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The Eighteenth Session of the COMCEC, held on 22-25 October 2002, decided that the theme of the Exchange of Views during its Nineteenth Session would be “Impact of Electronic Commerce and Use of Information Technology on the Promotion and Development of Intra-OIC Trade”. It requested the related OIC organs, including the Ankara Centre, to collaborate with the relevant OIC institutions in organising a workshop on the subject, which the Government of Tunisia offered to host.

In compliance with the said assignment, the Ankara Centre participated in the preparatory meetings, initially held in Tunis on 20-21 February 2003 and, subsequently, in Casablanca on 6-7 May 2003. The latter particularly discussed the preparations relating to the organisational arrangements and work programme of the Workshop. Consequently, the Workshop was held in Tunis on 10-12 June 2003. Delegations from the member countries, the OIC institutions and the International Trade Centre (ITC) participated in the Workshop.

Mr. Murat Ilkin, Researcher, represented the Ankara Centre at the Workshop and made a presentation on “Impact of Electronic Commerce and Use of Information Technology on Promotion and Development of Intra-OIC Trade”. The Centre’s study determines, first and foremost, the level of information technology (IT) infrastructure in the OIC countries, then, focuses on the

prospects of intra-OIC trade through the development of e-commerce and related capacities, and, finally, makes policy recommendations to promote intra-OIC trade through e-commerce. In realisation of the said study, the Centre has circulated, in January 2003, a questionnaire among the member countries to obtain the necessary data on the subject directly from the primary information sources.

In the Workshop, the participants mainly discussed current problems faced by OIC countries in the promotion of Intra-OIC trade, particularly in areas related to e-commerce and the use of information technology. The lack of appropriate

telecommunication infrastructure, legal and financial frameworks for e-commerce and private sector cooperation with the government in the area have been identified as problems that need to be dealt with by the OIC countries to achieve better progress in promoting intra-OIC trade.

In conclusion, the participants agreed on a set of recommendations which will be submitted to the Exchange of Views Session of the Nineteenth COMCEC, to be convened in 20-23 October 2003. The participants agreed that these recommendations would provide a fruitful atmosphere to enhance the role of e-commerce in promoting intra-OIC trade.

OIC NEWS

THE 30th SESSION OF THE ISLAMIC CONFERENCE OF FOREIGN MINISTERS APPROVES THE BUDGET AND WORK PROGRAMME OF THE CENTRE FOR 2003/2004

The 30th Session of the Islamic Conference of Foreign Ministers, Session of Unity and Dignity, was held in Tehran, Islamic Republic of Iran, on 28-30 May 2003. The member countries of the OIC and the countries with observer status attended the Session. The subsidiary, specialised and affiliated institutions of the OIC as well as some international and regional organisations and Islamic universities, foundations and societies were also present. The Centre was represented by H. E. Ambassador Erdiñ Erdün, Director General, Mr. Oker Gürler, Coordinator of Technical Activities and Director of Economic and Social Research Department, and Mr. Jalel Chouchane, Coordinator of Administrative and Financial Affairs and Director of Publication Department.

The Conference was opened by H. E. Seyed Mohammad Khatami, President of the

Islamic Republic of Iran. Among the

speakers at the Conference were H.E. the Foreign Minister of the State of Qatar, being the Chairman of the Ninth Islamic Summit, H.E. the Foreign Minister of the Republic of the Sudan, being the Chairman of the 29th Session of the ICFM, H.E. the Secretary General of the League of Arab States, H.E. the Secretary General of the Organisation of African Unity (OAU), and H.E. the Secretary General of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC). They commended the role played by the OIC and reaffirmed the determination of their organisations to boost and develop cooperation with it.

The OIC Secretary General, H.E. Dr. Abdelouhed Belkeziz gave a speech in which he reported on the implementation of the political, economic and cultural resolutions of the 29th ICFM.

The Conference was chaired by H.E. Dr. Seyed Kamal Kharrazi, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Islamic Republic of Iran.

Following the adoption of the Agenda, the Conference continued to discuss its respective agenda items in the plenary and in committees on Political Affairs, Economic and Social Affairs, Cultural and Islamic Affairs, and Administrative and Financial Affairs.

Reviewing the activities of the OIC in the economic field, the Economic and Social Affairs Committee adopted a number of resolutions for strengthening economic and commercial cooperation amongst the OIC member countries.

The Administrative and Financial Affairs Committee took up the Report of the 31st Session of the Permanent Finance Committee, the Report of the 23rd Session

of the Finance Control Organ on the Final Accounts of the General Secretariat and the Subsidiary Organs for the Financial Year ending on 30 June 2002, and the proposed budgets for the Financial Year 2003/2004. After deliberations, the Committee adopted the above-mentioned Reports and the recommendations contained therein, including the SESRTCIC budget for the Financial Year

2003/2004 and its final accounts for the Financial Year 2001/2002.

At the Closing Session, the Conference adopted its Final Communiqué and the resolutions drafted by the said Committees, and agreed to hold the 31st Session of the ICFM in Istanbul, Turkey.

TRADE EXPANSION BETWEEN THE OIC MEMBER STATES OF NORTH AND WEST AFRICA

Within the framework of policies aiming at implementing practical and operational activities in promoting trade and investment between the OIC Member States, the Islamic Centre for the Development of Trade (ICDT), a subsidiary organ of the OIC, and the Islamic Development Bank (IDB), a specialised institution of the OIC, organised a forum on “Stimulation of Trade between the OIC Member States of North and West Africa”, on 17-18 April 2003 in Casablanca, Kingdom of Morocco.

Among the participants were the Assistant Secretary-General of the OIC, delegations from 14 OIC countries, OIC Institutions and some regional and international organisations.

H.E. Ambassador Erdinç Erdün, the Director General, represented the SESRTCIC at the forum.

The Forum was opened by Mr. M. Mechahouri, Minister of Foreign Trade of Kingdom of Morocco. H.E. Ambassador Nabika Diallo, Assistant Secretary General of the OIC, also delivered a speech at the Opening Session.

The program of this event consisted of two parts: a seminar which presented an overview of the individual and national experiences in terms of trade and partnership between the two regions, and bilateral meetings between the participants.

The discussions revealed that energy products and other primary products such as wood, raw skins and leather, and food products represent approximately 60% of the volume of trade; while manufactured products, composed mainly of textiles, clothing, chemicals and drugs, represent the remaining portion, i.e. 40%.

The Forum recommended to invite the OIC member countries to implement the Framework Agreement on Trade Preferential System Among the OIC Member States (TPS/OIC) and other agreements adopted by the OIC, to encourage the establishment of a free trade zone between North and West African OIC Member States; to set up a follow-up committee composed of the ICDT, the IDB and the host country; and to organise this forum biannually, alternatively in the two regions.

NINETEENTH MEETING OF THE FOLLOW-UP COMMITTEE OF THE COMCEC

The Nineteenth Meeting of the Follow-Up Committee of the COMCEC was held in Istanbul, Turkey, on 12-14 May 2003. The

Meeting was inaugurated by H.E. Prof. Dr. Mehmet Aydın, Minister of State of the Republic of Turkey, after which the message of H.E. Ahmet Necdet Sezer.

President of the Republic of Turkey and Chairman of the COMCEC, was delivered by the representative of the Presidency. This message was followed by the speech of H.E. Prof. Dr. Mehmet Aydın, upon which H.E. Ambassador Nabika Diallo, the OIC Assistant Secretary General for Economic Affairs, delivered the message of the OIC Secretary General H.E. Dr. Abdelouahed Belkezziz.

H.E. Ambassador Erdiñ Erdün, the Director General, Mr. Oker Gürler, Coordinator of Technical Activities and Director of Economic and Social Research Department, and Mr. Kamuran Malatyali, Senior Economist, represented the Centre at the Meeting.

The Meeting was chaired by H.E. Dr. Ahmet Tıktık, Undersecretary of the State Planning Organisation of Turkey.

Upon adoption of the Agenda, the Background Report of the OIC General Secretariat was introduced by H.E. Ambassador Nabika Diallo in which he highlighted the various activities undertaken by the Member States and the OIC institutions towards the implementation of the resolutions of the COMCEC. Following his address, representatives of the OIC

institutions made presentations about their activities.

After deliberations, the Committee called upon the Member States to communicate their views on the proposed Supplementary Mechanism for the implementation of the OIC Plan of Action to the COMCEC Coordination Office (CCO) by 15th July 2003 at the latest.

Acknowledging the efforts made by the CCO and the ICDT in the preparations for launching the first round of trade negotiations under TPS/OIC Agreement, the Committee requested the two institutions to finalise the technical documents relating to the launching of the first round of trade negotiations in cooperation with the OIC General Secretariat and circulate them to the Member States.

While discussing the Preparations for the Exchange of Views on the “Impact of Electronic Commerce and Use of Information Technology on the Promotion and Development of Intra-OIC Trade”, the representatives of the ICDT, SESRTCIC and IUT briefed the Committee on the preparations for the Workshop on the subject. The Committee noted that the ICDT would submit a report on the Workshop to the Nineteenth Session of COMCEC.

The Committee also considered and approved the Draft Agenda of the Nineteenth Session of the COMCEC, to be held in Istanbul on 20-23 October 2003.

CENTRE'S AGENDA FOR THE THIRD QUARTER OF 2003

SEPTEMBER

8-12 September 2003, Expert Group Meeting on “Plant, Animal and Human Nutrition” Damascus, Syria.

OTHER MEETINGS

NEW DIRECTIONS FOR TECHNICAL COOPERATION AMONG DEVELOPING COUNTRIES DISCUSSED

The Thirteenth Session of the High-Level Committee on the Review of Technical Cooperation Among Developing Countries was held at United Nations Headquarters, New York, on 27-30 May 2003 under the auspices of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP).

Representatives of the member countries of the UNDP, G-77 and China, European Union (EU), various UN agencies and concerned regional and international organisations participated in the Meeting.

Representatives of the G-77, EU, Rio Group, OIC, some of the countries that attended the Meeting, UN agencies and international organisations took the floor and delivered speeches stating their views on the Buenos Aires Plan of Action as well as the importance of South-south cooperation and possible modalities of enhancing technical cooperation among developing countries.

Mr. Enver Hakan Konac, Acting Director of the Centre's Technical Cooperation

Department, represented the Centre at the Meeting and delivered a speech in which he stated that the Centre was the focal point for technical cooperation between the OIC institutions and UN agencies, gave a brief perspective of the Centre's technical cooperation strategies, and emphasized the importance of technical cooperation between the OIC institutions and the UNDP. SESRTCIC also submitted to the meeting secretariat a detailed information note on its technical cooperation tasks and activities, for circulation to the attendees.

The Meeting provided an opportunity for reviewing the progress made in the implementation of the Buenos Aires Plan of Action and the New Directions for Technical Cooperation Among Developing Countries. The overall framework for the promotion and application of technical cooperation among developing countries was also drawn in the meeting. The Provisional Agenda of the Fourteenth Session of the High-level Committee was also set during the meeting.

ANKARA CENTRE PUBLICATIONS

Latest Publications

InfoReport, vol. 15 issue no. 53, Arabic, English and French editions.

Journal of Economic Cooperation Among Islamic Countries, English, vol. 24, issue no. 2, 2003.

Technical Documents

Impact of E-Commerce and Use of Information and Communications Technology on Promotion and Development of Intra-OIC Trade.

WHAT'S NEW IN THE CENTRE LIBRARY

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WORLD BANK POLICY RESEARCH WORKING PAPERS

PRWP; 2918 (rev.)/Hoekman, B., F. Ng and M. Olarreaga. *Reducing Agricultural Tariffs Versus Domestic Support: What's More Important for Developing Countries?*

PRWP; 2943/Fiess, N. *Capital Flows, Country Risk, and Contagion*.

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