

Opening Statement of Prof Savas Alpay, Director General of SESRIC

**15-17 April 2013
Tehran, Islamic Republic of Iran**

Bismillahi Ar-Rahmanir-Raheem,

Your Excellency Mr Abu Torabi,

Your Excellency Dr Hassan Ghashghavi,

Your Excellency Dr Nazemi Ardakani,

Distinguished Representatives of the National Organisations for Civil Registration (NOCR) of OIC Member Countries, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Assalamu Alaikum wa Rahmatullahi wa Barakatuhu,

It gives me a great honour to address this august gathering on the occasion of the First Meeting of the Heads and Seniors of National Organisations for Civil Registration (NOCR) of Member States of the OIC, which we have the honour, to organise it jointly with the National Organisation for Civil Registration (NOCR) of the Islamic Republic of Iran and the Islamic Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (ISESCO).

Before I go into the aim and expected outcome of this meeting, I would like to make use of this unique opportunity to dwell, very briefly, on our Centre and its main activities. The Statistical, Economic and Social Research and Training Centre for Islamic Countries (SESRIC) is a subsidiary organ of the OIC operating in Ankara, Turkey, since 1978 as the economic research arm, statistics centre and training organ of the OIC. The Centre has been engaged in statistical data collection, collation and dissemination on and for the member countries, undertaking the preparation of research papers, reports and studies on various economic cooperation and development issues, organising of training programmes on subjects of immediate interest to the member countries, triggering technical cooperation among various partners from member countries, and putting out periodic and other publications in its areas of mandate.

SESRIC's Vocational Education and Training Programme for OIC Member Countries (abbreviated OIC-VET) launched in 2008, aims 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 the Member Countries to develop their knowledge and skills and thus to contribute to the development and competitiveness of the economies and to facilitate the sharing of knowledge between OIC Member Countries. Under OIC-VET, SESRIC has 15 Capacity Building Programmes (CaB) in the field of statistics, agriculture, environment, health, economy, information and communication, poverty alleviation and several initiatives in the field of tobacco, skill development and e-government. Since its inception in 2008, we initiated programmes and projects in the fields of immediate interest of OIC Member Countries, and based on the observed demand for initiating cooperation among civil registration institutions, we decided that it would be beneficial to bring together the authorities responsible for civil registration for the first time in OIC history.

Distinguished participants,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The civil registration system is important in two aspects; it serves as a basic data source for vital statistics and provides legal documents related to individuals' identity. Countries need to know number of population by age groups in each level of administrative units for planning further investments on health and education services as well as infrastructure development. At present, in many countries most of the population related statistics, like population by age groups, migration, marriages, divorces, deaths, births etc. are derived from the civil registration systems according to their legal requirements.

In this respect, it is one of the most important issues of concern to the OIC and its Member Countries. It is widely known that establishment of a well-functioning civil registration system will take several years and it is one of the bigger investments in regard with the information infrastructure of a country. Thus, in designing a civil registration system, its relation to other registry systems like human settlement, education, health and labour market need to be taken into account in order to establish an integrated registration system from which information of socio-economic structure could be derived.

"E-government applications", of which the civil registration system constitutes backbone, were also one of the thematic proposals prioritized in SESRIC's 2007 questionnaire on the possible themes of future exchange of views sessions of The Standing Committee for Economic and Commercial Cooperation of the Organization of the Islamic Cooperation

(COMCEC). The 24th Follow-up Committee of the COMCEC decided that "e-government applications and their economic impact on the OIC Member Countries" be included to the agenda of the 24th Session of the COMCEC. Based on the Resolution No. 68 adopted at the 25th Session of the COMCEC, SESRIC co-organised the "International Conference on eGovernment: Sharing Experiences" (eGOVshare2009) in 2009 in Antalya, Turkey. Also based on the same Resolution No. 68, the "OIC e-Government Working Group" (OIC eGovWG) was established with the purpose of focusing on fundamental areas such as priority setting, experience sharing, capacity building. "The First Meeting of the OIC eGovWG" was held in July 2011 in Ankara, Republic of Turkey which focused on cooperation and collaboration.

Alongside of the initiatives that I mentioned earlier, we have some other important initiatives in the field of statistics. Based on the Istanbul Declaration of the 2010 Meeting of the National Statistical Organisations (NSO), Member States of the OIC agreed to organise their annual meetings under the umbrella of OIC Statistical Commission. SESRIC convenes OIC Member Countries every year with an aim to create a platform for exchanging experiences and best practices among Member Countries to build effective statistical capacity building at the OIC level.

In addition to the OIC-StatCom Meetings, SESRIC and IDB co-organized the "Seminar on Population and Housing Census Practices of OIC Member Countries" on 6-8 March 2013 in Ankara, Turkey. We hosted the representatives of seventeen OIC Member Countries and three international organisations. The objective of the Seminar was to define the structure of a profile including relevant phases of censuses and to compile the different country experiences and practices from OIC Member Countries in accordance with the Resolutions of the Second Session of OIC-StatCom.

Distinguished participants,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Given the fact that the population of the OIC is around 1.5 billion as of 2011 and civil circulation of population among OIC Member Countries is rising gradually, it is obvious that, seeking cooperation between civil registration institutions has gained vital importance in the context of migration, asylum and social security in the past decades. In this respect, this meeting will inshAllah be an important inception of this cooperation and coordination among

civil registration institutions of OIC Member Countries. I believe that, with a healthy establishment of the civil registration system in the OIC, we will be experiencing good governance in all levels of state administration and citizenship services including national ID card systems, tax administration services, national social security, passport services, statistical institutes, healthcare organisations and customs and thus this will pave the way for free movement of people in the OIC Member Countries.

Distinguished participants,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

SESRIC, with its vast experience in initiating cooperation and collaboration, will support cooperation among civil registration institutions especially through its capacity building programmes and will also coordinate civil registration institutions in regard with the implementation of the outcomes of this meeting.

Finally, I would like to thank all the delegates of the civil registration institutions of the OIC Member States for accepting our invitation and designating time to attend here. I would also like to thank the National Organisation for Civil Registration of the Ministry of Interior of the Islamic Republic of Iran to host this important meeting. May Allah (Subhanahu wa ta'ala) bestow his mercy on the undertakings of this meeting.

Wassalamu Alaykum we Rahmatullahi we Barakatuhu