

Webinar on
“The Impact of COVID-19 on Elderly People and Persons with Disabilities in the OIC Member States”

23 December 2020, 11:00 AM Turkey Time

Opening Statement

H.E. Mr. Nebil DABUR, Director General of SESRIC

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Distinguished Participants, Ladies and Gentlemen,

السلام عليكم ورحمة الله وبركاته

I wish you all a very Good Day

- **It is my great pleasure to address this Webinar on “The Impact of COVID-19 on Elderly People and Persons with Disabilities in the OIC Member States”. We, at SESRIC, are delighted to co-organize this Webinar with the Directorate General of Disabled and Elderly Services at the Ministry of Family, Labour and Social Services of the Republic of Turkey.**
- **On behalf of SESRIC, I would like to extend my sincere thanks and appreciation to all of you for accepting our invitation to contribute to this Webinar. I welcome you all.**

- **Today, we are virtually gathered to discuss the common challenges and obstacles facing elderly people and persons with disabilities in the OIC Member Countries during these difficult times of the global COVID-19 pandemic crisis. Our valuable panellists from different regions of the OIC will shed the light on this important topic and share their respected authorities' best practices and country experiences.**

Dear Participants,

- **The outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic since late last year has span the globe in an unprecedented way with severe impacts on various socio-economic sectors and all members of society. The consequences on the vulnerable groups - including the elderly and persons with disabilities - were particularly challenging.**
- **With the limitations of social security and health systems in some OIC countries, the pre-pandemic health conditions of these groups unfortunately brought about higher risk of infection, where the limited and uncoordinated response policies have resulted in dramatic consequences in terms of loss of lives.**
- **On the other hand, some member countries have managed to take a wide range of successful measures to protect the elderly**

and persons with disabilities during the pandemic. These measures include introducing symptom screening, social distancing requirements, detection and quarantine procedures, awareness campaigns, designated curfew hours, and the adoption of national or local guidelines and preparedness plans.

- **It is worth mentioning here that those countries, which have so far recorded successful policy outcomes on elderly and persons with disabilities during the pandemic, have ensured an effective coordination among various public authorities such as the Ministries of Health and Social Affairs in developing and executing their response policies.**

Distinguished Participants,

- **Despite the high value and great importance given to the elderly people and persons with disabilities in Islam, in some member countries, these vulnerable groups are unfortunately still facing various forms of discrimination, maltreatment, disrespect and failing to observe their basic rights.**
- **In fact, only few OIC member countries have adequate mechanisms and policies in place to fully cater for the needs of elderly and persons with disabilities. Therefore, we need to**

acknowledge the importance of fostering an inclusive culture and responding to the urgent needs of this vulnerable segment of people in all aspects of society, especially during the crises like the COVID-19 pandemic.

- **Given the current situation of elderly and people with disabilities, it seems that the Governments of our member countries have to act now, with more enhanced intra-OIC cooperation, towards the development of more inclusive and responsive systems to the needs and rights of those people in all their diversity.**
- **In this context, it is worth mentioning that the situation of the elderly people and persons with disabilities has been given special attention at the OIC level where some strategic documents are developed and adopted towards raising awareness and improving the situations of these vulnerable groups through enhancing intra-OIC cooperation. For example, the *OIC-2025 Programme of Action*, which was adopted in 2016, identified a goal with a view to developing effective and reliable social services for elderly and people with special needs in OIC Member States.**

- **Recently, the “*OIC Strategy on the Elderly*” has been adopted by the member countries during the First Session of the OIC Ministerial Conference on Social Development held in December last year in Istanbul. The Conference also reviewed and discussed the framework on the draft “OIC Plan of Action on People with Disabilities”. In fact, such OIC high-level decisions and resolutions on adopting such strategic documents in the domain of elderly and people with disabilities are all indicators on the national commitment towards implementing of a wide range of national policies and best practices in OIC Member States.**

Dear Participants

- **In this context, I am proud to inform you that our Centre (SESRIC) has made a significant technical contribution to these important OIC strategic documents through the preparation of the related background research studies such as the “*State of Elderly in OIC Member Countries*” and “*People with Disabilities and Special Needs in OIC Countries*”.**
- **We, at SESRIC, will continue to take an active role in this important domain through contributing to the preparation of further strategic documents and facilitating the implementation**

of these documents. SESRIC will also contribute to improving the capacities of the relevant national institutions in our member countries with a view to enhancing social and economic well-being of elderly and people with disabilities. In particular, we are ready to partnership the relevant national institutions in our member countries in organizing virtual seminars, webinars, training and capacity building programmes in this important domain.

- I believe that the exchange of knowledge and sharing of experiences and best practices among our member countries, especially during these difficult times are more needed than ever. Therefore, I hope that this Webinar would contribute to our efforts towards enhancing intra-OIC cooperation and dialogue in this important area and would introduce some good practices and stimulate collective actions.**
- Before concluding, I would like to thank you all once again and wish you a fruitful exchange of experiences and productive discussions that can hopefully inspire the relevant authorities in the OIC countries in setting and executing effective national policies.**
- Thank you all for your kind attention. والسلام عليكم ورحمة الله وبركاته**