

Welcoming Statement by Dr. Savaş Alpay
Director General of SESRIC
At the Workshop on
“Innovative Social Assistance Strategies in Poverty Alleviation”
Ankara, Turkey, 12-14 December 2011

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

Distinguished participants,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Assalamu Alaikum wa Rahmatullahi wa Barakatuhu,

It is a great pleasure for me to address this august gathering on the occasion of the workshop on “Innovative Social Assistance Strategies in Poverty Alleviation”, which we have the honour, at SESRIC, to organize it in collaboration with the IDB Group through its Islamic Research and Training Institute (IRTI) and the Ministry of Family and Social Policy of the Republic of Turkey through its General Directorate of Social Assistance.

At the outset, I would like to welcome and thank you all for accepting our invitation and designating these three days from your valuable time to attend and participate in the deliberations of this important workshop. Our thanks and appreciations are also extended to the Ministry of Family and Social Policy of the Republic of Turkey and the IDB for their support and contribution to the organization of the Workshop.

Distinguished participants,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

As we are all aware, poverty is still considered as one of the most serious challenges facing the humanity today. It is a multi-dimensional phenomena and a result of a complex socio-economic

and political structure of a particular country. Poverty is more than poor people; it is associated with poor economies, poor human resources, poor social services provision, and poor policies to tackle the challenges facing human and socio-economic development. Therefore, the status, the determinants, and the policy measures required to eradicate poverty would, by definition, vary from one country to another.

Over the past two decades, many initiatives have been taken at both national and international levels to eradicate poverty and hunger at global level. In this respect, the international community agreed at the World Summit for Social Development in 1995 on the need for time-bound goals and quantitative targets for reducing poverty, and put a special emphasis on elaborating definitions, indicators and measurements of poverty. In 2000, eradicating poverty and elimination of hunger and under-nourishment has been identified in the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) as one of the most important objectives to be achieved at both national and global levels.

However, despite all efforts, the number of poor and undernourished people is still on rise worldwide. The recent estimates indicate that one billion people worldwide are undernourished; the majority of them are in the developing regions of Africa, Asia and Latin America. Considering the fact that the majority of the OIC member countries are located in these regions and constitute a substantial part of the developing countries, it is quite evident that a significant portion of those poor and undernourished people resides in OIC countries, particularly in the Least-developed and low-income members.

In this context, it is worth mentioning that, currently, 21 out of the world 48 LDCs are OIC members. 18 OIC member countries are classified as low-income countries and 22 as Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (HIPCs). According to FAO, 33 OIC member countries are also classified as LIFDCs, and according to the UNDP HDI, 25 OIC member countries are placed in the category of low HD countries. Five years ago, it has been estimated that there were 187 million undernourished people in the OIC Countries, corresponding to 21% of the world total

undernourished people. It was also estimated that there were almost 400 million people (23% of OIC total population) living below the income poverty threshold of 1.25\$ a day and 583 million people (39% of OIC total population) below the poverty threshold of 2\$ a day. It is undoubted that this situation has been worsened since then considering the negative impact of the global economic and food crises, particularly in the poor people in these countries.

Distinguished participants,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

In fact these figures and estimates indicate that poverty has been spreading far and wide in many OIC countries, particularly in the Least-developed and low-income countries. In most of these countries, poverty has been on such a large scale that it has become a structural phenomenon of human deprivation manifested in hunger, malnutrition, diseases, illiteracy, and low level and quality of consumption of hundreds of millions of people. The mass poverty in the majority of the OIC-LDLICs is a product of complex structural processes embedded in the political economy of these countries. Within this complexity, identifying the key causes of poverty should be considered as a crucial precondition for formulating an effective anti-poverty strategy.

If these countries are to reduce poverty or to judge how their national socio-economic policies affect it, they need to know a lot about their poor. It is important to know who the poor are; where they live; what assets they command; what their education, health and housing conditions are; and what economic opportunities are available to them. It is not possible to imagine sustainable socio-economic development in these countries without a significant rise in the standard of living of the neediest segments of the population in terms of consumption, health, housing, and education. Investing in people must, therefore, be the highest priority for these countries as long as human capital limitations restrain growth or keep people in absolute poverty.

Distinguished participants,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Though the problem of poverty in our member countries is essentially a national one, however, since economic cooperation is a main pillar of the OIC as an institution, and the ultimate aim of this cooperation is the wellbeing of the people in the member countries, the widespread poverty in the least-developed and low-income member countries seems to be inconsistent with this objective. The problem of poverty in the OIC community and the strategies for its alleviation should be considered with a new vision at both the individual country and OIC cooperation levels. The objectives for and the efforts to address poverty alleviation in our member countries should be outlined specifically in the national poverty alleviation strategies, but through a process of creating a supportive OIC environment.

It was within this understanding that the OIC Ten-Year Programme of Action, which has been adopted by the 3rd Extraordinary Islamic Summit in December 2005, emphasized the urgent need for strong collaboration and solidarity action by the Member States as well as by all relevant OIC institutions for fighting poverty at the OIC community level.

In this spirit, we came together today in this workshop to deliberate and exchange our views and expertise on one important aspects of cooperation in the field of poverty alleviation, which is “Innovative Social Assistance Strategies in Poverty Alleviation”. I am confident that the deliberations you will hold and the recommendations and proposals you will made will contribute significantly to the efforts of the OIC and its member countries towards eradicating poverty in their societies and, ultimately, approximate the collective welfare for the Islamic Ummah. As we all look forward to the successful outcome of this workshop, I wish you all the success.

Thank you for your kind attention.

Wassalamu Alaykum we Rahmatullahi we Barakatuhu