

**Opening Statement to be delivered at the Second Meeting of OIC Occupational Safety and Health Network (OIC-OSHNET)**

**Ankara, Republic of Turkey**

**04-06 March 2013**

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

**Respected Undersecretary,**

**Distinguished Delegates,**

**Ladies and Gentlemen,**

*Assalamu Alaykum we Rahmatullahi we Barakatuhu*

I am honored to address the Second Meeting of OIC Occupational Safety and Health Network (OIC-OSHNET) which we have the pleasure to jointly organize it with Directorate General of Occupational Health and Safety. 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. Taking this opportunity, I also would like to extend my sincere thanks to the Directorate General of Occupational Health and Safety operating under the Ministry of Labor and Social Security of the Republic of Turkey for their logistic support and hosting this significant meeting at Ankara.

As you all know, we are here to review the progress of the actions and activities accomplished since the Kick-off Meeting held in Ankara, Republic of Turkey on 16-17 May 2011 and discuss the modalities of closer collaboration and cooperation in on-going OIC-OSHNET projects-specifically share ideas, leverage resources, and find common solutions to address occupational safety and health hazards that concern all of us, as well as to draft an action plan for the coming period until the next meeting. During the Meeting, we will also discuss the Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) Regulation, Risk Assessment in Occupational Health and Safety (OHS) and Market Surveillance of Personal Protective Equipment.

In this meeting, we expect to consolidate the existing relationships between member countries further in order to generate common interests in protecting workers and seeking solutions to improve workplace safety in OIC Member 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 Network 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 we are all aware, the world of work is changing rapidly due to globalization, demographic trends as well as technological and organizational innovation and the issue of occupational health and safety has been on the agenda of many countries in the world more than half a century. It is a fact that, in a time of multinational corporations and interconnected economies, global approaches to promoting and maintaining the highest degree of physical, mental and social well-being of workers in all occupations, preventing of workers in their employment from risks resulting factors adverse to health and improving workplace safety and health are not only better for workers; they also reduce barriers to trade among nations and promote economic growth.

Stating the importance of well-being of employees hundreds of years ago, The Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings be upon him), said that “Do not burden your employees with what overpowers them. If you do so, then help them” and advised to humanity “to consider their employees as their brothers”. Especially, in the era of new technologies, changing work patterns, and knowledge-based and service economies, occupational health and safety is in front-page on the agenda of many countries; and over the last decade we have seen significant progress in the prevention of work accidents in developed and also emerging economies. These progresses include the attempts to improve the effective prevention structures, to eliminate occupational hazards through measures such as process automation and the replacement of dangerous substances, to introduce new safety and health standards and to better enforce legal provisions and guidance through labor inspections.

In this regard, OIC-OSHNET targets to establish an international network for systematic sharing of information and experience in occupational safety and health issues among professionals, to build public awareness of occupational safety and health in OIC Member Countries, as well as to improve the quality of the service in this area. In other words, OIC-OSHNET not only aims to provide a platform to discuss the ways and means of effective collaboration towards understanding of the current situation at the country and regional level, but also expands the culture of prevention and thus occupational safety and health.

Distinguished Delegates,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

As you may recall, in line with the recommendations adopted during the Cooperation Project in Ankara in May 2010, and in continuation to the efforts already exerted in the area of occupational safety and health, SESRIC proposed to establish an OIC Network for Occupational Safety and Health (OIC-OSHNET) among similar local, national and regional institutions operating in public and civil domain, in the OIC Member Countries. The proposal has been widely welcomed by member countries and OIC-OSHNET was kicked off with a meeting, jointly organized by SESRIC and Directorate General of Occupational Health and Safety in Ankara, Turkey, on 16-17 May 2011.

With the guidance of member countries and continuing support and involvement of the National Focal Points of the Network, since then, SESRIC has worked towards the successful implementation of the various projects under the framework of OIC-OSHNET. To this end, I am very proud to say that, successful projects have already been accomplished and have become full-fledged programmes such as OIC Capacity Building Programme for Occupational Safety and Health (OSHCaB).

In the second quarter of the 2011, the Centre organized the Kick-off Meeting of OIC Occupational Safety and Health Network (OIC-OSHNET), where experts and directors of occupational health and safety from 15 OIC Member Countries have participated in the workshop 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 Centre has further established the OSHNET Portal in line with the recommendations taken during Kick-off Meeting of OIC-OSHNET in order to facilitate the systematic sharing of information and experience in occupational safety and health issues among professionals as well as to increase the effectiveness of the OIC-OSHNET Programme. The Centre has respectively organized the follow-up meeting of OIC Occupational Safety and Health Network (OIC-OSHNET) on 14 September 2011 during the World Congress on Safety and Health at Work. The meeting reviewed the progress since the kick-off Meeting of the OIC-OSHNET, including the Draft Terms of Reference of the Network and discussed some potential collaboration opportunities.

Distinguished Delegates,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

We have also organized the Meeting of Labor Ministers of OIC Member Countries in collaboration with OIC General Secretariat and Ministry of Labor and Social Security of the Republic of Turkey on September 10, 2011 in Istanbul, Turkey on the side-lines of the XIX World Congress on Safety and Health at Work. The Ministerial Meeting has provided a platform for the Labor Ministers of the OIC Member States for the first time to come together and discuss the issues of common concern in their countries.

Moreover, within the framework of OIC-OSHNET, the Centre was organized a symposium on 'International Partnership in OSH Training' in cooperation with Directorate General of Occupational Health and Safety (DGOHS) during the XIX World Congress. Speakers to the symposium included experts from International Labor Organization (ILO), public sector, private companies, and some OSH organizations around the world. The Symposium took place with the participation of experts and directors of occupational health and safety, besides deputy secretaries of Ministries of Labor from 15 OIC Member Countries.

I would like to express here that our Centre were invited to the 26th Occupational Safety and Health Week of the Republic of Turkey and were awarded the plaque of appreciation by Turkish

Centre for Occupational Health and Safety (DGOHS) to acknowledge SESRIC's efforts in organizing various meetings on the side-lines of the XIX World Congress on Safety and Health at Work.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Within the framework of Occupational Safety and Health Capacity Building (OSHCaB) Programme, which has been initiated in early 2010 to address the outstanding needs and ways for improving workplace safety and health in OIC member countries, we are currently organizing short-term occupational health and safety training programmes according to the needs and capacities of the occupational health and safety institutions in the member countries. So far, we have organized 5 capacity building programmes in Malaysia, Oman, Brunei, Pakistan and Turkey in different subjects. And in the upcoming period, we are planning to organize training programmes in Albania, Bangladesh, Yemen and other member countries who have responded our questionnaire.

These are some of the accomplishments that were realized under the OIC-OSHNET Programme since our last meeting. I would like to express that this Second Meeting would present us with an invaluable platform to discuss further how to improve our existing programmes, besides identifying new potential areas for further collaboration. We will share our experiences and our recommendations for reaching the better. We believe that through close cooperation and networking among member countries, this Network 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 Network, support of the Member Countries and National Focal Points are the two main assets of this Network. 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 Islamic world. 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 Barakatuh