

Speech to be delivered at the Opening Session of the OIC Network for Occupational Safety and Health -

OIC-OSHNET Kick-off Meeting

Ankara, 16-17 May 2011

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

Distinguished Delegates,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

AssalamuAlaykum we Rahmatullahi we Barakatuhu

It gives me a great honour to address this important gathering on the occasion of the inauguration of the OIC Network for Occupational Safety and Health, which we have the pleasure to organise it jointly with the Turkish Centre of Occupational Health and Safety of the Ministry of Labour and Social Security of the Republic of Turkey in Ankara.

At the outset, I would like to thank you all for accepting the invitation and designating time to attend this very important meeting. Our special thanks go to the Turkish Centre of Occupational Health and Safety for their logistic support provided to the participants in facilitating this important event.

As we are all aware, the issue of occupational health and safety has been on the agenda of many countries in the world more than half a century. Promotion and maintenance of the highest degree of physical, mental and social well-being of workers in all occupations, the prevention of workers in their employment from risks resulting from factors adverse to health and the placing and maintenance of the worker in an occupational environment adapted to his physiological and psychological capabilities constitute the core of occupational health and safety. However, while the main goal of occupational health and safety programs is to foster a safe work environment for workers, it may also aim to protect co-workers, family members, employers, customers, suppliers, nearby communities, general environment and other members of the public who are impacted by the workplace environment. Therefore, occupational health and safety is not only a major issue for work, but also an integral part of civil life and welfare of the society by affecting quality of lives of people that are somehow exposed to the same environment.

Islam naturally puts a great importance on well-being of employees, not only in terms of just payment and equity but also in terms of ideal working conditions. Employers should not make their employees to work so hard or in such miserable conditions that their health deteriorate or their ability to participate in social life and to enjoy their income will be affected negatively. Employers should not put tasks on the employees that are beyond their capacity or should provide them with sufficient help. In the hadith, the Prophet advises employers to consider their employees as their brothers by stating further "... and do not burden them with what overpowers them. If you do so, then help them" (Bukhari and Muslim).

Therefore, as we all acknowledge, main issues of occupational health and safety discipline would be fully in conformity with the spirit of Islamic teachings.

In this context, and in an attempt to enhance our efforts, at SESRIC, to develop the human capacity of relevant institutions towards establishing healthier and safer work places in our member countries, we have launched a capacity building programme on occupational health and safety in 2010. The programme is based on the analyses of the needs and capacities of the member countries in the field of Occupational Health and Safety, through the responses of the related questionnaires, and matching these needs and capacities through sending experts among these countries to offer the needed training programmes.

In this connection, I would like to express our readiness at SESRIC to strengthen our cooperation with the occupational health and safety institutions of our member countries and we are confident that only with your support and encouragement, we can extend and enrich our training programmes for more benefits to our member countries in this important area.

Distinguished Delegates,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am very pleased to inform you that this significant network we are establishing will be the first network under the Vocational Education and Training Programme for OIC Member Countries, namely OIC-VET.

As you may already know, the OIC-VET Programme is a programme designed and developed by SESRIC in order 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 in member countries to develop their knowledge and skills and thus to contribute to the socio- economic development and competitiveness of the economies.

The OIC-VET Programme was developed to establish closer cooperation among member countries in meeting today's developmental challenges by providing opportunities for organisations to build OIC partnerships, exchange best practices, increase the expertise of their staff and develop the skills and competencies of the participants. I believe that through close cooperation and networking among member countries, the OIC-VET Programme will establish a larger community of beneficiaries.

As you may already know that the OIC-VET Programme was launched by H.E. 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. First project of OIC-VET was jointly organized again by SESRIC and ISGUM in Ankara, on 24-28 May 2010, where it was recommended to design study visits on a permanent basis, to design capacity building programmes in the field, to establish a trainers database and networks among the institutions in the field and to encourage SESRIC and occupational health and safety organizations for future cooperative activities.

After a year, at the point where we stand today, depending upon the request of member countries, four training programmes under Occupational Health and Safety Capacity Building Programme have been

accomplished with the support of Member Countries. And today, in line with the recommendations adopted during the study visit in Ankara a year ago, an OIC Network for Occupational Safety and Health (OIC-OSHNET) among similar local, national and regional institutions in the OIC Member Countries is being kicked-off as a long term mutual cooperation among member countries. Together, we are giving the start of OIC-OSHNET today, in Ankara.

This kick off meeting, I believe, will set the ground to establish an international network for systematic sharing of information and experience in occupational health and safety issues among professionals, to build public awareness of occupational health and safety in OIC Member Countries, as well as to improve the quality of service in this area. It will solidify the existing relationships between occupational health and safety centres in OIC member countries in order to help them produce a better outcome in providing enhanced services to the individuals in their countries. Therefore, we hope that our gathering here will take place in a fruitful and most productive atmosphere.

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 OIC Member Countries. As we all look forward to the successful outcome of this network project, I wish you all the success in your deliberations.

Thank you for your kind attention.

Wassalamu Alaykum we Rahmatullahi we Barakatuhu