

OPENING REMARK

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Your Excellencies & distinguished participants and guests;

Assalamu alikum wa rahmatullahi wa barakatuh

It is a great pleasure and honor to join you here today. As a co-organizer of today's event, and on behalf of the Islamic Development Bank I would like to welcome you all to the sixth session of OIC statistical commission. I would like also to extend our sincere thanks and appreciation to SESRIC for the outstanding arrangements and organization of this important event in this historic and beautiful city of Konya.

There is no doubt that we are living today in a very dynamic world that continues to unfold with events, which should not pass without proper reflection from our part as statistical commission of the OIC. The continued war in the Middle East and its impact on the economy of our member countries, the anticipated impact of Brexit, Sustainable Development Goals, and the United Nation's Paris agreement on climate changes are just few examples. This dynamic characteristic of our times mandates us to work efficiently and in cooperation and partnership among ourselves and play a vital role in the decision making process by our leaders. Such goal cannot be achieved without modernizing our National Statistical Systems (NSS) and populating them with skilled staff. I believe the Statistical Commission of OIC for which we are gathering today is a great opportunity towards achieving this goal.

Brothers and Sisters,

17, 169, 230. These are not merely random numbers, rather the 17 Sustainable Development Goals, 169 targets and 230 indicators. This speaks volume about the sheer responsibility of the national statistical offices and other agencies to provide timely and reliable data in order to enable monitoring the progress of these SDGs.

One fundamental problem at the heart of monitoring the progress of SDGs and other socio-economic indicators is the unreliable or non-existent data and the lack of skills and willingness to use it. Hence, official Statistical Systems with trustworthy data are a valuable enabling tool at the hand of governments and decision makers, without which any action would be like throwing darts in the dark.

At the Islamic Development Bank, we value greatly all activities that cater towards the capacity building of statistical systems. Such modernized and efficient system is likely to produce reliable data on socio-economic indicators. To this end, we have worked with SESRIC on an accreditation and certification program for statisticians, and it is about time to see the fruit of this program. On the same vein, IDB – STATCAP program aims at assisting member countries to build and strengthen their statistical capacities to

enable them produce reliable, timely, consistent and accurate economic, financial, socio-demographic and other data. At present, we are planning to expand our capacity and initiate new STATCAP programs in near future.

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

In today's world of mobile technology, social networks, pervasive satellite and sensor information, and machine-to-machine transactions, more data has been generated in the past two years alone than in all of the previous years combined. Hence, the already "Big Data" asset is growing even bigger with an unprecedented volume and velocity. Data collection is no more restricted through surveys conducted by human beings, now machine started to gather enormous data, and we started to hear more and more the term "Internet of Things". Moreover, the field of data analysis and statistics has witnessed great advancements in last years. It is now a big challenge to better visualize this data, explore it, make inferences and predictions and communicate the outcomes to the relevant parties to help them make evidence based decisions.

The confluence of disciplines like statistics, mathematics, artificial intelligence and machine learning has resulted in the novel field of "data science", which is gaining increasing momentum in the developed world. Every day, we hear of new interesting startups and applications leveraging on innovative usage of big data. It is of paramount importance for us to start building our capacity in these areas, through collaborations and partnership. The advancement in this area is marching very fast, and I am afraid, if we are not able to catch up with the trend, we might get irrelevant and obsolete very soon. Again, I believe gatherings like ours today is a great place to set the ball rolling for such novel areas and promising frontiers.

At the Islamic Development Bank, we are increasingly modernizing the discipline of data processing, analyzing and publishing. We already launched last year the data portal where users can browse, analyze, and even create own visualizations and dashboards for many key socio-economic indicators of our member countries. The portal draws data from member countries and international organizations like the World Bank and IMF. This year we went a step ahead and made the content of this portal available as mobile application, which would enhance ease of access and enable better evidence based decisions and dialogues among the management.

In conclusion, I thank you again for your participation, and I will be looking forward for a very successful meetings and proactive involvements from all of you during these two days.