

H.E Dr. Savas Alpay, the Director General of SESRIC
Special Guest of Honour
Distinguished Participants
Ladies and Gentlemen

Assalamu 'Alaikum Warahmatullah Wabarakatuhu

It gives me a great honour and privilege, on behalf of the Islamic Development Bank (IDB), to express our thanks and appreciation to SESRIC for hosting this important First Session of the OIC Statistical Commission (SC) in this great city of Istanbul, Turkey.

In today's world, demand for quality statistics on indicators of countries worldwide for the purpose of monitoring the performance and progress of development goals and initiatives has increased considerably. Unfortunately, the National Statistical Offices (NSOs) which are expected to supply the quality statistics are at different levels of development with diverse challenges which vary from country to country.

At OIC level, several efforts have been made to bring NSOs together and address the challenges facing them especially in the area of data collection, data processing and data dissemination. These efforts have culminated in organizing meetings and side-meetings at major international forums and events. For instance, as recent as February 2011, SESRIC organized the meeting of the NSOs of OIC member countries during the UN Statistical Commission in New York as well as hosted the meeting of NSOs of OIC member countries in this hotel in 2010. Late last year, the IDB also hosted the 3rd meeting of OIC Statistical Working Group (SWG) whose aim is to strengthen coordination, cooperation, collaboration and harmonisation of statistical activities among OIC institutions. In addition to these meetings, there have been many other high-profile regional gatherings organized by NSOs such as Qatar Statistics Authority, etc.

In our view, there is urgent need to have an apex statistical body in which statistical-related issues unique to OIC member countries can be discussed and

decision taken vis-a-vis international standards. Accordingly, we believe that the establishment of OIC-Statistical Commission (OIC-StatCom) is long overdue for many reasons. First, OIC member countries together form the 2nd largest organisation in the world after the United Nations making it necessary to have a platform for discussing critical issues pertaining to all aspects of statistics. Second, the Commission will enable member countries to exchange ideas and knowledge, share best practices, and coordinate statistical activities at OIC level.

IDB welcomes the establishment of the OIC-StatCom and looks forward to it becoming the highest decision-making body for overseeing and setting direction for OIC-level statistical activities. We call on NSOs of OIC member countries as well as OIC institutions to work together and make it a reality.

It is our hope that in the next 2 days, we would be able to define the goals, objectives and modus operandi of the OIC-StatCom as well as establish various working groups to focus on different sectors and themes relevant to OIC initiatives such as Trade, Poverty, Climate Change, Zakat, Awqaf, Islamic banks and financial institutions including Microfinance Institutions etc..

We wish you success and productive deliberations.

Thank you and God bless you all!

Wassalam 'alaikum warahmatullahi wabarakatuh