

Speech of Prof. Savaş Alpay, Director General of SESRIC
At the Opening Session of the
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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 gathering and distinguished audience on the occasion of “International Integrated Basin Management Workshop”, which we have the honour, to co-organize it in collaboration with the Ministry of Forestry and Water Affairs of the Republic of Turkey and Turkish Water Institute (SUEN).

At the outset, I would like to welcome and thank you all for designating these two days from your valuable time to participate in this important training course. Our thanks and appreciations are also extended to the Ministry of Forestry and Water Affairs of the Republic of Turkey and Turkish Water Institute (SUEN) for their support and contribution to the organization of this unique event. I am pleased to note that experts specialized in the area of water and basin management are together here today to share and exchange their experiences, practices and knowledge on international integrated basin management.

I would like to take this opportunity, to briefly introduce you the Statistical, Economic and Social Research and Training Centre for Islamic Countries (SESRIC) and our relevant activities. SESRIC is a subsidiary organ of the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) operating in Ankara, Turkey since June 1978. The Centre undertakes four main duties determined by its mandate: statistics, research, training and technical cooperation.

Within the framework of the implementation of its mandate in the area of statistics, SESRIC serves as the major socio-economic statistical and information bank on and for the OIC Member Countries, and hosts the most comprehensive statistical database on the member countries. In this connection, the Centre collects and disseminates, through the utilisation of cutting-edge technologies, the necessary socio-economic data and background information on the 57 OIC member countries that would make them better informed of each other's potentials and needs and, thus, facilitate their elaboration of cooperation projects and integration schemes.

In the area of research, SESRIC acts as the main socio-economic research organ of the OIC, whereby it undertakes research activities on various issues of concern to the OIC member countries with a view to analysing the prevailing situation at the OIC level and suggesting the appropriate policy actions that need to be taken in order to face the challenges and strengthen the intra-Islamic cooperation in the concerned areas. In this context, the Centre targets priority areas such as economic cooperation, trade, education, health, poverty, environment, science & technology, transportation, agriculture, and tourism. Within this framework, the Centre undertakes extensive assignments of preparing the main technical background reports on many socio-economic issues placed on the agenda of the related OIC conferences and meetings every year.

In the area of training and technical cooperation, SESRIC initiates and implements capacity building programs on many important subjects and areas of immediate interest to the OIC Member Countries, and assumes the role of the focal point for the technical cooperation activities and projects between the OIC system and the relevant regional and international organisations. In so doing, the Centre devotes large portion of its resources to facilitate exchanging experience and expertise among the OIC Member Countries with a view to contributing to the South-South Cooperation initiative within the OIC community through transferring knowledge and know-how from one member country to another.

Distinguished participants,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The issue of water gains greater importance when the OIC Member Countries are considered. The 57 OIC MCs are dispersed over a large geographical region spread out on four continents, extending from Albania (Europe) in the North to Mozambique (Africa) in the South, and from Guyana (Latin America) in the West to Indonesia (Asia) in the East. As such, the OIC MCs as a group account for more than one fifth of the world area and population. Water is a scarce resource in arid and semi-arid areas of the OIC region where most of the countries in this region are facing severe pressures due to limited opportunities for the exploitation of new water resources. These pressures are expected to increase in the face of expanding populations and the increased per capita water use associated with economic development.

Across the 57 nations of the Organization of the Islamic Cooperation (OIC), maximizing the productive use of water and minimizing its destructive impacts is a common and major challenge, despite the great diversity of water environments. The OIC's great diversity and great water challenges, coupled with its shared beliefs, together provide an extraordinary opportunity for its member states to work together to ensure a water secure future, sharing varied experiences and learning from what has and has not worked.

In this respect, 23 OIC Member Countries suffer from water stress and water scarcity. Among these, 13 countries are facing absolute water scarcity with TRWR/capita \leq 1000m³/year (total renewable water resources), 5 countries are facing water scarcity with TRWR/capita \leq 1000m³/year and 5 countries are facing water stress. Moreover, About 86.2% of the total water in OIC countries is withdrawn for agricultural purposes compared to 70% in the world. As everywhere else, the bulk of agricultural water withdrawal in the OIC countries is used in irrigation. And most of it is not used even efficiently mainly due to inefficient and out dated irrigation techniques. Only 24% of population is without access to improved drinking water resources in OIC countries compared to 21% in the world. Accordingly, 40% of population is without access to

improved sanitation facilities in OIC countries compared to 36% in the world.

There is also an obvious need to increase the development of water and sanitation infrastructure. Within the OIC there are many experiences of successful water policy development, management and technology application. The improved management of water resources, the increased efficiency of water use and the development of alternative ways of providing water, such as through grey, reclaimed or desalinated water for both rural and urban supplies, are all areas where innovation is needed. They are also all areas where individual OIC countries have successful experience to learn from. Noting that, many OIC Member Countries could be severely impacted by intensified water-related problems, such as the increased incidence of droughts and floods, water quality degradation, and unreliability of food production, the OIC Member Countries have adopted the OIC Water Vision document during the Islamic Conference of Ministers Responsible for Water held in Istanbul, Turkey, during the period 05-06 March 2012 under the theme of “Working Together for a Water Secure Future”.

The objective of the OIC Water Vision is to catalyze improved water security in OIC Member Countries through cooperation in; connecting centres of excellence within the OIC in water science, policy, management and technology development to build capacity, and share and enhance knowledge; identifying solutions to water problems through increased dialogue and exchange of experience as well as through promoting concrete actions; and promoting solutions to water security challenges in the national and international agendas of OIC leaders. The OIC Water Vision proposes that the future will bring many new dimensions to the challenge of achieving and sustaining water security, and through a shared vision and enhanced cooperation and collaboration across the member states for increased water security.

I believe that this workshop will be an instrumental approach in transferring the experience and knowledge in “International Integrated Basin Management” as a best practice for promoting international basin management in between countries. We hope that this programme will develop a wider cooperation between the institutions involving

in basin management and their relevant counterpart institutions in your countries. During these two days you will share and exchange knowledge, practices and experiences and draw on successful examples on the subject matter.

I am confident that the work you are about to accomplish would, ultimately, approximate and contribute significantly to the collective welfare for all the participant countries. I hope that this workshop will set the ground for establishing a professional network among your institutions for systematic sharing of knowledge and experience on integrated basin management and enhancing cooperation between countries.

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