



Organisation of Islamic Cooperation
STATISTICAL, ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL RESEARCH
AND TRAINING CENTRE FOR ISLAMIC COUNTRIES
"Cooperation for Development"



**SESRIC Programme for Commemoration of Dhaka
The OIC City of Tourism 2019
15 October 2019, Dhaka, Bangladesh**

Address by
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Director General of SESRIC

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

**Honourable State Minister of Civil Aviation and Tourism, H.E. Mr. Md. Mahbub ALI,
H.E. Md. Mohibul Haque, Secretary, Ministry of Civil Aviation and Tourism
Distinguished Participants, Dear Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen,**

Very Good Morning السلام عليكم ورحمة الله

It is a great pleasure for me to address this august gathering on the occasion of SESRIC Programme for the commemoration of Dhaka, the OIC City of Tourism 2019. We at SESRIC are truly delighted to organize this programme in close collaboration with the Ministry of Civil Aviation and Tourism of the People's Republic of Bangladesh. The programme consists of two parts. The 1st part, is an international seminar on "Development of Muslim Friendly Tourism in Dhaka City", which will start immediately after this opening session. The 2nd part, in the afternoon, is an Award Ceremony for the best Tour Operators in the City of Dhaka.

I would like to express my sincere thanks and gratitude to all those who contributed to the organization of this event, particularly to the honourable State Minister of Civil Aviation and Tourism of the People's Republic of Bangladesh, H.E. Mr. Md. Mahbub ALI, and his team in the Ministry and in the Bangladesh Tourism Board. My thanks are also extended to my colleagues at SESRIC.

I am really honoured by the presence of such a distinguished gathering. Thank you all for accepting our invitation and designated this day from your valuable time to be with us in our programme for the commemoration of Dhaka, the OIC City of Tourism 2019.

Honourable Minister,
Dear Guests,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Over the last few decades, tourism has become an important component of the global economy. According to the World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC), in 2018, tourism sector generated around 10% of the world's GDP and employment. Last year, the number of tourists traveling across the world reached 1.4 billion and the tourism sector is projected to remain as an engine of growth in many regions, including the OIC region.

As a group, the OIC countries enjoy rich and diverse natural, geographic, historical and cultural heritage assets, and, thus, have a high potential for the development of a sustainable international tourism sector. However, considering the modest share of the OIC region in the world tourism market and the concentration of the tourism activity in only a few OIC countries, it

seems that a large part of the tourism potential of the OIC region remained unutilised.

Therefore, although it is a crucial factor, the potential of inherent natural tourism resources cannot by itself make a successful tourism industry; unless it is properly planned and managed.

According to the most recent available statistics, the number of international tourist arrivals in the OIC countries increased from 71.2 million in 2000 to 184.5 million in 2017 (more than doubled). Yet, the share of the OIC countries in the world tourism market accounted for only 13.7% in the same year, corresponding to an increase by only 3.2 percentage points over their share in 2000.

It is also observed that international tourism activity in terms of both tourist arrivals and tourism receipts in the OIC region is still concentrated in a few member countries. For example, in 2017, only 10 countries hosted 75% of the total international tourist arrivals in OIC region, and these 10 countries accounted for 82% of total international tourism receipts of all OIC countries in the same year.

Therefore, the role of international tourism sector is still economically limited or even negligible in many other OIC countries. In 2017, the average net share of international tourism (i.e. the international tourism balance) in the GNP of the group of OIC countries accounted for only 0.6%. However, international tourism sector is found to play a relatively more significant role as a source of foreign exchange earnings. For example in 2017, total international tourism receipts in OIC countries accounted for 7.7% of their total exports.

In fact, the problems facing tourism and the development of a sustainable international tourism sector in the OIC countries are diverse as each country has its own tourism features, level of development, and national priorities and policies.

In the case of many OIC countries, these problems range from the lack of technical know-how and weak promotional and public awareness to insufficient tourism-related infrastructures and investments and the lack of tourism diversification and safety.

However, in spite of these problems, it is believed that there still is a wide scope for the development of a sustainable international tourism industry in the OIC countries. Overall, this requires an adoption and implementation of long-term strategies as well as medium to short-term plans and programs at both the national and regional levels along with a process of creating a supportive OIC cooperation and coordination environment.

Honourable Minister,
Dear Guests,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

As one of the earliest established subsidiary organ of the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation, mandated to work in the domain of statistics, socio-economic research and training, SESRIC has been, over the last two decades, contributing actively to the efforts of the OIC and its member countries towards enhancing intra-OIC cooperation in the domain of tourism

development, particularly since the 1st Islamic Conference of Tourism Ministers which has been convened in Esfahan, Iran in October 2000.

In the area of statistics, we continue to update our “tourism” category in SESRIC main statistical database “OIC Stat Database”, which is the only comprehensive statistical database on the 57 OIC member countries. Currently, this database contains data on 780 socio-economic indicators classified under 24 categories dating back to 1985. Within the framework of SESRIC flagship “Statistical Capacity Building” Programme “OIC-StatCaB”, we also contribute to the efforts of the NSOs of our member countries towards enhancing their technical statistical capacities in various areas, including tourism statistics.

In the area of research, SESRIC has been preparing, since the 1st Islamic Conference of Ministers of Tourism in the year 2000, a regular report titled “International Tourism in the OIC Countries: Prospects and Challenges”. We submit this report as the main technical background document for the sessions of the Islamic Conference of Tourism Ministers. SESRIC also actively contributes to the technical assessment process of the candidate cities for the “OIC City of Tourism” Award.

In the area of training and technical cooperation, we at SESRIC give a special importance to training activities in the domain of tourism. In this regard, and within the framework of SESRIC “Tourism Capacity Building Programme”, we organize different training courses and workshops on various aspects related to tourism sector with a view to enhancing the technical capacities and share experience in our member countries in the field of tourism development.

**Honourable Minister,
Dear Guests,
Ladies and Gentlemen,**

As the tourism sector scales up, international tourists increasingly look for more customized services in line with their preferences. One of these niche areas that has emerged in the international tourism market over the last two decades is the “Muslim Friendly Tourism” or what is also called “Islamic Tourism”.

“Muslim Friendly Tourism” or “Islamic Tourism” goes beyond simply removing alcohol from the hotel facilities or providing a prayer rug in a hotel room. It is a broad concept that covers many pillars from organizing tours by observing prayer times to designing family friendly common facilities with some privacy in hotel establishments.

As the trend of such services goes up, an increasing number of Muslims across the world and in the OIC Countries prefer using tourism facilities that are Sharia’h compliant and provide services in line with the Islamic principles. According to the latest available data, 140 million international Muslim visitors were recorded in 2018, and this figure is projected to reach 230 million by 2026.

In order for OIC countries to utilise the potentials of such an increasing trend of Muslim Friendly Tourism, there is a need for raising awareness and collaboration among all tourism stakeholders, including public institutions responsible for tourism, tour operators, hotel managements, religious authorities, and academicians. Therefore, this topic has recently become an important issue at the OIC agenda in the domain of tourism cooperation.

In this connection, I would like to mention that the “Strategic Roadmap for Development of Islamic Tourism in OIC Member Countries”, which was prepared by SESRIC in cooperation with the OIC General Secretariat has been adopted here in the city of Dhaka in February last year during the 10th Islamic Conference of Tourism Ministers.

Honourable Minister,
Dear Guests,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Within the framework of our activities and programmes in the domain of tourism, we, at SESRIC, have recently paid a special attention to promoting and raising awareness of the potential and development of “Muslim Friendly Tourism” in our member countries.

In fact, we observed that tourism sector in many OIC member countries is still not well-equipped to utilise the potentials of the “Muslim Friendly Tourism” industry in terms of basic infrastructure like certified hotels, customized tours and trained tour guides. Only in few OIC countries, tourism destinations and stakeholders can fully meet expectations of Muslim travellers such as by providing certified halal food or a designated prayer room. It is therefore imperative to raise awareness and take all necessary measures to enhance the development of the Muslim Friendly Tourism industry in our member countries.

In this regard, over the last few years our Centre has organized some training and knowledge-sharing programmes, to improve the capacities of public institutions of the OIC Countries in this area. For example, in 2017, we have

organized a training programme on the “Development and Promotion of Muslim Friendly Tourism” with the participation of the senior level officials from 15 OIC countries in Ankara, Turkey. Most recently, we organized similar training and capacity building programmes for Uzbekistan, Guyana and Suriname.

Honourable Minister,
Dear Guests,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Dhaka is blessed by an extraordinary wealth of Islamic heritage created over the centuries. For that the city has been chosen by the 10th Islamic Conference of Tourism Ministers as the OIC City of Tourism for 2019. I believe that today’s seminar will provide additional insights to our knowledge in the light of experiences of selected OIC countries including Uzbekistan and Malaysia, and that the discussions will further contribute to the development of Muslim Friendly Tourism in Dhaka, as well as in Bangladesh.

Before concluding, I would like to assure you that, as SESRIC, we will continue our efforts towards promoting the Muslim Friendly Tourism in our member countries through various activities and programmes and different cooperation modalities.

I wish you all a fruitful discussion during the seminar.

Thank you for your attention. والسلام عليكم ورحمة الله

