



Welcoming Address

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Your Excellency the Chairman of OIC-STATCOM
Your Excellency Director General, SESRIC
Distinguished Guests
Ladies and Gentlemen

Assalaam 'alaikum warahmatullahi wabarakatuhu

On behalf of your institution, the Islamic Development Bank Group, I wish to welcome you all to the 3rd OIC Statistical Commission meeting. Let me start my thanking SESRIC for hosting this important meeting and for their excellent preparation and generous hospitality extended to us since arriving in this great and beautiful city, Ankara, the Republic of Turkey.

As of today, the world economy is still clouded in uncertainty. The financial crisis of 2008/2009 with epicenter in the US and the subsequent sovereign debt crisis in Euro area are threat to the economies of many member countries. The impacts of these crises are felt through three transmission channels: growth, trade and capital flows (principally ODA, remittances, and FDI). The human cost of the crisis is huge: unemployment especially among the youth has taken heavy toll on the lives of citizens as youth dependent ratio increased remarkably. As donor countries implement austerity measures, aid needed to finance key economic sectors in member countries continued to shrink, thereby worsening the socio-economic situation of aid-dependent member countries.

In today's world, the challenges facing member countries are numerous, diverse, and vary from one country or region to another. Poverty, instability/conflict, disease, unemployment, illiteracy, climate change, and youth bulge are some of the challenges that need urgent attention. We need to study these challenges to find solutions to them. We need indicators to quantify and measure progress of member countries on these development issues. We need composite indices and appropriate statistical methods to benchmark and compare countries' performance.

The role of national statistical offices (NSOs) and international and regional institutions is crucial in this regard. The NSOs are pivotal to compilation,

construction, and collection of datasets, disseminating credible and timely data to the public (locally and internationally), and providing independent statistical services to support government program, among others. To do this successfully, the NSOs need to be supported with adequate man power and financial resources. Not all NSOs in member countries are adequately staffed with the right budget. Thus, international and regional institutions should step in to finance statistical capacity building of countries with weak national statistical system.

At IDB, this is exactly what we do. We set up a STATCAP initiative in 2007 which offers scholarship for NSOs staff to pursue Master's degree in priority areas to fill skills gap as well as finance soft and hard statistical infrastructure. Between 2007 and 2012, over \$2 million have been spent in statistical projects in various member countries as a result of the initiative, and more than 10 students have so far benefitted from the scholarship component of the initiative. We are working on restructuring the initiative to address NSOs concerns and needs.

Let me take this opportunity to inform and remind the eleven NSOs in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) who are eligible to apply for DfID fund, managed by IDB, to do so by June this year. Invitation to bid for the fund has been sent to the heads of the NSOs concerned. I appeal to these NSOs to come forward with concrete statistical projects for funding.

At this juncture, I would like to commend the good work of and the progress made by the technical committees of experts set up as a result of recommendations of the OIC-STATCOM-II. It is encouraging to note that the issues discussed by these committees are NSOs-led and NSOs-owned.

In conclusion, I would like to mention the need for us to embrace big data and open data initiatives. At IDB, we are exploring the possibility of launching a Data Portal and Open Data initiative which will need your support. I wish you all successful deliberations in the next two days and I am confident that the OIC-STATCOM will continue to be a platform to address statistical issues at the level of OIC.

Thank you and God bless.