

Statement by Mr. Birol Aydemir

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(On the occasion of 4th Session of OIC Statistical Commission, Ankara)

*Mr. Chairman,*

*Distinguished Members of the OIC Statistical Commission and Delegates of the Member Countries,*

It is a great honour and privilege for me to participate in the Fourth Session of OIC Statistical Commission and to meet most of you again after our last meeting in United Nations Statistical Commission in New York. I would like to welcome you to Turkey and wish you a nice stay in our capital city, Ankara.

*Dear colleagues,*

Today in our world, knowledge is the biggest power, and you know that statistics itself is knowledge. Accordingly, statistics has occupied a dominant place in every field of our life from business, economy, banking to advertisements, weather, sports, elections and so on. Statistics affects and changes the way we live today and the way we think about tomorrow.

With this understanding, I believe that the Commission has undertaken such an important mission by bringing Member Countries together and supporting the collaboration and cooperation in different fields of statistics.

Taking this opportunity, I would like to emphasize my pleasure that the agenda covers important issues such as Post-2015 Development Agenda, System of Health Statistics, Global Tobacco Surveillance System and Improving Statistical Capacities in Tourism Sector. The topic "*Post-2015 Development Agenda and Implications for NSOs*" is the right choice from my point of view as we are on the verge of post-2015 development agenda. As we have observed, one of the lessons learned from the Millennium Development Goals Process was that statisticians need to be in the process of deciding the indicators at the beginning of the studies. In line with this experience and increasing importance of statistics, we as TurkStat expressed our view on post-2015 agenda in the last United Nations Statistical Commission Meeting in New York. In this meeting, we supported the proposal that having effective national statistical systems should be a development goal in the post-2015 agenda. Most of the Member Countries supported this view as well.

Indeed, a revolution is needed in the way the world views on statistics. This will not happen without transforming the world's perception on statistics. One powerful way of facilitating such a transformation is to place statistics development as a goal within the post-2015

development agenda. Statistics needs to be endorsed as the natural resources of development, and a well-functioning statistical system as a base of good governance.

The definition of good governance takes into account key indicators such as technical and managerial competence, the quality of organisations, reliability, accountability, transparency and open information systems. Transparency and accountability of policy making are essential for good governance. Reliable statistics are essential to improve the transparency and accountability, and having democracy evidence-based policy.

As you see, this is an important cycle as the dependent factors each other. And this cycle infers that democracy, good governance and reliable statistics could provide economic development.

At this point, I would like to ask you why and how statistics is indispensable factor for societies and provide economic development.

We know that statistics describes the reality of people's everyday lives, and the picture of society tells us where the poor are, why they are poor, what their lives are like and will be in future. This statistics provides the bases required to develop and monitor effective policies, and also facilitates better and faster decision-making. Statistics also gives the public opportunity to assess its own governments. However, in many countries, the role and importance of statistics are not still appreciated. Unfortunately, at the political level, statistics is not seen as vital for good governance. And NSOs have not been mostly included in the policy-making processes. Decisions are taken ignoring the views of national statistical offices.

On the other side, ongoing globalization process and economic crises in the world bring about high expectations from NSOs to produce reliable statistics in various fields of statistics. We cannot meet these expectations adequately. The only way to achieve these expectations highly depends on improving the capacity building of NSOs and the governance of national statistical systems. Unfortunately, in many countries, NSOs have serious weaknesses and inadequacies in many areas. I strongly believe that capacities and mandates of NSOs have to be supported by the Governments, and they need to be incorporated in the policy-making mechanisms as main actors. Regarding the capacities and mandates of NSOs, I can say that legal framework and management of the national statistical system impact on the effectiveness of the system in producing demanded statistical data.

A statistical legislation ensures effectiveness and credibility of the national statistical system by supporting its professional independence, institutional arrangements for the collection, management and dissemination of official statistics. The professional independence is the key factor for any NSO to supervise and coordinate the national statistical system and to create an autonomous institute to collect official statistics.

By the way, I would like to remind you that the UN General Assembly endorsed the Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics in January, which includes a revised preamble.

This endorsement gives the message on the importance of official statistics and the need for confidence beyond the statistical community and into the political world. Furthermore, this endorsement has also given us as NSOs a strong ground to stand on. Now we have to benefit from these principles by collectively renewing our implementation efforts.

As we all know, almost all NSOs have legal mandates covering these principles. However, we all have significant problems during the implementation phase. The most important problematic areas for NSOs in the implementation phase are professional independence and to access the administrative registers in the statistical production process. Although most national statistical offices are granted legal right to obtain and use these administrative registers, that is not practically applicable in many cases. We as NSOs face with difficulties when trying to access the administrative registers kept by other public authorities. At this point, I strongly believe that solutions for this significant problem should be found by international organizations as well as NSOs. As NSOs are not quite strong within the bureaucracy and government, the lead of these international organizations is of particular importance.

In this regard, some questions have to be answered: How do official statisticians demonstrate their commitment to the Fundamental Principles? What are the challenges and good practices during their implementation? Could OIC Member Countries have a common voice within the region to promote the awareness and implementation of Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics?

I strongly believe it is the high time that we discuss all these topics and explore problems and related solutions.

*Dear Members and Delegates,*

The importance of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation has gradually increased, since the organization is a unique structure that performs a role of the UN in the Islamic World with 57 States on four continents. We also have to keep in our minds that the OIC has been the biggest international organization outside the United Nations in terms of number of member states. We can confidently say that the OIC has become more active and an important actor among international institutions.

Looking at the general figures, we find out that OIC Member Countries control 70 (seventy) percent of the world's energy resources while their GDP is only 8 (eight) percent of the global economy; and 40 (forty) percent of the population of these countries lives below poverty level. All these figures indicate that Islamic world is facing serious challenges today in a dramatically changing world. And we know, there are significant discrepancies among the development levels of OIC Countries.

On the other hand, we have also a wealth of religious principles and positive ideologies that promote work and mercy and oppose laziness, egoism and destruction.

It is also time to think over this issue and discuss the solutions, what will we do from now on?

In order to uncover the grand potential of these Countries, we need to unite efforts to develop effective mechanisms for cooperation, mutual aid and promotion of development.

Our strategic goals should be to study under an umbrella for regional capacity development programmes in all statistical domains, and to implement joint studies by establishing steering and working groups comprising representatives from Member States and international organisations.

*Dear Members and Delegates,*

Completing my words, firstly I would like to say our motto to stress the importance of statistics. *“Statistics is the key of comprehending the past, managing the present and planning the future...”*

And lastly, I would like to reiterate that the technical and economical cooperation as well as development in our region requires strong and continuous dialogue. In this context, I sincerely believe that the road to an effective and fair world system passes through dialogue and cooperation. In this context, we are ready to give further momentum to the joint activities in order to stimulate the spirit of cooperation.

In conclusion, on behalf of my Institute and my country, I would like to extend our sincere thanks and appreciation to OIC, Islamic Development Bank and SESRIC for their invaluable and intensive studies.

I wish you a fruitful meeting and renew my best wishes to all Delegates for the success of this Meeting.

Thank you.