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“Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) in OIC Member Countries: Needs and Capacity Assessment”

Opening Remarks

by

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H.E. Amb. Musa Kulaklıkaya, Director General, Statistical, Economic and Social Research and Training Centre for Islamic Countries,

H.E. Ms. Nimet Baş, (former) Minister of National Education,

H.E. Mr. Salah Jelassi, Director & Resident Representative, IDB Group Country Gateway Office

Excellencies,

It is my pleasure to be here with you and the distinguished representatives of OIC countries. It is very timely to convene this workshop to discuss how to leverage and enhance the capacities on technical and vocational education and training (TVET). Skills are key for employability and decent work, especially for disadvantaged groups such as youth and women. Today and the next two days, you will be discussing how to enhance the effectiveness and efficiency of skills development practices among the OIC members.

It is important to contextualize the discussions around TVET through an employment perspective. Skills acquired by students and trainees need to contribute to their career development and facilitate their integration to the labour market. Yet, unemployment, especially for disadvantaged groups, has become a global problem that we can no longer neglect. According to the World Bank, 620 million young people are neither working or studying.

Similarly, UNDP's HDR 2015 states that out of the 204 million people

currently unemployed, 74 million are young people. The female participation to labour force ratio remains only around 50 percent and much lower in Turkey. The integration of youth, women and other marginalized segments of society into the economy will remain a key agenda item for the next 15 years, as 600 million new jobs will be needed.

OIC countries have also been facing these challenges in the region.

Participation of the young population in the labour force in OIC member states decreased to 44,4% in 2012 from 45,9% in 2000 according to a recent study of SESRIC. As the ILO highlights, youth unemployment rates in Middle East and North Africa reached 27,2% and 29,4% respectively in 2013. According to 2014 data from the World Bank, almost one out of three young people available for and seeking employment were without work in countries such as Yemen, Saudi Arabia, Syrian Arab Republic and Iraq.

At the same time, job creation per se may not be the solution. Currently, many businesses are already searching for skilled employees and workers, particularly for vocational and technical jobs. Yet, 40% of employers globally report that they can't fill their entry-level positions. This is just one part of the problem. 45% of youth also state that they are working in a job which doesn't utilize their skills sets. Thus, skills mismatch emerges as an important barrier to employment and productivity.

Designing and delivering TVET in a demand-driven way could help overcome this skills mismatch and enhance the employability of individuals. This could help prepare the workforce for the world of work and productive sectors and smoothen the transformation of economies.

Effective TVET will help in overcoming poverty, inequality and foster people's active participation in development processes.

TVET and skills development is a key priority for UNDP from a developmental point of view. The organization's Strategic Plan 2014-17 has focused on building 'productive capacities that create employment and livelihoods for the poor and excluded. In order to achieve this result, the strategic plan recommends 'skills development' interventions that can cater to new jobs and provide sustainable livelihoods. UNDP's Human Development Report 2015 entitled "Work for Human Development" underlines that targeted assistance is required for both young women and men so that they can participate in trade and vocational training, apprenticeships and on-the-job learning. Apprenticeships and industry-driven trainings facilitate transition to work and allow for career shifts. Capabilities, especially employable knowledge and skills, are also one of the linkages between people and the prosperity agenda of the SDGs. The Sustainable Development Goals and especially SDG 4 and 8 underline the

role of skill development for work, entrepreneurship, employment, livelihoods and development.

The rise of the global population and rapid technologic changes invalidate our existing solutions to the current challenges we face, and require exploring novel approaches. Leveraging the private sector's role in skills design and delivery is one of these effective ways of improving training results. UNDP's Istanbul International Center for Private Sector in Development (IICPSD) contributes to private sector engagement in skills development and TVET in this sense. The center identifies and documents the best practices in this field, and transforms them to actionable toolkits. The research of IICPSD in Turkey and India have revealed that the private sector could contribute by:

- helping integrate labour market signals as inputs for more demand-driven trainings,
- contributing to the identification of required skills and competencies as well as the development of occupational standards and qualifications,
- ensuring practical and industry-relevant skills are acquired by trainees,
- increasing the relevance and recognition of certificates,
- helping achieve a faster and smoother transition to work process.

Considering the refugee crises in the OIC region, it should be noted that skills are also instrumental to enable forced migrants and refugees to re-integrate into the economy and to access livelihood opportunities. For the successful transition of refugees to work life, life skills including language skills are crucial for the success of skills interventions targeting these groups. At the macro level, a holistic approach is required to align skills development policies for migrants and refugees with the economic and industrial strategies of governments.

I hope that the discussions in this workshop will help in improving the TVET practices in the region and beyond. As UNDP, we stand ready to support the countries to better link skills development to employability, decent work and improved livelihoods consistent with the SDGs.

Thank you!