

Bismillahirrahmanirrahim

Distinguished Participants,

Assalamu Alaikum wa Rahmatullah wa Barakatuh,

It is a great pleasure for me to address the Third Meeting of the Statistical Working Group, which I would like to express my thanks and appreciation to the Islamic Development Bank for organising it and for the warm hospitality they have offered to the participants.

As we all know, the accurate, timely, reliable and consistent statistical data and information is of an utmost importance for policymaking and strategy development in any country. The role of the National Statistical Organisations (NSOs) in preparing and making such statistical data available is highly instrumental in helping the decision-makers develop and design prudent socio-economic development policies and strategies.

In this context, the NSOs of the member countries of the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC) have widely different capacities; some of the member countries have very high quality and cutting-edge operational capacities, but some others, particularly the least-developed members, are lacking the necessary technical and human capacities for producing statistical data in accordance with the relevant internationally-accepted statistical standards. The development of concrete and coherent National Strategies for the Development of Statistics (NSDS) should, therefore, be given special attention. The NSDS should be designed based on an adequate framework for building and sustaining the national statistical capacities of the NSOs to enable them to produce and analyse national statistics for better development policies and strategies in the country.

For this reason, the Statistical, Economic and Social Research and Training Centre for Islamic Countries (SESERIC), gives special importance to the development of NSDS in OIC member countries. In this respect, the Centre reviewed the current situation in the OIC member countries regarding the NSDS. Based on this review, there is an attempt to shed light on the major needs and capacities of the NSOs of the OIC member countries.

The “*National Strategies for the Development of Statistics Progress Report*” of PARIS21 presents the status of National Strategies for the Development of Statistics (NSDS) in 79 countries in different regions around the world. Among these countries, 45 are member countries of the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC). In addition, the *World Bank Bulletin Board on Statistical Capacity* provides the similar information for Kazakhstan and Turkey, and, finally, Qatar presents the status of its NSDS at the web site of *Statistics Authority*.

Accordingly, we can say that, currently, we have relevant information on the status of the NSDS in 48 OIC member countries, 30 of these countries (i.e. 62.5% of the total) are currently implementing a strategy; 4 countries (8.3% of the total) are currently designing a strategy or awaiting adoption; 13 countries (27.1% of the total) have expired strategies or without strategy but currently planning strategies, and only one country (2.1% of the total) is found to be without a strategy and nor planning one.

On the other hand, it is possible to find information on the partner countries and/or institutions that supported statistics either financially or non-financially in the countries in years 2009 and 2010. This information is available at the “country activities” page in the web site of PARIS21, which except Turkey, the list of the partner countries does not include other OIC member countries. This does not mean that the other OIC member countries do not support each other but rather it means that they do not report their activities to PARIS21. For this reason, I believe that in order to show the intra-OIC cooperation to the world, OIC member countries should also report on their supports to each other to PARIS21.

In another related issue, the World Bank has been preparing and publishing a Statistical Capacity Index since 2004. This index is available for 46 OIC member countries. Based on this index, the 46 OIC member countries, for which the index is available, are classified accordingly. Given the distribution of countries in terms of their performance there is a potential for designing Coaching Programmes. Finally, instead of depending on the statistical capacity index developed by the World Bank, a specific statistical capacity index for the OIC member countries can be developed.

Distinguished Participants,

I would like to inform you about the OIC Statistical Capacity Building (StatCaB) Programme for the NSOs of the member countries. It is a long-term training programme and large scale capacity development project designed, steered, and fully funded by SESRIC. This program is essentially a twinning program whereby the countries are matched according to their needs and capacities. It involves collecting information from the NSOs of the OIC member countries, assessing the needs and capacities of the member countries, matching these needs and capacities through organising short-term training programs, courses or workshops, evaluating the outcomes and impacts of the training, and disseminating the activities.

So far, the Centre organised training courses in many NSOs of OIC Member Countries in different regions, where hundreds of NSO staff have benefited from these courses during the period 2007-2010. In this context, we would be very pleased to partner with the other members of the Statistical Working Group to expand this programme to larger number of OIC member countries.

In addition to capacity building activities, SESRIC also facilitates building of platforms to enhance cooperation among the NSOs of the OIC member countries. In this regard, SESRIC organizes two important series of meetings annually. The first one is a side event of the sessions of the United Nations Statistical Commission, which are held in New York annually. Secondly, SESRIC organizes the sessions of OIC Statistical Commission (OIC-SC) annually in collaboration with the Islamic Development Bank (IDB). In these meetings, the NSOs of the OIC member countries find an opportunity to exchange views and to seek mechanisms to enhance their cooperation on statistical activities. In this context, I encourage and call upon the NSOs of the all OIC member countries to actively participate in these two important annual meetings.

The Statistical Working Group is an important platform initiated by SESRIC and IDB with the aim of harmonizing statistical activities, exchanging experiences and best practices, and developing common methodologies for collecting and processing data.

SESRIC reports on the activities of this working group to the Ministerial Session of the COMCEC, thereby facilitating a higher awareness for enhancing national statistical systems in the OIC member countries. In this connection, I would like to make use of this opportunity to propose convening the future meetings of the Statistical Working Group at the same time with the sessions of the OIC Statistical Commission in order to have higher participation from the NSOs of the OIC member countries. This will facilitate higher involvement of the NSOs in the SWG activities and make the SWG meetings more effective and fruitful.

In concluding, I wish all the success to this Meeting, and may Allah SWT bestow his mercy on the undertakings of this Group.

Assalamu alaikum wa rahmatullahi wa barakatuhu