

**LAUNCH EVENT OF THE SESRIC-ITFC JOINT REPORT ON
“POTENTIAL IMPACTS OF THE AfCFTA ON SELECTED OIC
COUNTRIES”**

12 July 2021, 12:00 AM Turkey Time

Opening Remarks by H.E. Mr. Nebil DABUR

Director General of SESRIC

بِسْمِ اللّٰهِ الرَّحْمٰنِ الرَّحِیْمِ

Excellencies, Distinguished Participants,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

السَّلَامُ عَلَیْكُمْ وَرَحْمَةُ اللّٰهِ وَبَرَكَاتُهُ

It is a great pleasure for me to address this launch event of the joint research report prepared by SESRIC and ITFC on the “Potential Impacts of the African Continental Free Trade Area on Selected OIC Countries”.

At the outset, let me express my sincere thanks and appreciation to His Excellency Eng. Hani Salem Sonbol, CEO, ITFC and his team for their excellent cooperation with SESRIC during the preparation of the study as well as the organisation of this important event.

ITFC and SESRIC have been long-standing partners in supporting the efforts of the OIC MCs towards enhancing their socio-economic development. I am pleased to see that the scope of this partnership has been further expanding over the last years, generating significant outcomes for the benefits of our MCs.

Within the framework of this excellent cooperation, we signed last year an MoU to initiate a joint project on the potential impacts of African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) on the OIC countries in Africa. Through this partnership, we agreed to engage in evidence-based research to inform the policy makers on different implications of the AfCFTA on national economies.

As part of this partnership, we agreed to produce jointly three technical reports. We are pleased to have the first report finalized through excellent collaboration of the team members at both ITFC and SESRIC. We are also excited to proceed with the next two reports over the coming periods.

Excellencies, Distinguished Participants, Ladies and Gentlemen,

We believe that the “Agreement on the African Continental Free Trade Area” is a critical milestone in enhancing economic cooperation and integration among the African countries. Yet, such endeavours usually bring both challenges and opportunities for the concerned countries with positive and negative impacts on different segments of the societies.

Therefore, it is necessary for the partner countries to understand both the opportunities and challenges associated with such initiatives. Accordingly, they should design the appropriate policies to address the challenges and ensure the availability of the tools and resources needed to effectively implement these policies. It is also essential for them to identify the opportunities arising from this Agreement and seek the ways and means to successfully utilize them.

This should be based on and supported by evidence-based research. In fact, the SESRIC-ITFC partnership serves exactly this purpose. We have joined our hands to identify the potential challenges and opportunities by producing technical research reports, and thereby support the efforts of the MCs towards addressing these challenges and utilizing the opportunities.

Excellencies, Distinguished Participants, Ladies and Gentlemen,

As a subsidiary organ of the OIC, SESRIC has demonstrated, over the past four decades, its capacity and professionalism to successfully fulfil its mandate, which was entrusted to it 43 years ago. The Centre has accumulated solid experience and successful achievements in the three areas of its mandate, namely statistics, research and training.

Over the years, we have introduced various measures and methodologies and launched new approaches and programmes to strengthen the role of SESRIC in supporting and contributing to the efforts of the OIC and its member countries vis-à-vis the challenges they face in their development efforts.

As the only OIC institution mandated to work in the domain of statistics, SESRIC is the main repository of statistics and information on and for the OIC MCs. The Centre collects and disseminates high quality statistics on and for the OIC MCs in order to better inform them about each other's potentials, capacities and needs and thus facilitate their cooperation in various fields and through different modalities. At the same time, the Centre serves as the Secretariat of the OIC Statistical Commission, the only OIC cooperation fora in the field of statistics, similar to the UN Statistical Commission.

SESRIC is also considered as the main socio-economic research organ of the OIC. The Centre undertakes the task of preparing regular policy-oriented technical background reports and studies as well as strategic cooperation documents on a wide range of socio-economic issues on the OIC agenda. The Centre submits and presents these reports and documents to the various relevant OIC sectoral ministerial conferences.

In so doing, SESRIC supports and contributes to the OIC high-level policy dialogue mechanism by analysing the current situation at the OIC level and suggesting appropriate policy actions that need to be taken in order to address the challenges and enhance intra-Islamic cooperation in the relevant areas.

In the area of training and technical cooperation, SESRIC plays a significant role in enhancing south-south cooperation among the OIC MCs. The Centre has been, over the years, initiating and implementing many capacity-building programs on various socioeconomic areas and sectors.

These programmes aim at facilitating the transfer and exchange of knowledge, know-how, experiences and best practices among the member countries using different modalities and practical approaches and through effective partnership and cooperation with relevant OIC, national, and international institutions.

Excellencies, Distinguished Participants, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Before concluding, I would like to say that we recognize the importance of the free trade agreement among the African countries as well as the challenges associated with the Agreement. There is a long way to go with respect to raising awareness and building the capacities of relevant national authorities.

Addressing these and other challenges will directly translate into opportunities for increased competitiveness, market integration and business opportunities for all African countries. This will also improve intra-OIC economic and commercial linkages. In this context, let me reassure you that SESRIC, as usual, stands ready and willing to work closely with the OIC MCs with a view to supporting and contributing to their development efforts.

May Allah Almighty support and help us all and guide our efforts and steps towards the prosperity and welfare of our MCs and the Islamic Ummah at large.

Thank you very much for your attention.

والسلام عليكم ورحمة الله