emirates, Tunisia, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, Syria, Sultanate of Oman, Palestine, Morocco, Arab Republic of Egypt, Sudan and Libya. Dr. Juan Falconi, expert from WTO, Ms. Arzu Semati, expert from the Turkish Institute for Statistics, and Mr. Khalid Muzaffer, expert from Ministry of Economy of Sultanate of Oman, lectured the participants on the topics handled during the sessions of the workshop. The titles of the lectures given during the workshop are given hereunder as:

- Tourism Statistics in Arab States: Prospects and Challenges
- International recommendations on Tourism Statistics
- Border Statistics
- Inbound and Outbound Tourism Expenditures and Domestic Tourism
- WTO Questionnaire on Tourism Arrivals and Departures
- Surveys on Expenditures of Inbound and Outbound Tourism and International Tourism
- WTO Data on Hotels
- WTO Questionnaire on Tourism Statistics Methodology
- Tourism Satellite Accounts

Country experiences related to these topics were also shared during the workshop.

2nd Session of the 10th Meeting of OIC Standardization Experts Group (SEG) on 'Development of the OIC Halal Food Standard and the Procedures

The 2nd Session of the 10th Meeting of the OIC Standardization Experts Group (SEG), which was entrusted with the task of development of the OIC Halal Food Standards and Procedures by the 24th Session of COMCEC, held on October 13-16, 2009 in Istanbul, Republic of Turkey. The Turkish Standards Institution (TSE) organized and hosted the Meeting, which was attended by the representatives of 25 Member States of the OIC and the representative of Bosnia and Herzegovina as observer. Furthermore, representatives of the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC), the Coordination Office of the Standing Committee for Economic and Commercial Cooperation of the Organization of the Islamic Conference (COMCEC), the Islamic Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ICCI) and Statistical, Economic and Social Research and

Training Center for Islamic Countries (SESRIC) also attended the meeting. The SESRIC was represented in the Meeting by Mr. Mazhar Hussain, researcher.

The objective of the Meeting was to finalize and approve the final drafts of three fundamental documents: "OIC Halal Standard-General Guidelines on Halal Food", "Guidelines for Bodies Providing Halal Certification" and "Guidelines for the Authorized Accreditation Body Accrediting Halal Certification Bodies" to pave the way for the harmonization of Halal Standards across the globe.

The Meeting was inaugurated by Mr. Tahir Büyükhelvacigil, President of the TSE. The OIC Assistant Secretary General, H.E. Ambassador Hameed Ajibaiye, made an opening statement. After that the Meeting elected Mr. Hakan Ergin,

OIC Assistant Secretary General of the TSE, as the Chairman of the Meeting. In his opening speech, Mr.Ergin welcomed the representatives of the OIC Member States, OIC General Secretariat and OIC subsidiary organs.

Following the formal inauguration and the Opening Session of the Meeting, discussion started with the pending issues of the draft “OIC Halal Standard-General Guidelines on Halal Food” and participants asked about the response of the International Islamic Fiqh Academy (IIFA) in this regard. As during the First Session of the 10th Meeting of the OIC Standardization Experts Group (SEG), which held in Ankara on April 28-30, 2009, the clauses related to Stunning, Mechanical slaughter, Aquatic animals and Slaughtering tools and utensils were referred to the IIFA to provide guidance in the light of Islamic Jurisprudence (The Fiqh). Therefore, under this agenda item, the SEG delegation that held a meeting with the IIFA summarized the outcome of the meeting with regard to these controversial issues. The participants exhaustively reviewed the ruling received from the IIFA and in the light of the ruling unanimously agreed on all issues except “Stunning”. The clauses on the above mentioned issues are re-drafted while it is decided to forward the clause on “Stunning” to IIFA for further deliberations and guidance.

During the second day, the participants considered the draft “Guidelines for Bodies

Providing Halal Certification” clause by clause and made their comments on its clauses to modify or keep as it is. Mostly, the participants made comments about the technical issues like correct use of language for the Halal Standards Guidelines and addition of some more clauses to further elaborate the role and responsibilities of Halal Certification Bodies. These comments and suggestions were discussed in detail and included in the draft after acceptance by the majority of the participants. At the end of discussion, the Meeting unanimously accepted the revised draft. During the third day, the draft “Guidelines for the Authorized Accreditation Body Accrediting Halal Certification Bodies” was discussed clause by clause and the participants accepted the revised draft.

In the Closing Session, final report of the meeting was presented by the Meeting Chairman and participants unanimously adopted the report. In his concluding remarks the OIC Assistant Secretary General, H.E. Ambassador Hameed Ajibaiye, congratulated the participants for the adoption and approval of the three fundamental documents for use in the Halal sector and called the Meeting a landmark achievement towards the harmonization of Halal Standards across the globe generally and in the OIC Member Countries particularly. The Member States representatives also expressed their thanks to the government of the Republic of Turkey and congratulated the TSE for organizing a successful and productive meeting.

3rd Meeting of the OIC Member States’ Stock Exchanges Forum

The 3rd Meeting of the OIC Member States’ Stock Exchanges Forum was organised by the Istanbul Stock Exchange and held in Istanbul on 24-25 October 2009. The Meeting was attended by representatives of 21 stock exchanges, 8 central depositories, clearing and registry institutions of the OIC Member Countries and 15 related organisations and institutions, including the SESRIC and IDB.

At the opening session, Dr. Savaş Alpay, Director General of SESRIC, read the Message of H.E. Prof. Ekmeleddin İhsanoğlu, the Secretary General of the OIC to the Meeting. In his Message, Prof. İhsanoğlu extended his sincere gratitude to the Istanbul Stock Exchange and its President for taking a lead role in promoting cooperation among stock exchanges in the OIC Member States and its efforts to make this forum a permanent platform and communication

channel for stock exchanges from Islamic countries.

Prof. İhsanoğlu said that the idea of working toward closer cooperation and even integration among the stock exchanges is part of the OIC new vision as encapsulated in the Ten Year Programme of Action to support all activities that would promote economic prosperity in the Member States and their integration, including removing barriers to the free movement of people, goods, services and capital within the OIC community. He emphasised that cooperation among stock exchanges and relevant institutions of OIC Member States become more important than ever, particularly as the stock markets around the world still struggle to overcome the adverse effects of the global financial crisis. Prof. İhsanoğlu expressed his belief that standing together may give us the chance to turn the global crisis into an opportunity for our markets and that cooperation of stock markets in OIC Member States could offer a way for these markets to overcome some of the obstacles constraining their development.

In this context, the Secretary General underlined the need for promotion of the Islamic financial instruments and mentioned that one of the aspects and tasks before this Forum should be sustaining the tempo gained so far in this regard and developing common trading and settlement rules and procedures for the benefit of the Member States. He assured the Forum that the General Secretariat of the OIC will remain supportive of various endeavours and current desire of the Forum to expand the scope and content of Islamic financial architecture. Prof. İhsanoğlu concluded his Message by expressing his confidence that the Forum would enable the existing stock exchanges, clearing houses and related financial institutions in the OIC Member States meet the challenges imposed by the intense global competition, cooperate with each other in coordinating their activities, integrating their policies, regulations and procedures and increase their competitiveness and enhance investment opportunities in the OIC countries.

He wished the 3rd Meeting of the Forum a very successful and productive deliberation.

In his capacity as the Director General of SESRIC, Dr. Savaş Alpay made a statement at the opening session, in which he expressed his great honour to participate in this Meeting as the Director General of SESRIC, the OIC subsidiary organ which has contributed actively to the early idea of the initiative of establishing this active and successful Forum. In his statement, Dr. Alpay dwelled briefly on two of the SESRIC recent activities and initiative which may have certain connection to the work of the Forum.

Dr. Alpay briefed the Forum on the SESRIC monthly reports on the current financial crisis, which attempt to highlight the fact that the Islamic principles-based financial system has been recently more attractive in many countries around the world as many people come to argue that such a system, as a feasible potential alternative, could provide the solution to the weaknesses of the conventional financial system. He mentioned that strengthening cooperation in this context among the stock exchanges of the member countries, with the aim of promoting and encouraging financial instruments based on Islamic principles, such as Sukuks, and developing common trading and settlement rules and procedures for these instruments, could be one of the most concrete and useful outputs of the Forum to the benefit of the OIC Member Countries.

Dr. Alpay informed the Forum on the possibilities of extending the Centre's Capacity Building Programme (CBP) to include the stock exchanges. In this context, he expressed the readiness of SESRIC to strengthening cooperation with the stock exchanges of the member countries in the area of capacity building and to assume the role of OIC coordinator for training activities in capacity building for stock exchanges in the member countries.

During the working sessions of the Meeting, the participants reviewed the activities of the Forum

since its establishment in 2005. They discussed and deliberated on the reports submitted by the Task Forces of the Forum on various technical cooperation issues of concern to the stock exchanges of the member countries such as customized indices and Islamic depository receipts, post-trade services, promotion of awareness and education of investors about Islamic capital markets, and studying the feasibility of an Islamic Securities Exchange.

The Meeting also deliberated on a number of presentations made by the representatives of some related organisations and institutions on specific technical issues with the aim to

encourage cooperation among the stock exchanges of the OIC member countries. A set of proposals, recommendations and decisions have been made at the end of the Meeting related to the future work and activities of the various Task Forces of the Forum and other related administrative and organisational matters.

The Report of the Forum, including the adopted recommendations and decisions, has been submitted to the 25th Session of the COMCEC, which was held in Istanbul on 5-9 November 2009. The 4th Meeting of the Forum will be held in Istanbul in October 2010 prior to the 26th Session of the COMCEC.

25th Session of COMCEC

The 25th Session of the COMCEC convened in Istanbul on 5-7 November 2009 with the participation of delegates from 52 OIC member countries. Bosnia-Herzegovina, Russian Federation, Kingdom of Thailand and Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus participated in the Session as observers and Republic of Macedonia as a guest. The OIC General Secretariat, subsidiary, specialized and affiliated organs of the OIC also participated in the Session. A number of international and regional organizations, such as ECO, ECO Bank, FAO, D-8, and the Arab Organisation for Agricultural Development (AOAD) attended the Session.

The SESRIC was represented thereat by Dr. Savaş Alpay, Director General; Dr. Kabir Hassan, Advisor to the Director General; Mr. Nabil Dabour, Director of Economic and Social Research Department; Mr. Mehmet Fatih Serenli, Director of Training and Technical Cooperation Department; Mr. Esat Bakimli, Researcher; and Mr. Haytham Zeinelabdin, Researcher.

The Senior Officials Meeting of the 25th Session of the COMCEC

The Meeting of the Senior Officials of the 25th Session of the COMCEC was held on 5-6

November under the Chairmanship of H.E. Kemal Madenoğlu, Undersecretary of the State Planning Organization of the Republic of Turkey. During the Meeting, the delegations of the Member States and the OIC institutions considered and deliberated on a number of agenda items related to various issues of enhancing economic and commercial cooperation among the Member States.

The agenda items of the Senior Officials Meeting included the following issues:

- World economic developments in conjunction with the OIC member countries: implications of the financial crisis, fluctuating commodity prices and developments in global energy markets on the economies of the member countries.
- Review of the implementation of the OIC Ten-Year Programme of Action and the Plan of Action to Strengthen Economic and Commercial Cooperation among the OIC Member States.
- The outcome of the study by COMCEC and SESRIC to enrich the agenda and substance of the COMCEC.

- The Trade Preferential System among the OIC Member States (TPS-OIC).
- Recent developments of intra-OIC trade and other related issues.
- Financial cooperation among the OIC member countries and enhancing intra-OIC investment flows: cooperation among Stock Exchanges and Central Banks of the OIC member countries.
- Development of OIC Halal food standards and procedures.
- E-government applications and their economic impact on the OIC member countries.
- Review of the implementation of the Islamic Solidarity Fund for Development (ISFD).
- Review of the implementation of the Action Plan for OIC Cotton Producing Countries, Cooperation Development Strategy (2007-2011).
- Vocational Education and Training Programme for OIC Member Countries (OIC-VET).
- Exchange of views on the “Impact of Food Crisis on the Economies of OIC Countries”.
- Other business: the Statistical Working Group (SWG) at the OIC level and cooperation among the Development and Cooperation Institutions (DCIs) of the OIC Member States.

The SESRIC contributed the following background reports and studies dealing with some prominent agenda items of the Meeting: (1) Annual Economic Report on the OIC Countries 2009; (2) Enhancing Economic and Commercial Cooperation among OIC Member Countries; (3) E-government Readiness: The Performance of the OIC Member Countries; and (4) Results of

the Questionnaire Circulated by the SESRIC to the Member Countries on the Proposed Themes for the COMCEC Exchange of Views Sessions.

In addition to the presentations made by the Centre on these reports, the Centre also made presentations and briefed the Committee on the following agenda items: (1) Cooperation among the Central Banks of the OIC member countries; (2) Vocational Education and Training Programme for OIC Member Countries (OIC-VET); (3) The Statistical Working Group (SWG) at the OIC level; and (4) Cooperation among the Development and Cooperation Institutions (DCIs) of the OIC Member States.

In their deliberations on all these issues, the Senior Officials discussed and considered the recommendations and policy implications of many technical and background reports prepared and presented by various relevant OIC institutions as well as those of some related international and regional organizations. They also prepared the Draft Resolutions on these issues for consideration by the Ministerial Meeting, which was held on 7 November 2009.

The Ministerial Meeting of the 25th Session of the COMCEC:

The Ministerial Meeting of the 25th Session of the COMCEC was held on 7 November 2009. The Opening Ceremony of the Meeting was held under the chairmanship of H.E. Abdullah GÜL, President of the Republic of Turkey and the Chairman of the COMCEC.

In his inaugural address, H.E. Abdullah Gül, referred to the past activities of COMCEC and stressed that the current era offered a suitable environment for reflecting the experience and wisdom as well as the peaceful character of the Islamic civilization to the world. He said that we should take the opportunity of the special occasion of the 25th Anniversary to make the best of COMCEC as a platform which has proved its success over the past 25 years. He mentioned that we should aim at rendering COMCEC more effective and strong in the

period ahead, by strengthening its corporate structure and drafting a viable vision document. He added that it is also crucial for member countries to demonstrate a stronger political will and employ a more effective bureaucratic follow-up.

While touching on the recent finance, energy and food crisis, H.E. Gül stated that in the process of restructuring the world economy, new approaches serving the welfare of all mankind are needed and OIC Countries ought to have a greater role in that process. He also underlined the importance of resolving regional problems by countries located in their own region and thus their solutions are to be worked out by themselves in order to reach permanent peace in the region and in the world. In this context, H.E. Gül highlighted the efforts of Turkey to achieve this target in the Middle East region, including the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, Iraq and Afghanistan. H.E. Gül stressed the need to help those countries in the period of establishing peace and reconstruction while combating terrorism and concentrating on education against the ideologies of the militant elements. H.E. Abdullah Gül concluded his speech by emphasizing that Turkey will continue to extend its support to all cooperation efforts within the framework of COMCEC and carry our common problems to other global platforms.

H.E. Prof. Dr. Ekmeleddin İhsanoğlu, Secretary General of the OIC, made a statement at the Opening efforts of the OIC for diversifying the mandate of the Organization and creating mechanisms to promote the economic welfare and development of the Muslim world. Highlighting its past activities and future perspectives, Prof. İhsanoğlu underlined the “Framework Agreement on Trade Preferential System”, which had entered into force in autumn 2002, as one of the most important achievements of COMCEC at the beginning of the third Millennium. In conclusion, H.E. Prof. Ekmeleddin İhsanoğlu stated that as the world is reshaping itself into larger economic communities based on common interests and

shared values, the OIC could achieve greater success by commitment of its Member States to taking bold steps in the right direction to reach realistic goals.

The Heads of Delegation of the State of Kuwait, Republic of Senegal and the Islamic Republic of Iran made statements on behalf of the Arab, African, and Asian groups of Member States, respectively. They expressed their thanks to the Republic of Turkey for the hospitality extended to the delegates and H.E. Abdullah Gül for his wise leadership in guiding economic and commercial cooperation among the OIC Member States. They stressed the need of enhancement the problem-solving capacity and increasing competitiveness and productivity within the OIC region. They also thanked OIC Secretary General H.E. Prof. Ekmeleddin İhsanoğlu, OIC General Secretariat, COMCEC Coordination Office and relevant OIC institutions for their efforts to strengthen economic and commercial cooperation among the Member Countries.

H.E. Dr. Ahmed Mohammed Ali, the President of the Islamic Development Bank (IDB), delivered a statement at the Opening Session, in which he underlined the importance of the COMCEC for the OIC Countries and gave information on the good relationship between COMCEC and IDB which had developed during the past 25 years. Dr. Alwi Shihab, Secretary General of the Islamic Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ICCI) read out the message of H.E. Shaikh Saleh Bin Abdullah Kamel, the President of the ICCI. In his message, H.E. Shaikh Kamel underlined the achievements of the ICCI in the last year and touched upon a number of issues related to the future activities.

An award ceremony was held at the end of the Opening Session, where H.E. Abdullah Gül presented plates of gratitude to H.E. Prof. Ekmeleddin İhsanoğlu, Secretary General of the OIC; H.E. Dr. Ahmed Mohammed Ali, President of the IDB; Dr. Alwi Shinab, Secretary General of ICCI on behalf of the President of

ICCI; Dr. Savaş Alpay, Director-General of SESRIC; Mr. Allal Rachdi, Director-General of ICDT; Mr. Imtiaz Hossain, Rector of IUT; Dr. Abdullatif Bin Abdullah Bin Sultan, Secretary General of OISA; and to Dr. Halid Eren, Director-General of IRCICA, for their invaluable contribution to the COMCEC activities. The “Islamic Solidarity Prize for the Enhancement of Trade among OIC Member Countries” was accorded to the İGEME (Export Promotion Centre of Turkey). Finally, Mr. İbrahim Şahin, Director-General of Turkish-Radio Television Corporation, extended H.E. Ekmeleddin İhsanoğlu a documentary film of OIC prepared for the occasion of the 40th Anniversary of OIC.

The Ministerial Working Session was held afternoon under the Chairmanship of H.E. Dr. Cevdet Yılmaz, Minister of State of the Republic of Turkey. Following the adoption of the Agenda, Dr. Savaş Alpay, Director General of SESRIC, made a presentation on the study “Enriching Economic and Commercial Cooperation among OIC Member Countries” which was prepared by SESRIC and COMCEC Coordination Office.

The Ministers exchanged their views on the theme “Impact of Food Crisis on the Economies of OIC Member Countries”. In its capacity as the Chairman of the Senior Officials Meeting, H.E. Kemal Madenoğlu, Undersecretary of the State Planning Organization of the Republic of Turkey, summarized the discussion made by the Senior Officials on the said theme. H.E. Hafez Ghanem, Assistant Director-General of UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), made a presentation on related issues such as hunger, effects of financial crisis, investment in agriculture and agricultural growth and evaluated the negative impacts of unstable and fluctuating food prices on rural and urban poor in developing countries. The Heads of Delegations of Turkey, Morocco, Qatar, Palestine, Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan, Sudan, Somali and Gambia shared their country experiences as well as brought up cooperation proposals in the area of food security.

On the theme “Crisis in the World Financial Markets and Implications on the OIC Member Countries”, Dr. Mohsin S. Khan, Chief Economist in Peterson Institute and Former Director-General of IMF in charge of Middle East and Mid-Asia, delivered a keynote speech. Prof. Hassan Kabir, University of New Orleans and Advisor to the Director General of SESRIC, made a presentation on Islamic Finance and its potential role in avoiding financial crises. Dr. Savaş Alpay, Director General of SESRIC, also made a statement summarizing the Report and recommendations of the Meeting of Governors of Central Banks of OIC Member Countries, which was organised by SESRIC and the Central Bank of the Republic of Turkey in Istanbul on 3 October 2009.

On the same theme, Mr. Erdem Başçı, Deputy Governor of the Central Bank of Turkey, made a statement on G-20 platform which includes three member states of the OIC namely Indonesia, Saudi Arabia and Turkey. In his statement, Mr. Başçı said that the global financial crisis of 2008 had made it clear that with their limited representation, forums such as G-7/G-8 were no longer adequate as global steering groups. He highlighted that being member of G-20, Turkey had a prominent role in bringing to light the emerging market perspective in G-20 in the process of designing of a new global financial system.

Mr. Rifat Hisarcıkloğlu, Chairman of the Union of The Chambers and Commodity Exchange of Turkey and Mr. Ömer Cihat Vardan, Chairman of the MÜSIAD delivered their respective statements on the outcome of the OIC/COMCEC Business Forum held on 05-06 November 2009 concurrently with the 25th Session of COMCEC with the participation of more than 200 businessmen from the Member Countries. They underlined the need for the member countries to open up their economies to economic and commercial activities of businessmen and merchants.

A special signing ceremony was held at the Ministerial Session, where the Head of

Delegation of the State of Qatar signed the TPS-OIC Rules of Origin; the Head of Delegation of Cote d'Ivoire signed the "General Agreement on Economic, Technical and Commercial Cooperation", "Agreement on Protection and Guarantee Investment" and "Framework Agreement on TPS-OIC". Furthermore, the International Islamic Trade Finance Corporation (ITFC) signed respective Special Line Agreements with the Turkish Export Credit Bank (Eximbank) and four Iranian Banks, namely Bank Melli Iran, Bank of Industry and Mines, Parsian Bank and Karafarin Bank each.

On the theme "Developments in the Global Energy Markets and their Implications on the OIC Member Countries", Dr. Zafar Iqbal, Chief Economist at the IDB, delivered a keynote speech focusing on the fluctuation of energy prices due to rising cost of raw materials in the OIC countries. Mr. IQBAL stressed the need for global crisis-management approaches and also emphasized close cooperation among particular OIC countries which are net energy materials-exporting countries like fuel and natural gas.

The Ministerial Working Session then adopted the Resolutions drafted by the Senior Officials Meeting held on 5-6 November 2009. At the end of the Ministerial Meeting of the 25th Session of the COMCEC, H.E. Dr. Cevdet Yılmaz, Minister of State of Turkey, delivered a closing statement. He stated that the global economy had gone through profound changes over the past two years and that food and energy crises, followed by the global financial crisis had inevitably affected the economies and peoples of the OIC Member States. H.E. Dr. Yılmaz expressed his satisfaction with the COMCEC initiatives such as Central Banks Meeting of OIC Countries, which they hope would bring more cooperation in tackling the negative effects of the crises. He also underlined some promising cooperation agenda items of COMCEC, including OIC Stock Exchanges Forum, cooperation among the Capital Markets Regulatory Bodies of Member Countries, poverty alleviation and Islamic Solidarity Fund

for Development, implementation of Cotton Plan of Action, and Food Security road map.

COMCEC Economic Summit

On the occasion of the 25th Anniversary of COMCEC, an Economic Summit was held in Istanbul on 9 November 2009 under the chairmanship of H.E. Abdullah Gül, President of the Republic of Turkey and Chairman of the COMCEC. The Summit was attended by the representatives of 41 OIC member countries. Bosnia-Herzegovina, the Russian Federation and the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus also participated in the Summit as observers. The OIC General Secretariat and the following OIC subsidiary organs, specialized and affiliated institutions attended the Summit: IDB, SESRIC, ICDDT, ICCI, OISA and IRCICA.

H.E. Abdullah Gül inaugurated the COMCEC Economic Summit by delivering a statement, in which he stated that the purpose of COMCEC was to promote economic and commercial cooperation among member countries, rally around solidarity and develop the necessary infrastructure needed in this regard. He also noted that in order to promote future cooperation, the institutional structure of COMCEC ought to be strengthened, financing opportunities searched, viable projects with renewable vision developed, and strong political will exercised.

H.E. Gül underlined that by availing itself of the capabilities bestowed on it, thanks to its strategic position, historical heritage, geographical and cultural ties, and experiences accumulated during the peace keeping missions, Turkey made efforts to contribute positively to the resolution of problems which, directly or indirectly, affect OIC member countries. In this respect, H.E. Gül drew attention to the fact that this understanding of Turkey applied not only to the Palestinian issue, the Arab-Israeli conflict and the situation in Iraq and Lebanon within the context of the Middle East, but also to all other problems, which deeply affect Pakistan, Afghanistan, Sudan, Somalia and brotherly

countries. H.E. Abdullah Gül emphasized that Turkey would continue to extend its support to all cooperation efforts within the framework of COMCEC, and willing to organize the OIC Heads of State and Government Summit in 2014.

His Excellency Prof. Dr. Ekmeleddin İhsanoğlu, Secretary General of the OIC, also made a statement, in which he expressed his thanks to the Government of the Republic of Turkey for its firm commitment to develop economic and commercial cooperation among the OIC Member States. H.E. İhsanoğlu paid homage to the copious support of Heads of State and Government through their countries' identification with the numerous economic activities of the OIC. He concluded his remarks by saluting all officials in the General Secretariat and the COMCEC Coordination Office for

their untiring efforts in preparing the Summit, and commending the tangible support received from all the OIC agencies in the particular areas of developing high-quality projects, which have greater potentials for active economic cooperation among OIC countries.

Dr. Savaş Alpay, Director General of SESRIC, made a presentation on the OIC Vocational

Education and Training Program (OIC-VET) developed by SESRIC. The Program was then officially launched by H.E. Abdullah Gül, President of the Republic of Turkey and Chairman of COMCEC.

Following the statements of the Heads of Delegations, the Summit adopted the Istanbul Declaration. The Summit concluded with the closing speech of H.E. Abdullah Gül, President of the Republic of Turkey and Chairman of COMCEC. In his closing speech, H.E. Gül expressed his hope that the Istanbul Declaration would contribute to further improvement of economic and commercial cooperation among OIC member countries, in order to meet the challenges of the 21st century towards sustainable development and would be beneficial for all. He concluded his speech by expressing his deep gratitude to all the member countries for their support to COMCEC, the Heads of State and their representatives who attended the Summit, and all those who have worked meticulously for the organization of the COMCEC Economic Summit.

For more information, please visit:

<http://www.comcec.org>

38th Session of the Permanent Finance Committee (PFC)

The Permanent Finance Committee (PFC) of the Organisation of the Islamic Conference (OIC) held its 38th Session in Jeddah, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, on December 14 – 16, 2008. The Meeting was attended by the representatives of 37 OIC Member States, the OIC General Secretariat and its Subsidiary Organs.

In his speech, the Secretary General of the Organisation of the Islamic Conference, H. E. Prof. Dr. Ekmeleddin İhsanoğlu, stated that the activities programme of the OIC for the financial year 2010 has seen a significant extension estimated at 34% compared to the last year's budget. He added that the interest of the OIC Member States in the Organisation and its activities was reflected in the willingness of

many of these States to host OIC's official meetings or to undertake initiatives and hold conferences relevant to the Organisation and to its activities. He drew attention to the fact that many influential major States such as the United States of America and the Russian Federation, among others, have realized this new reality and have indeed opened new channels for consultation and communication with the OIC. In line with that, major governmental and non-governmental regional political organizations in the world have realized the important role the organization is gaining and started to demonstrate remarkable respect for the OIC and willingness to establish close ties with it.

The Secretary General emphasized that the OIC is planning to intensify its contacts and activities with the European Union and European institutions in general and with European countries for the completion of the final stages of the opening of the OIC's office in Brussels.

In the field of humanitarian action, the Secretary General listed a number of the achievements of the OIC in Niger and Indonesia, in addition to the Gaza Strip which witnessed many humanitarian activities in the last period.

Professor İhsanoğlu explained that one of the major successes achieved by the OIC is the establishment of councils for the representatives of the OIC Member States in major international capitals, particularly those with active international multi-lateral diplomatic activities, such as the United Nations. He stated that continued communication with these councils led to the establishment of influential voting blocks, which have enabled the Organisation to acquire great weight in international decision making for the high interests of our Ummah.

The Secretary General maintained that the amplification of OIC's duties and challenges was

accompanied by a significant expansion in its international events and activities. At the same time, the Member States' expectations and demands also grew significantly. Added to this are the new missions and duties assigned to the Organization by virtue of the resolutions of the two Summits of Makkah Al-Mukarramah and Dakar.

The Committee approved its Agenda and Programme of Work as submitted by the General Secretariat. Following the exhaustive consideration of the various agenda items of the meeting, the Committee adopted the Report of the Finance Control Organ with some modifications in the major recommendations on the General Secretariat and its Subsidiary Organs' Reports.

Furthermore, the Committee requested the OIC General Secretariat to call for a specialized open-ended Intergovernmental Experts Group to further review and finalize the contents of the proposed OIC Rules for Joint Staff Pension Scheme and, thereafter, to submit an analytical report directly to the forthcoming 37th CFM for adoption.

OTHER MEETINGS

Workshop on the Formulation of the Unified Statistical Strategy of the GCC States

As part of the efforts to develop a Unified Statistical Strategy for the GCC Countries, the Sultanate of Oman and the General Secretariat of the GCC Countries organized a workshop on “The Formulation of the Unified Statistical Strategy of the GCC States” during 5-7 October 2009 in Muscat, Sultanate of Oman. This initiative was assigned to the Sultanate of Oman according to the resolution of the Ministerial Committee for Planning and Development of the GCC Countries in its nineteenth meeting, on 9 June 2009 in Muscat. The aim of the workshop was to benefit from the experiences of the international organizations in the formulation of the Strategy Document, the needed mechanisms and inputs for implementation and ensuring its success, together with developing tools for measuring and monitoring the execution of its activities.

United Arab Emirates, Kingdom of Bahrain, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, Sultanate of Oman, State of Qatar and State of Kuwait were the participating countries in the Workshop. Beside the GCC Member States, International and Regional Organizations, such as Paris 21, Eurostat, UNSD, IMF, World Bank, UNESCWA, AITRS, The Arab Planning Institute, Arab Monetary Fund, Gulf Organization for Industrial Consulting, UN Fund for Population GCC, League of Arab States, Information and Decision Support Centre, Arab Republic of Egypt, UNICEF-Muscat, Regional Office of the International

Labor Organization (ILO) and SESRIC participated also in the Workshop. The target groups of the workshop were heads of the GCC National Statistical Offices or their deputies, Members of the team for formulation of the unified strategy, senior statisticians at: central banks, health ministries, finance ministries, manpower ministries and civil status registries.

Dr. Sıdıka Başçı, Director of the Statistics and Information Department, represented SESRIC during the Workshop. She made a presentation in the second day of the Workshop within Theme 3: Developing the Statistical Infrastructure. The title of her presentation was “Capacity Building: Priority Programmes”. Furthermore, she had mutual meetings with Paris 21, UNESCWA, Eurostat, AITRS, League of Arab States, Arab Monetary Fund, The Cooperation Council for the Arab States of the Gulf, United Arab Emirates-Ministry of Economy, National Statistics Office of Kingdom of Bahrain, Regional Office of the ILO and Arabian Research Bureau.

The General Secretariat of the GCC Countries, considering all views, ideas and experiences shared during the Workshop about the Unified Statistical Strategy of the GCC States, will prepare the first draft document of the Unified Statistical Strategy and share it with the participants of the Workshop to have their feedbacks towards the end of 2009.

International Investment Forum of Turkmenistan

The International Investment Forum of Turkmenistan was organized by the Government of Turkmenistan, in collaboration with “IC Energy LTD”, and held in Ashgabat on 15-17 October 2009. The Forum was designed to assist potential investors in gaining an in-depth and updated insight into the latest economic trends, investment climate, legal and tax frameworks, business conditions and

opportunities for partnerships. The Forum played an important role in highlighting the investment opportunities that exist in Turkmenistan.

The International Investment Forum of Turkmenistan was an intensive and interactive three-day event, which covered key areas of investment opportunities in the following

sectors: oil and gas, power generation, construction, real estate, textiles, agriculture, banking and finance, telecoms, tourism, transport, and healthcare and pharmaceuticals.

For more information, please visit the Forum website at:

<http://www.turkmenistaninvestmentforum.com>

3rd OECD World Forum on Statistics, Knowledge and Policy

The 3rd OECD World Forum on "Statistics, Knowledge and Policy" was held on 27 – 30 October 2009 in Busan, Republic of Korea. Under the theme of "Charting Progress, Building Visions, Improving Life," it was an opportunity to re-identify what progress means in the 21st century and it contributed to establish comprehensive indicator sets to measure this newly conceptualized "progress" and to share the best practices of evidence-based policy making.

The event was organized by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development

(OECD) and Statistics Korea (KOSTAT) in cooperation with the Organization of Islamic Conference (OIC), the European Commission (EC), the World Bank (WB), the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) and the Bank of Korea.

Dr. Savaş Alpay, Director General of SESRIC, chaired the Session titled "Fostering the measurement of societal progress: the role of ICT and training".

For more information, please visit: <http://www.oecdworldforum2009.org>

PARIS21 Consortium Meeting

The Partnership in Statistics for Development in the 21st Century (PARIS21) organised its Consortium meeting in Dakar, Senegal, on 16-18 November 2009. Dr. Savaş Alpay, Director General of SESRIC, delivered a speech in the session titled: "What works in financial and technical assistance: regional approaches, twinning, south-south" on 17 November 2009.

The Consortium Meeting brought together some 400 high-level participants — policy makers, statisticians, analysts, and civil society and private sector representatives from

developing and developed countries, and multilateral organisations — to discuss statistical capacity building in developing countries and review the achievements and future contribution of the PARIS21 Partnership and its Secretariat.

The Consortium meeting was jointly organised by the Government of Senegal and PARIS21 and was followed by the 5th Africa Symposium on Statistical Development.

For more information, please visit: <http://www.oecd.org>

The Annual Conference of the Accounting and Auditing Organisation for Islamic Financial Institutions (AAOIFI) on Islamic Banking and Finance

The Accounting and Auditing Organisation for Islamic Financial Institutions (AAOIFI) organised its Annual Conference on Islamic Banking and Finance, in collaboration with the World Bank, in Manama, Kingdom of Bahrain, on 14-15 December 2009. The Conference discussed the most important topics related to

the operations of the Financial Islamic Banking such as expanding access to finance to small businesses and households, the way forward for Tawarruq (monetisation) transactions, Sukuk: equity or debt instruments?, investment accounts versus deposit accounts, derivatives: application of mechanisms such as Arboun, Debt

Trading and Salam for derivative products including profit rate swap, interbank money market operations, and issues on bankruptcy, liquidation, merger and acquisition.

Mr. Nabil Dabour, Director of Economic Research Department represented the Centre at the Conference. During the Conference, Mr. Dabour conducted a fruitful discussion with

Dr. Mohamad Nedal Alchaar, Secretary General of AAOIFI on the possibilities of future technical cooperation between SESRIC and AAOIFI in the area of Islamic financing and banking systems and capacity building in Islamic financial institutions in the OIC member countries.

For more information, please visit:
<http://www.aoofi.com>

17th International Scientific Conference of the Islamic World Academy of Sciences (IAS)

SESRIC has participated in the 17th Conference of Islamic World Academy of Sciences (IAS) held in Shah Alam / Selangor, Malaysia on 14-17 December 2009 under the patronage of HRH the Sultan of Selangor, Sultan Sharafuddin Idris Shah Al-Haj. The Conference was jointly organised by the IAS and the University Industry of Selangor on the theme “*Towards the Knowledge Society in the Islamic World: Knowledge Production, Application and Dissemination*”.

The aim of the conference was to promote the watchword that knowledge was becoming a major component in production processes, and that a new economic paradigm was emerging in which the most important factor was not the availability of capital, labour, raw materials or energy, but the intensive use of knowledge and information. The conference also aimed to

highlight that knowledge has become a pillar of the wealth and power of nations. The Conference was preceded by a “Science Youth Forum” which was held at the University of Industry of Selangor (UNISEL), Shah Alam. Over 150 participants representing over 25 countries participated in the conference, including the representatives of no less than 15 academies of sciences.

SESRIC was represented by Mr. Mehmet Fatih Serenli, Director of Training and Technical Cooperation Department, thereat. Mr. Serenli presented two papers during the Conference on “The Atlas of Islamic World Innovation” and “R&D and KE Performance of OIC Member Countries”.

For more information, please visit:
<http://www.ias-worldwide.org>

10th Islamic Countries Conference on Statistical Sciences

The 10th Islamic Countries Conference on Statistical Sciences (ICCS-X), held in Cairo, Egypt, on 20-23 December 2009. The conference was organized by the Islamic Countries Society of Statistical Sciences (ISOSS) and co-sponsored by the American University in Cairo and the Egyptian Cabinet Information and Decision Support Center (IDSC). The conference brought together researchers and practitioners in statistical sciences from 32 countries all over the world and more than 190 presentations were given by distinguished speakers. Mrs. Zehra Z. Koç Selçuk represented the SESRIC thereat. The

ICCS-X conference was held under the theme of Statistics for Development and Good Governance. In this context, three discussion panels; Public Opinion Polling and Good Governance, Measuring the Unmeasurable, and Indicators and Politics were devoted entirely to the discussion and deliberation on the theme of the conference. In addition to that, various broad topics in statistics theory and its applications had also been discussed in other separate sessions.

For more information, please visit:

<http://www.iccs-x.org.eg>

UPCOMING EVENTS

FOR THE FIRST QUARTER OF 2010

January

- ▶ Meeting of the Intergovernmental Group of Experts (IGGE) on Considering the Statute for Observer Status at the OIC, January 20, 2010, Jeddah, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia
- ▶ Expert Group Meeting on the Role of OIC in Maintenance of Security, Peacemaking and Conflict Resolution in Member States, January 23-24, 2010, Jeddah, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

February

- ▶ Conference of Ministers of Agriculture and Food Security, February 23-25, 2010, Khartoum, Sudan
- ▶ 41st Session of the UN Statistical Commission, February 23-26, 2010, New York, USA
- ▶ SESRIC's Meeting with the OIC-NSOs on the Sideline of the 41st Session of UN Statistical Commission, February 25, 2010, New York, USA

March

- ▶ Training Course on "Quality Statistics and Applications of New data Collection Methods", March 1-3, 2010, Tajikistan
- ▶ 1st Meeting of National Statistical Organisations (NSOs) of the OIC Member States, March 22-23, 2010, Istanbul, Republic of Turkey
- ▶ 33rd Session of the Islamic Commission for Economic, Cultural and Social Affairs (ICECS), March 29-31, 2010, Jeddah, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia