

**Opening Statement of Dr. Savaş Alpay, Director General of the SESRIC, at the Third Meeting of the Monitoring and Advisory Committee of the Vocational Education and Training Programme for OIC Member Countries**

**Tehran, Islamic Republic of Iran**

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بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

**Respected Minister,**

**Distinguished Delegates,**

**Ladies and Gentlemen,**

*Assalamu Alaykum we Rahmatullahi we Barakatuhu*

I am honoured to address the Third Meeting of the Monitoring and Advisory Committee of the Vocational Education and Training Programme for OIC Member Countries. Let me, at the outset, express my sincere appreciation and thanks to all of you for accepting the invitation and designating time to attend this very important meeting. Our special thanks go to the Technical and Vocational Training Organization (TVTO) of the Islamic Republic of Iran for hosting this significant meeting at this beautiful city, Tehran.

The main objective of this meeting is to review the progress that has been achieved since the Second Meeting of MAC held in Turkey last year, and to discuss ways and means of cooperation and collaboration among National Focal Points of the Programme in implementing projects in OIC Member Countries. In this meeting, we expect to consolidate the existing relationships between the National Focal Points further in order to help them generate a better outcome in providing vocational education and training to the individuals in their countries. As you all know, The OIC-VET Programme emphasises the importance of coordination and cooperation among all Member States to improve the quality of vocational education and training in the public and private sectors with the aim of supporting and enhancing the opportunities for individuals to develop their knowledge and skills and thus to contribute to the development and competitiveness of the economies of their countries. Therefore, as an important step towards this ultimate goal, we are sure that our gathering here today will take place in a fruitful and most productive atmosphere. I would also like to mention that it is promising to see number of participants and also interest and support of the Member Countries to the Programme have been increasing each year. In this regard, once again I would like to thank all the respected representatives for their participation and invaluable contribution to this meeting.

As you may all agree, in an age of intensive global competition, knowledge is the single most important tool for a strong existence and education is the single most powerful means to improve the quality of life and well-being of our citizens. Education builds a culture of providing best service for our people and society as a whole. Every investment in education would definitely bring higher returns for the future of our individuals and community. Stating the importance of life-long learning hundreds of years ago, The Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings of God be upon him), advised humanity to “seek knowledge from the cradle to the grave”. Especially, in the era of rapid technological transformation, life-long learning is in front-page on the agenda of many countries. Governments now need to be more responsive to the demands of the sectors and more aware of the social and economic relevance of skills and provide technical and vocational education with a commensurate share of social investment. Moreover, as production gets more onto a global scale, the pressure on the workforce to improve and update their knowledge and skills according to the changing demands and priorities of the market has been increasing as well.

All these developments could explain why many governments in the developing world have now been trying to reform their technical and vocational education systems. These reforms include the attempts to make the importance of life-long learning known by individuals, to improve the image of the vocational education and training (VET) and to increase the public awareness about the leading role of VET in socio-economic development of the countries.

In this regard, OIC-VET Programme targets to enhance the understanding of VET both by people and industry, besides building the skills and competencies of the workforce through strengthening the VET systems of the Member Countries by employing collaborative projects and designs. In other words, the OIC-VET Programme not only improves the capacity of the VET systems of the Member Countries but also establishes bridges among the members of OIC Community by identifying potential collaboration areas and turning them into real cooperative actions.

In fact, The OIC-VET Programme is envisaged to establish closer cooperation among Member Countries in meeting today’s developmental challenges by providing opportunities for organisations involved in vocational education and training to build OIC partnerships, to exchange best practices, experiences and knowledge, to increase the expertise of their staff and to develop the skills and competencies of the participants. Our ultimate desire is that all OIC Member Countries would share this vision and benefit from this significant Programme.

**Distinguished Delegates,**

**Ladies and Gentlemen,**

As you may recall the OIC-VET Programme was launched by Abdullah Gül, President of the Republic of Turkey and Chairman of COMCEC during the COMCEC Economic Summit held in Istanbul on 9 November 2009, with the participation of the heads of states and governments. The İstanbul Declaration, adopted at that Economic Summit, stated the importance of vocational education and training in socio-economic development of the OIC member countries, welcomed the launch of OIC-VET and also requested Member Countries to facilitate the implementation of the programme. Marked by this event, SESRIC undertook the role of Executive OIC Organ of the OIC-VET Programme, responsible to develop and coordinate cooperation programmes among Member Countries and also follow up the implementation of these programmes. With the guidance of Monitoring and Advisory Committee and continuing support and involvement of the National Focal Points, since then, SESRIC has worked towards the successful implementation of the various projects under the framework of OIC-VET Programme. To this end, I am very proud to say that, three successful pilot projects have already been accomplished and have become full-fledged programmes under the umbrella of OIC-VET.

Our first pilot project with the Turkish Centre for Occupational Health and Safety (İSGÜM) in May 2010 has led the way to the successful establishment of OIC- Occupational Safety and Health Network (OIC-OSHNET) with a kick-off meeting one year later in May 2011. Our aim is to turn this network into a platform for OSH professionals to exchange their best practices and to share their experiences and projects in the field so that OIC Member Countries would enhance their capacities in this important area.

The second pilot project with the Centre for Art and Vocational Training Courses of Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality (İSMEK) in June 2010 has yielded to İSMEK Master Trainer Programme (İMTP), whose first certificates were awarded to the 10 Pakistani Master Trainers in April 2011.

OIC International Student Internship Programme (OIC-ISIP) has also started its implementation phase in 2010. Arrangements have been already made for the internship of summer 2011.

These are some of the accomplishments that were realized under the OIC-VET Programme since our last meeting. I would like to express that this Third Monitoring and Advisory Committee Meeting would present us with an invaluable platform to discuss further how to improve our existing programmes under OIC-VET, besides identifying new potential areas for further collaboration. We will share our experiences and our recommendations for reaching the better. Vocational training is a precious tool for promoting new opportunities for individuals in all sectors of the economy. We believe that through close cooperation and networking among member countries, the OIC-VET Programme has already started to establish a larger community of beneficiaries since its launch, in a short period of time.

It is my belief that as the owners of the OIC-VET Programme, support of the Member Countries and support of the OIC Institutions are the two main assets of this Programme. And it is my hope that open and inclusive dialogue will be the hallmark of this meeting and its concrete outcome will pave the way for future collaborations. I am confident that the work you are about to accomplish would, ultimately, approximate and contribute significantly to the collective welfare for the Ummah. As we all look forward to the successful outcome of this meeting, I wish you all the success in your deliberations.

Thank you for your kind attention.

*Wassalamu Alaykum we Rahmatullahi we Barakatuhu*