



info REPORT

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≈ UPCOMING EVENTS

ANKARA CENTRE UPDATE

Operational Meeting among the OIC Institutions in the area of Vocational Education and Training Programme for OIC Member States (OIC-VET)

The Statistical, Economic and Social Research and Training Centre for Islamic Countries (SESRIC) has organised an operational meeting with the concerned OIC institutions in the area of vocational education and training. The meeting was held on 4 April 2009 in Jeddah, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia to discuss the monitoring and operational aspects of the implementation of the Vocational Education and Training Programme for the OIC Member States (OIC-VET). Representatives from the General Secretariat of the Organisation of the Islamic Conference, COMCEC Coordination Office, Islamic Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ICCI), Islamic Development Bank (IDB) and Islamic University of Technology (IUT) attended the meeting.

Dr. Savaş Alpay, Director General of the SESRIC, informed the meeting on the background of the OIC-VET Programme and the actions taken so far; and declared that the Programme aims at enhancing cooperation among the OIC Member States in the field of vocational education and training with the view of establishing a common OIC platform for the benefits of the Member States in this area by incorporating their vocational training programmes into the OIC-VET. He also noted that the SESRIC started the necessary communications with the national authorities of the member states to assign their National Focal Points (NFPs) in order to setup the implementation structure of the Programme with a view to initiate the activities necessary for the pilot application under the Transnational Exchange Projects (OIC-TEPs). As a consequence of these communications, 20 Member States have already

nominated their National Focal Points.

Dr. Savaş Alpay continued to stress the possible impact of the Programme on the economic well-being and human development of the Member States and urged the concerned OIC institutions; mainly IDB, IUT, ICCI and ICYF-DC as the members of the Monitoring and Advisory Committee (MAC) of the OIC-VET Programme to render a strong impetus to the Programme by sharing their technical knowledge and expertise with the Member States in a best possible manner. He also mentioned his sincere hope that with the valuable contributions of the concerned OIC institutions, the Programme will achieve tangible results and bring a great success for the Member States in the areas of socio-economic development and cooperation.

Mr. Mehmet Fatih Serenli, Director of Training and Technical Cooperation Department at the SESRIC, has informed the meeting about the preparations for the First Meeting of the Monitoring and Advisory Committee (MAC) scheduled to be held on 13 May 2009 in Izmir, Republic of Turkey on the sideline of the 25th Meeting of the Follow-up Committee of the COMCEC. The nominated National Focal Points of the Member States had been invited to the said meeting and most of them had already confirmed their participation.

The meeting recognised the importance of the Programme, and agreed that it may constitute the basis for intra-OIC cooperation in the area of vocational education and training.

SESRIC Meets with Roll Back Malaria Partnership

Together with the General Secretariat of the Organisation of the Islamic Conference; the Statistical, Economic and Social Research and Training Centre for Islamic Countries (SESRIC) has participated in a meeting on 6 April 2009 with a delegation from Roll Back Malaria Partnership in the OIC headquarters. The delegation comprised of Prof. Awa Marie Coll-Seck, Executive Director; Herve Verhoosel, External Relations Manager, and Nadia

Lasri, Partnership Facilitation Information Manager. The Centre was represented by Dr. Savaş Alpay, Director General of the SESRIC, and Mr. Mehmet Fatih Serenli, Director of Training and Technical Cooperation Department. The purpose of the meeting was to explore the ways and means of possible cooperation between Roll Back Malaria Partnership and OIC institutions.

The SESRIC has informed the delegation members that in line with its mandate of collating, processing and disseminating socio-economic statistics and information on and for the utilisation of the member states, it hosts the most comprehensive database “BASEIND” on the 57 OIC Member States, which also includes a set of 37 indicators on health and health-related fields besides the most recent available data identified and collected on the member states. The SESRIC has already prepared an OIC Outlook on Health Systems and Expenditure in the OIC Member States which draws attention to health systems of OIC member states given the mixed nature and high levels of heterogeneity and divergence in the economic structure and performance of the states.

It was also mentioned that the SESRIC has initiated the recent Ibn Sina Programme for OIC Health Capacity Building to enhance cooperation between the OIC Member States in the field of health, in close cooperation with all related national, regional and international institutions. The main objective of the Programme is to effectively plan and implement short-courses and workshops through matching needs and capacities of the relevant health institutions in the OIC Member States according to the evaluation

of regularly conducted surveys. Ibn Sina Programme pays special attention and concerns towards the improvement of the capacities of Member States in the field of communicable diseases including malaria.

The Kuala Lumpur Declaration, signed by the health ministers of the OIC Member States participated in The First Session of the Islamic Conference of Health Ministers, which was held on 12 – 15 June 2007 in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, notes that communicable diseases such as malaria can lead to significant loss of lives and beget negative impacts on the economy of the OIC Member States; and thus urged the Member States to intensify their cooperation with the World Health Organisation and other international organisations to combat global health concerns including malaria. The same Session adopted the Resolution No. 3 on Combating Malaria in the OIC.

The Second Session of the Islamic Conference of Health Ministers, which was held on 1-4 March 2009 in Tehran, the Islamic Republic of Iran, invited the OIC Member States with epidemiological expertise and capacities to cooperate in malaria elimination programs with other OIC Member States and encouraged mobilizing assistance from the WHO and the Global Fund.

Training Course on “Payment Systems” at Qatar Central Bank

The SESRIC organised a training course on “Payment Systems” at the Central Bank of the State of Qatar on 26 – 28 April 2009. The course was provided by Ms. Nesrin İlhan, expert from the Central Bank of the Republic of Turkey and was attended by 13 staff members of the Central Bank of the State of Qatar.

The training course on “Payment Systems” mainly covered the following subjects:

- ▶ General overview of the Central Bank of the Republic of Turkey
- ▶ Payment System in Turkey
 - ▶ Legal Basis
 - ▶ Turkish Interbank Clearing-Real Time Gross Settlement System (TIC-RTGS)
 - ▶ Business objectives of TIC-RTGS
 - ▶ Structure of the System
 - ▶ Facilities of TIC-RTGS
 - ▶ Backup centre
 - ▶ Integration with TIC-ESTS
 - ▶ Queuing mechanism
 - ▶ Other issues

- ▶ Risk and Oversight
 - ▶ Risk and measures in TIC-RTGS
 - ▶ Oversight
- ▶ Turkish Interbank Clearing-Electronic Security Transfer and Settlement System (TIC-ESTS)
 - ▶ Business objectives of TIC-ESTS
 - ▶ Properties of TIC-ESTS
 - ▶ Operations of the TIC-ESTS
- ▶ A day in TIC-RTGS/ESTS
 - ▶ Phases of the business day
 - ▶ Tasks of the Electronic Payments Division
- ▶ Change Strategy and Plans
 - ▶ Establishment of Retail Payment System
 - ▶ TIC-RTGS/ESTS 3rd generation

At the end of the training, all participants expressed their satisfaction with the program. The participants also appreciated the training they received as a good example of technical cooperation among the OIC Member States.

SESRIC Co-Organises the 1st Meeting of OIC Development and Cooperation Institutions

The First Meeting of the Development and Cooperation Institutions of OIC Member States was held in İstanbul on 13 – 14 May 2009. The meeting was organised by the Organisation of the Islamic Conference (OIC) General Secretariat, the Statistical, Economic and Social Research and Training Centre for Islamic Countries (SESRIC), and the Turkish International Cooperation and Development Agency (TİKA). Ministers from 4 OIC Member States, representatives from 11 OIC Member States and representatives of the OIC General Secretariat, the Islamic Development Bank (IDB), SESRIC, and TİKA also participated the Meeting.

The Meeting was inaugurated by speeches from H.E. Mr. Musa Kulaklıkaya, President, Turkish International Cooperation and Development Agency (TİKA); H.E. Dr. Savaş Alpay, Director General, Statistical, Economic and Social Research and Training Centre for Islamic Countries (SESRIC); H.E. Dr. Ahmad Mohamed Ali, President, Islamic Development Bank (IDB); H.E. Prof. Ekmeleddin İhsanoğlu, Secretary General, Organisation of the Islamic Conference (OIC); H.E. Dr. Khalid bin Muhammad Al-Attiya, State Minister for International Cooperation, State of Qatar; H.E. Mr. Mohammad Abbasi, Minister of Cooperatives, Islamic Republic of Iran; H.E. Mr. Asseff Ahmad Ali Sardar, Federal Minister of the Planning Commission, Islamic Republic of Pakistan and H.E. Mr. Faruk Çelik, State Minister, Republic of Turkey.

The first session of the meeting was chaired by H.E. Mr. Cevdet Yılmaz, State Minister of the Republic of Turkey. The theme of this session was “Development Cooperation in the Context of New Global Challenges”. H.E. Mr. Mohammad Abbasi, Minister of Cooperatives, H.E. Mr. Asseff Ahmad Ali Sardar, Federal Minister of the Planning Commission of the Republic of Pakistan, and Mr. Bashir Omar M. Fadlalla, Policy Advisor from the Islamic Development Bank, presented speeches in this session. Discussions followed the speeches of the presenters in which all participations contributed with very valuable comments and experiences.

In the second session of the meeting, chaired by H.E. Dr. Savaş Alpay, Director General of the SESRIC,

representatives of the State of Kuwait, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Malaysia and the Organisation of the Islamic Conference presented speeches on the theme “Development Cooperation in the Context of the OIC-Ten Year Plan of Action”. The participants were also informed about the emergency aid programmes carried out by the OIC General Secretariat.

The third and last session of the meeting, chaired by H.E. Mr. Musa Kulaklıkaya, President of TİKA, focused on the theme “Aid Effectiveness: Joining Hands for Higher Effectiveness and Quality”. Representatives of the Arab Republic of Egypt and the Republic of Tunisia presented valuable speeches about the subject. The representative of Indonesia made a presentation titled “Possible Cooperation” related to cooperation activities among Indonesia and the OIC.

The İstanbul Declaration which was adopted at the end of the Meeting recommended *identifying* joint development cooperation activities among participating institutions, *implementing* joint programmes, projects and activities towards poverty alleviation and sustainable development, *enhancing* the visibility of development assistance provided by OIC Member States and collecting and disseminating the development assistance statistics annually by SESRIC, *establishing* the OIC Development Assistance Committee (OIC-DAC), *forming* an Experts Group to study and prepare strategic and operational guidelines and procedures for the OIC-DAC, *having* the DCI meetings on an annual basis.

The Expert Group is expected to have its first meeting before the end of this year and finalize its report before the 2nd meeting of the DCIs in 2010. The SESRIC will coordinate the work of the Experts Group in collaboration with the OIC General Secretariat and the IDB.

The representatives of Member States that attended the meeting expressed their profound gratitude to the organisers and stated that this meeting was a very good step that could lead to many fruitful results in the socio-economic development process of the OIC.

1st Meeting of the Monitoring and Advisory Committee (MAC) of the Vocational Education and Training Programme for OIC Member States (OIC-VET)

The SESRIC organised the First Meeting of the Monitoring and Advisory Committee (MAC) of the Vocational Education and Training Programme for OIC Member States (OIC-VET) in Izmir, Republic of Turkey on 13 May 2009 on the sideline of the 25th Meeting of the Follow-up Committee of the COMCEC. The Meeting was chaired by Mr. Mehmet Fatih Serenli, Director of Training and Technical Cooperation Department at SESRIC. The main purpose of the Meeting was to discuss, among others, the operational aspects of the OIC-VET Programme and the preparation for the pilot application which was scheduled to start in Fall 2009. The Meeting was attended by delegations from National Focal Points of the OIC Member States, namely Bahrain, Brunei Darussalam, Gabon, Pakistan, Qatar, Senegal, Syria, Tunisia and Turkey. Also present were representatives of the OIC institutions, namely COMCEC, ICCI, IDB, IUT and SESRIC.

In his statement during the opening session, Dr. Savaş Alpay, Director General of the SESRIC, welcomed all distinguished delegates from the Member States, and expressed his deep appreciation and gratitude for their constructive efforts to make this significant Programme materialised for the benefit of their respective states. He stressed upon the fact that this meeting is bringing together, for the first time, the National Focal Points of the OIC-VET Programme. Especially in today's world, where the economies are changing into knowledge based economies, the opportunity presented by this Meeting for exchange and networking between the National Focal Points is of utmost importance. This is indeed a welcome opportunity to underscore the pre-eminent place of cooperation in vocational training as it addresses a very important priority issue within the OIC.

He mentioned that one of the objectives of this Meeting is to establish closer and stronger partnerships among the National Focal Points of the OIC-VET Programme in their efforts in vocational education and training in the OIC Member States. The OIC-VET Programme emphasises the importance of coordination and cooperation among all Member States 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 to

develop their knowledge and skills and thus to contribute to the development and competitiveness of the economies of their countries. While respecting the responsibility of the Member States for the content and implementation of vocational training, the Programme supports and supplements the activities of the OIC Member States, and aims at improving the competencies and skills of the people according to the needs and priorities of labour markets through intra-OIC partnerships at institutional level.

Mr. Abderrahman Beddi, the representative of Islamic Development Bank, appreciated the efforts of the SESRIC for the OIC-VET Programme and ensured that the IDB will spare no efforts to cooperate with the SESRIC in the implementation of the OIC-VET Programme in the OIC Member States. He also gave an overview of the Islamic Solidarity Fund (ISDF) through which the IDB has initiated a vocational training and poverty alleviation programme especially for the least developed OIC Member States.

The Meeting discussed the Draft Terms of Reference of the OIC-VET Programme and formally established the Monitoring and Advisory Committee (MAC) under the authority and guidance of the COMCEC. The Resolution No. 1 that was adopted by the 24th Session of the COMCEC, held in İstanbul on 20 - 24 October 2008, decided that the membership comprises representatives from the National Focal Points of the OIC Member States and the concerned OIC institutions in the field of vocational education and training, mainly the Statistical, Economic and Social Research and Training Centre for Islamic Countries (SESRIC), Islamic Development Bank (IDB), Islamic Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ICCI), Islamic University of Technology (IUT), and Islamic Conference Youth Forum for Dialogue and Cooperation (ICYF-DC). The Committee is responsible for adopting the rules and regulations of the OIC-VET Programme, and for monitoring the overall implementation.

The Meeting also heard presentations of country experiences in vocational education and training in an OIC context as well as brief updates about the existing and planned activities of OIC institutions in

the field of VET and the potential roles each could play in the OIC-VET Programme. Participants of the Meeting summarised the state of VET capacity in each country and the lessons learnt from their experience for matching the existing competences, and identified possible areas of future cooperation.

The OIC-VET Programme will begin with the two-year Pilot Application Phase during which the proper implementation of the Programme can be screened and examined by the Monitoring and Advisory Committee (MAC), and will be followed by a full implementation period. The Meeting discussed some relevant monitoring and operational issues prior to

and during the pilot application of the Programme in order to duly kick off initial activities in accordance with the aims and objectives of the Programme. The Meeting elaborated on necessary steps to move forward on the involvement of the Member States and the concerned OIC institutions with the aim of getting the Pilot Application of the Programme started in Fall 2009 by sharing their technical knowledge and expertise with each other. Particular emphasis was given on the ways and means of constructing strong cooperation in specific sectors where countries are in more need to bring their capacities together.

SESRIC Participates in “Data Day at WTO”

The World Trade Organisation (WTO), in cooperation with the International Trade Centre (ITC), UNCTAD and the World Bank, hosted on 18 – 19 May 2009 at its headquarters in Geneva, Switzerland, “Data Day at WTO”.

The event was an inter-agency initiative aimed at raising awareness on a range of data-related issues, familiarizing users further with multiple data applications, drawing attention to continuing needs for data, and promoting coherence and co-operation among international agencies that manage data. Mr. Atilla Karaman, Researcher at the SESRIC, participated in the “Data Day at WTO”.

On the first day of the event within six panels various topics were covered related to trade policy in:

- ▶ Services
- ▶ Tariffs and trade
- ▶ Non-tariff measures
- ▶ Agriculture-specific issues
- ▶ Trade facilitation, and
- ▶ Use and misuse of indicators and models.

On the second day, more technical information on available databases and indicators maintained by agencies in order to respond to specific demands were covered. The presentations were organised according to four clusters dedicated to

- ▶ Tariff Analysis
- ▶ Merchandise Trade Flows
- ▶ Trade in Services and
- ▶ Trade Facilitation, as well as a presentation on GTAP modelling.

SESRIC Participates in WSIS Forum 2009

The World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) Forum 2009 was held on 18 – 22 May 2009, at the ITU Headquarters, Geneva, Switzerland. The WSIS was co-organised by the International Telecommunication Union (ITU), UNESCO, UNCTAD and UNDP. Mr. Hüseyin Hakan Eryetli, Director of the Publication and IT Department, and Mr. Atilla Karaman, Researcher, represented the SESRIC thereat.

The Forum offered participants a series of diverse meetings, including high-level panels addressing critical issues to the WSIS implementation and follow-up in multi-stakeholder set-ups, WSIS action line facilitation meetings, thematic workshops, kick-off meetings for new initiatives and projects, speed-

exchanges facilitating networking among the participants, and the others.

H.E. Mr. Ali Abbasov, Minister of Communications and Information Technologies of Azerbaijan and H.E. Mr. Hassam Baryalai, Deputy Minister of Communication and Information Technology of Afghanistan have addressed the Opening Session of the WSIS. H.E. Mr. Ali Abbasov expressed that his country had become a leading country in ICT in the region. He also briefed the participants on the recent developments regarding the Transnational-Eurasian Information Super Highway project.

H.E. Mr. Hassam Baryalai summarised the recent ICT developments in Afghanistan in his speech. He mentioned that the Government of Afghanistan gave

priority to ICT in the Development Strategy of Afghanistan in 2008. He also added that within a short period of time both the private and public ICT investments in his country have resulted in 3,100 km of operational fibre optic backbone connecting Afghan cities to the world. Emphasizing the need for public and private sector cooperation in ICT, he informed that the Afghan National Data Centre will be operational as of June 2009 to serve the e-government applications in Afghanistan. He concluded that the outcome of the Summit will become a roadmap for the creation of Information Society.

During the High-Level Panel sessions of WSIS, participants discussed on the issues related to Accessing Knowledge, Financial Mechanisms in the Economic Downturn, Cyber-security, Climate Change and the ICTs, and ICT Applications for Better Life.

The participants in the Facilitation Meetings of the event dug deep into the issues ranging from infrastructure to e-Learning. In the Facilitation Meeting Action Line C2 Infrastructure, H.E. Mr. Abdol Majid Riazi, Deputy Minister of

Communication and Information Technology of Iran, summarised the recent infrastructure developments in ICT in Iran. He emphasised that the availability and quality of access is vital in the path to Information Society. He informed the audience that the problems that Iran face today to bridge the digital divide by 2015 are not due to difficulties in finance, human resources or knowledge base but due to embargoes applied by ICT infrastructure hardware suppliers against Iran.

The WSIS also hosted Thematic Workshops. During one of the Workshops, the successful ICT public private partnership from Bangladesh was discussed. The presentation focused on Commercial Community Information Centres (CICs), mobile based information and advisory services through call centres, an e-governance model in Bangladesh.

The SESRIC participants carried out a number of contacts with delegates from OIC Member States and other international organisations during the Forum and informed these delegates on the upcoming "International Conference on E-Government: Sharing Experiences" to take place in Antalya, Turkey on 8 – 11 December 2009.

2nd Meeting of the OIC Statistical Working Group

The Second Meeting of the OIC Statistical Working Group (SWG) was held on 15 – 16 June 2009 at the Headquarters of the Statistical, Economic and Social Research and Training Centre for Islamic Countries (SESRIC) in Ankara, Turkey.

The objectives of the SWG are:

- ▶ To develop a framework for the coordination of the statistical activities among the OIC institutions and the NSOs of the member states to ensure consistency in statistical practices, prevent duplications and facilitate improved interaction with the member states.
- ▶ To identify the procedures and guidelines for OIC-level data collection, data processing, data dissemination, statistical publications and statistical capacity building activities.

The founding institutions of the SWG, namely, OIC General Secretariat, SESRIC, IDB, ICDDT, ICCI and COMCEC Coordination Office are ex-officio members of the SWG. However, the membership of the SWG is open to all OIC Institutions undertaking statistical responsibilities. NSOs of the OIC member

states can become member of the SWG without any reservation, or participate in the SWG meetings without pre-conditional membership.

The participants of the 2nd Meeting of the SWG agreed on the need to intensify efforts to strengthen coordination, harmonisation, and standardisation in core areas of statistical activities (i.e. data collection, data processing and data dissemination) and statistical capacity development. The participants also decided to organize the 1st Meeting of NSOs of OIC Member States in the first quarter of 2010 in Istanbul, Turkey. They agreed that both SESRIC and IDB should jointly organize the meeting. In preparation for the meeting, the participants also decided that a concept paper detailing the rationale and issues to be discussed should be developed and circulated to NSOs and SWG members as soon as possible for their feedback. In addition, a Technical Task Force for organizing the meeting and preparing Agenda will be set up.

More information about the OIC SWG is available at http://www.sesric.org/index_projects_swg.php

SESRIC Co-Organises the Congress of Vocational and Technical Education in OIC Member States

The SESRIC together with the Turkish Asian Centre for Strategic Studies (TASAM) co-organised the “Congress of Vocational and Technical Education in Islamic Countries” which took place in İstanbul, Republic of Turkey on 18 – 20 June 2009. H.E. Dr. Savaş Alpay, Director General of the SESRIC, delivered an Opening Statement thereat.

The congress was held with the high-level participation of H.E. Ahmad Abdullahi SH. Muhamad, Minister of Education, Somalia; H.E. Adama Diop, Deputy Minister of Education, Senegal; H.E. Ebtihag Abdulkader Alkamal, Deputy Minister of Education, Yemen; H.E. Mehmet Temel, Deputy Undersecretary of Ministry of National Education, Turkey; H.E. Prof. Dr. Suyonto, Director General of Management of the Primary and Secondary Education, Indonesia; H.E. Dr. Mustafa Şahin, Vice

President of Turkish International Cooperation and Development Agency (TİKA), H.E. Abdennasser Naji, Inspector General of Technical Education, Morocco. Additionally, more than 40 diplomats, academicians, vocational and technical education experts from nearly 30 Islamic countries attended the Congress of Vocational and Technical Education in Islamic Countries.

During this international meeting, an assessment of vocational and technical problems at the education systems of member countries of the Organisation of the Islamic Conference was covered, their current status was articulated by experts and more importantly, a common vision for the future was attempted to be determined on core areas such as exchange of qualified staff, cooperation and assistance.

Training Course on “Information Technology: E-Publication” at Bahrain Central Informatics Organisation

The SESRIC organised a training course on “Information Technology: E-Publication” at the Central Informatics Organisation of the Kingdom of Bahrain, through Bahrain Institute of Public Administration (BIPA), on 23 – 25 June 2009. The course was provided by Mrs. Zeinab Zohier Hosny, expert from the Central Agency for Public Mobilisation and Statistics (CAPMAS) of the Arab Republic of Egypt and was attended by 23 staff members of the Central Informatics Organisation and the Institute of Public Administration (BIPA).

The training course on “Information Technology: E-Publication” mainly covered the following subjects:

- ▶ Basic concepts and definitions related to e-publication
- ▶ Ways of e-publication

- ▶ Database systems
- ▶ Geographic information systems
- ▶ Data files (DATABASE, HTML, PDF, XLS, DOC, TXT)
- ▶ Databases and system management (concepts and definitions)
- ▶ Structured Query Language (SQL)
- ▶ HTML (concepts and definitions, publishing using HTML, publishing with Microsoft FrontPage)

At the end of the training, all participants expressed their satisfaction with the program. The participants also appreciated the training they received as a good example of technical cooperation among the OIC Member States.

O I C N E W S

32nd Session of the Islamic Commission for Economic, Cultural and Social Affairs (ICECS)

The 32nd Session of the Islamic Commission for Economic, Cultural and Social Affairs (ICECS) was held in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia on 4 – 6 April 2009.

Following the speech of the representative of the Republic of Uganda, H.E. Prof. Ekmeleddin İhsanoğlu, Secretary General of the OIC and

Chairman of the 31st Session of the ICECS, also delivered his statement at the opening session where he expressed his great honour in continuing to serve as the OIC Secretary General while noting that this meeting constitutes the first one since his re-election as the OIC Secretary General. In the area of economy, H.E. the Secretary General said that the Organisation was trying hard to follow this contemporaneous logic and to create conditions to enhance joint Islamic action in the economic field by strengthening economic relations and mutual interests among the OIC Member States. He added that the current global financial crisis was a source of great concern to all Member States, the OIC General Secretariat and its institutions and expressed the hope that the Commission will closely monitor the phenomenon in collaboration with the OIC General Secretariat and the SESRIC, to study the impact of the crisis on the economies of the Member States, particularly as they relate to economic recession and restrictions on development assistance, especially to low-income countries.

The Committee commended the efforts of the General Secretariat and the Subsidiary Organs, each in their respective field of specialisation, and particularly in strengthening cooperation among the Member States especially in the economic and commercial field with statistical indicators on intra-OIC trade showing that it is steadily increasing and the growth rate of the volume of intra-OIC trade increasing from 14.5% in 2004 to 16.67% in 2008. At this rate, the desired target of 20% will be reached well before the set date of 2015.

In the field of cultural and social affairs, the Committee commended the efforts exerted in combating Islamophobia, and considering the clear political dimension of this phenomenon, it decided to

refer the issue to the Senior Officials Meeting. On economy, the Committee commended the efforts exerted by the General Secretariat and the Subsidiary Organs to develop cooperation among the Member States. On science and technology, the Committee commended the General Secretariat's efforts to launch projects in the fields of science and technology health and environment and commended the Organisation of the OIC Water Forum in İstanbul, given the importance of water as the source of life and one of the present and future challenges of the Muslim world.

The Committee discussed Draft Resolutions on Dawa, Cultural, Social, and Economic Affairs, and Science and Technology, and adopted them preparatory to their submission to the 36th Session of the Council of Foreign Ministers (CFM) held in Damascus, Syria on 23-25 May 2009.

The Joint General Assembly adopted general recommendations on the Subsidiary Organs, as follows:

- ▶ To commend the activities and studies carried out by the Subsidiary Organs, each in its respective field of specialisation.
- ▶ To urge the Subsidiary Organs to exert greater efforts so as to publicise their activities and exhort the Member States to expand the scope and increase the prospects of their cooperation with the Subsidiary Organs by intensifying the effectiveness of their participation in the activities of the centres and providing them with the necessary data, with a view to building and publishing databases in all the Member States so as to achieve the greatest benefit, widest interaction, and deepest understanding amongst the peoples of the Muslim Ummah.

4th Coordination Meeting for Implementation of the OIC TYPOA

The 4th Coordination Meeting of the OIC subsidiary organs, specialised and affiliated institutions on the implementation of the OIC Ten-Year Programme of Action (TYPOA) was held in Jeddah, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, on 7 April 2009. The Meeting was attended by the OIC General Secretariat, specialised and affiliated institutions. The OIC Standing Committee for Economic and Commercial Cooperation (COMCEC), OIC Committee for Information and Cultural Affairs (COMIAC), OIC Standing Committee for Science and Technology (COMSTECH), Uganda and Syria also attended the

Meeting. The Meeting considered, as its agenda item, the documents related to the implementation of the OIC-Ten Year Programme of Action, and preparations for the celebration of the 40th anniversary of the OIC.

In his opening statement, H.E. Prof. Dr. Ekmeleddin İhsanoğlu, the Secretary General, underlined the importance of the TYPOA and called for increased action and coordination among OIC institutions to work more actively and coordinate their efforts with a view to ensure effective and timely implementation

of the programme. His Excellency also pointed the importance of the meeting with OIC institutions on the implementation of the provisions of the Ten-Year Programme of Action as it provides with an opportunity to take stock of the progress made in all areas of concern to these institutions, which helps coordinate and evaluate the outcomes.

During their meeting in March 2006, March 2007 and May 2008, the OIC subsidiary organs, specialised and affiliated institutions reviewed the provisions of the TYPOA and suggested the course of action to be adopted by the individual institutions in their respective areas for implementing the TYPOA. The first working group underlined the need to implement the decision of the OIC Summit, namely to contribute 0.02% of each Member States' GNP to an established Fund for the promotion of Science and Technology and to encourage Member States to accept the IDB proposal that 10% of assistance to Member States be earmarked for science and technology. Also, on other substantive issues, the vital importance of the issues and projects in the field of Social and Cultural Affairs under the TYPOA was underscored.

The second working group reiterated that increasing intra-OIC trade will be a challenge due to the current World Financial Crisis. In this regard, it proposed that Member States expedite the signing and ratifying of the OIC agreements in particular the PRETAS;

increase the involvement of the private sector; give more priority to infrastructure development and establish an Arbitration Mechanism to facilitate trade. Furthermore, the participants were also briefed about the recent endeavours of the SESRIC in bringing together the Development and Cooperation Institutions (DCIs) of the OIC Member States in order to generate a concerted action in the fight against poverty in the OIC Member States. Also the Meeting was informed about studies prepared by the SESRIC on "Education: Prospects and Challenges in the OIC Member States" and "Health Systems and Expenditure in the OIC Member States" and also the "Vocational Education and Training Programme of the OIC Countries (OIC-VET), and the most recent Ibn Sina Programme for OIC Health Capacity Building. In particular, it was emphasised that Ibn Sina Programme for OIC Health Capacity Building be launched as soon as possible by the SESRIC and IDB, and supported by the Member States.

The Meeting turned out to be a success. OIC institutions have taken a good stock of the good evaluation of progress so far made in the process of implementation of the TYPOA. The participants exchanged views and adopted recommendations to ensure better coordination in the implementation of the Programme. The OIC institutions were called upon to report regularly to the General Secretariat on actions and initiatives taken for the implementation of the Programme.

Seminar on Development of Tourism in the Muslim World

The Seminar on Development of Tourism in the Muslim World was held in Kyrenia, Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC), on 15 – 17 April 2009 with the participation of delegates from 16 OIC Member States and representatives of the OIC General Secretariat, SESRIC, IRCICA, ICDT, IDB, ISESCO and ICCI. Mr. Haytham Zeinelabdin, Research Assistant, represented the SESRIC thereat.

The Meeting was inaugurated by H.E. Turgay Avcı, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC), who delivered a speech in which he expressed his gratitude and deep appreciation to H.E. Prof. Ekmeleddin İhsanoğlu, OIC Secretary General, and to all participants for their support and contribution. He also briefed the participants about the current situation of the TRNC and the UN negotiations.

H.E. Prof. Ekmeleddin İhsanoğlu, OIC Secretary General sent a message to the Meeting which was also delivered in the Opening Session.

In the working sessions, the Seminar presentations were made by experts from OIC Member States and Organisations as follows:

- ▶ "International Tourism in the OIC countries: Prospects and Challenges", presented by SESRIC
- ▶ "The WTO Negotiations in the Tourism Sector", presented by ICDT
- ▶ "World Tourism Industry, New Trends and Challenges", presented by Eastern Mediterranean University, TRNC
- ▶ "Role of the Private Sector in the Promotion of Cooperation in the Tourism Sector among the OIC Member States", presented by ICCI

- ▶ “The Role of Preservation of Architectural Heritage in the Development and Promotion of Tourism in the OIC Member States”, presented by IRCICA
- ▶ “Promotion of Tourism Culture in the Islamic World” presented by ISESCO
- ▶ National Experiences of Morocco, Tunisia, Turkey, Mauritania, Niger, Gambia, Malaysia, TRNC, Azerbaijan, Tajikistan, and Comoros

Following the working sessions and debates on the presentations made by experts, the participants agreed upon the improvement of tourism potential in the Member States and recommendations that would help the development of tourism in the Muslim World.

The Final Report and Recommendations is available at http://www.sesric.org/event_detail.php?id=280.

10th Meeting of the OIC Standardisation Experts Group (SEG)

The 24th Session of COMCEC entrusted the 10th Meeting of OIC Standardisation Experts Group (SEG) with the task of “Developing Halal Food Standard and Procedures”. Within this framework, the 10th Meeting of OIC Standardisation Experts Group on “Studying and Developing Halal Food Standards” was convened on 28 – 30 April 2009 in Ankara, Turkey. The Meeting was organised and hosted by the Turkish Standards Institution (TSI). It was attended by the representatives of 30 OIC Member States. Furthermore, the representative of Bosnia and Herzegovina attended the meeting as observer. The representatives of the COMCEC Coordination Office, ICCI, ICDT and SESRIC also attended the Meeting. The SESRIC was represented at the said Meeting by Mr. Murat İlkin, Researcher.

The objective of the Meeting was to discuss the OIC Halal Food Standards and the documents on the organisations involved in Halal certification and accreditation.

The Meeting was inaugurated by Mr. Tahir Büyükhelvacıgil, President of the TSI. The opening speech was delivered by Mr. Yavuz Mollasalihoğlu, Director General of Standardisation for Foreign Trade of the Under Secretariat for Foreign Trade after being elected as the chairman of the Meeting. It was followed by the message of H.E. Prof. Ekmeleddin İhsanoğlu, Secretary General of the OIC, delivered by the representative of the OIC General Secretariat.

Following the opening session of the Meeting, the participants exchanged views on the OIC Halal Food Standards on which modifications were made based on the consensus on them. The representatives of the Turkish delegation emphasised that international standards should be recognised in food safety

measures. However, a consensus was not reached on some standards as they remained questionable on whether they are in compliance with the Islamic rules or not.

There are some disagreements between the participants on the distinction between Halal and Forbidden (Non-Halal) food products, listing of Halal feedings for animals, Halal animals mechanical slaughtering and compliance of the types of instruments used for slaughtering such as knives made by stainless steel with Shariah rules. However, there was strong inclination to send the final draft of the OIC Halal Food Standards to the International Islamic Fiqh Academy (IIFA) for clarification of the controversial standards in terms of their compliance with Islamic or Shariah rules. While the need for such approach was acknowledged by the participants, it was also indicated that it could take the IIFA a long period of time to resolve the issues that needed to be addressed by them. As a result, it was agreed that a committee consisting of ICCI, Indonesia, Jordan, Kyrgyz Republic, Malaysia, Pakistan, Turkey and United Arab Emirates could take the OIC Halal Food standards to the IIFA upon review of the final project document about OIC Halal Food Standardisation by all participants and follow up on the areas of disagreement.

At the closing Session, it was decided that the OIC Standardisation Experts Group convene again in July 2009 in Antalya, Turkey, to discuss the documents on the organisations involved in Halal certification and accreditation as the said meeting could only focus on OIC Halal Food Standards. Also, the participants expressed their thanks to the TSI of the Republic of Turkey for the excellent arrangements it carried out for the meeting and the warm hospitality it overwhelmed the participants with.

2nd Forum of Tourism and 3rd International Conference on Investment and Privatisation

The Islamic Chamber of Commerce (ICCI) in cooperation with the IDB, the Iranian Ministry of Tourism, Iranian Privatisation Organisation, and Iran Chamber of Commerce, Industries and Mining, organised the 2nd Forum of Tourism and 3rd International Conference on Investment and Privatisation on 28 – 30 April 2009 in Tehran, Islamic Republic of Iran. Mr. Mazhar Hussain, Researcher, represented the SESRIC thereat and presented the report titled “International Tourism in the OIC Countries: Prospects and Challenges”.

The main objectives of the forum were to adopt effective and strong strategies for promotion and marketing of tourism among OIC Member States and adoption of a mechanism for improving of

infrastructure; such as hotels and restaurants, as well as means of communication and transport including land roads. The forum was attended by experts from the OIC Member States, the OIC institutions, international organisations and representatives of private tour operators from the OIC Member States.

During the forum, experts from the OIC and international institutions presented their findings about current tourism trends in the OIC Member States and made policy recommendations for the further development of tourism sector in these economies. Moreover, representatives of private tour operators and hotel chains shared their experiences and best practices with the participants.

2nd Project Committee Meeting of the OIC Cotton Action Plan

The 2nd Project Committee Meeting of the OIC Cotton Action Plan was held on 11 May 2009 in İzmir, Republic of Turkey. The Meeting was chaired by the representative of the IDB, as Chairman of the Committee, and attended by the representatives of the OIC General Secretariat, COMCEC Coordination Office, SESRIC, ICDT, ITFC and ICCI. The Committee reviewed and discussed a

number of project proposals presented by the OIC countries who are members in the Committee. These project proposals were presented by Uganda, Senegal, Cameroon, Sudan, Egypt, Turkey, Indonesia and Syria. After examining the project proposals, the Committee called on IDB and other financial institutions to contribute to the budgets of these projects.

3rd Meeting of the Steering Committee for the Implementation of the OIC Cotton Action Plan

The 3rd Meeting of the Steering Committee for the Implementation of the OIC Cotton Action Plan was held on 11 May 2009 in İzmir, Republic of Turkey. The Meeting was chaired by the representative of Turkey, as Chairman of the Committee, and attended by the representatives of the OIC General Secretariat, COMCEC Coordination Office, SESRIC, ICDT, ITFC and ICCI. Only three member countries in the Committee attended the Meeting (Turkey, Egypt and Burkina Faso). The Committee adopted the report of

the 2nd Project Committee Meeting and decided to submit the approved project proposals to both the IDB and the international financial institutions through the OIC General Secretariat. The Committee also adopted a report on “The Mid-Term Review of the Five-Year OIC Cotton Action Plan”, which was prepared and presented by the OIC General Secretariat, in collaboration with the Chairman of the Committee.

25th Meeting of the Follow-up Committee of the COMCEC

The 25th Meeting of the Follow-up Committee of the COMCEC was held on 12 – 14 May 2009 in İzmir, Turkey, with the participation of 11 member countries of the Committee (Saudi Arabia, Turkey, Palestine, Senegal, Kuwait, Iran, Cameroon, Pakistan, Qatar, Indonesia and Sierra Leone). United Arab

Emirates also attended the Meeting as observer. The OIC General Secretariat and the subsidiary, affiliated and specialised organs of the OIC (SESRIC, ICDT, IDB, ICCI, IUT, ITFC, OISA, and ICYF-DC) attended the Meeting. The SESRIC was represented at the meeting by Dr. Savaş Alpay, Director General,

Mr. Nabil Dabour, Director of Economic and Social Research Department, Mr. Mehmet Fatih Serenli, Director of Training and Technical Cooperation Department, and Mr. Mazhar Hussain, Researcher.

The Committee reviewed and discussed the progress achieved in the implementation of the resolutions and decisions of the 24th Session of the COMCEC, which was held in October 2008 in İstanbul. The discussion included a set of common issues of concern to the Member States with a view to enhancing economic and commercial cooperation among them. These issues were discussed under the following main Agenda Items:

- ▶ Review of the implementation of the OIC Ten-Year Programme of Action relating to economic cooperation and the Plan of Action to Strengthen Economic and Commercial Cooperation among the OIC Member States
- ▶ Expansion of intra-OIC trade and investment, progress in the establishment of Trade Preferential System among the OIC Member States (TPS-OIC)
- ▶ Cooperation among the stock exchanges of the OIC Member States
- ▶ E-government applications in OIC countries
- ▶ Review of the implementation of the action plan for the OIC cotton producing countries
- ▶ Vocational education and training programme of action for OIC member states (OIC-VET); and
- ▶ Preparations for the exchange of views on “Impact of food crisis on the economies of the OIC countries”

The Committee also prepared the Draft Agenda of the 25th Session of the COMCEC, which will be held in İstanbul in November 2009.

Mr. Nabil Dabour briefed the Committee on the latest developments on the Agenda Item “E-government applications and their impact on the OIC Member States”. He informed the Committee that the Centre has recently prepared a report on “E-Government Readiness in the OIC Member States”, which evaluates the capability of the OIC Member States in E-Government Readiness based on the data provided by the United Nations e-Government Survey 2008. Mr. Dabour also informed the Committee that the Centre will organise, in collaboration with TODAİE and TİKA, the “International Conference on E-Government:

Sharing Experiences” in Antalya, Turkey, on 8 – 11 December 2009. The Conference will bring together leaders, bureaucrats, technocrats, ICT representatives (regulatory bodies, NGOs, suppliers, etc.) and academicians from the Member States and elsewhere. The participants will exchange their experiences and explore ways and means of cooperation in various issues related to e-government applications.

The Committee welcomed the offer of the Centre to organise the said Conference on this important area of cooperation and requested it to submit a comprehensive report on the subject including means and ways of cooperation to the 25th Session of the COMCEC.

Under the agenda item “Vocational education and training programme of action for OIC member states (OIC-VET)”, Mr. Mehmet Fatih Serenli briefed the Committee on the latest developments related to the preparations and implementation of the programme. The Committee took note with satisfaction of the progress that has been achieved in the OIC-VET Programme since the 24th Session of the COMCEC. The Committee commended the efforts exerted by the SESRIC to organise the Operational Meeting among the relevant OIC Institutions in the field of vocational education and training on 4 April 2009 in Jeddah, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, as well as the First Meeting of the Monitoring and Advisory Committee (MAC) of the OIC-VET Programme in İzmir on 13 May 2009 with a view to initiating the Pilot Application Phase of the Programme in Fall 2009.

The Committee called upon the Member States that have not done so, to designate their National Focal Points (NFPs) for the OIC-VET Programme in order to facilitate the communication between the SESRIC and the relevant Member State. The Committee also called upon the Member States to cooperate and collaborate with the SESRIC during the preparation period of the initial activities of the Pilot Application Phase scheduled to start in Fall 2009.

In this context, the Committee requested the SESRIC to establish a common online platform for the National Focal Points (NFPs) of the OIC-VET Programme in order to facilitate the process of sharing their experience on their best practices in the field of vocational education and training and to exchange information about their relevant training activities, partner institutions or organisations and resource persons.

Under the agenda item “Preparation for the exchange of views on the ‘Impact of food crisis on the economies of the OIC countries’”, the representative of the ICDT briefed the Committee on the preparations for the Workshop on the said theme which will be organised by the ICDT, in collaboration with the ITFC and the SESRIC, as the coordinator institution of the Exchange of Views sessions of the COMCEC, and held in Casablanca on 17 – 18 June 2009. Under the same agenda item, the Committee took note of the following proposals as

possible themes for the exchange of views sessions to be held during the subsequent COMCEC Sessions:

- ▶ The impact of exchange rate policies and currency harmonisation on intra-OIC trade
- ▶ Development of financial architecture in OIC Member States
- ▶ Islamic Banking in the new financial system; and
- ▶ Agricultural development and water related issues in the Member States.

36th Session of the Council of Foreign Ministers (CFM)

The 36th Session of the Council of Foreign Ministers (CFM) of the Member States of the Organisation of the Islamic Conference (OIC) was held in the Syrian capital Damascus on 23 – 25 May 2009, under the theme “*Promoting Islamic Solidarity*”.

The meeting, which pooled together the foreign ministers of 57 Member States of the OIC, discussed a host of political issues, notably the issue of the Arab-Israeli conflict, latest developments in the Holy City of Al-Quds and Israeli relentless aggressions against Palestinians. Participating Ministers also explored other major political issues, such as the situation in Iraq, and the unfortunate developments in Somalia in the wake of worsening security conditions and the recent outbreak of deadly clashes on the outskirts of the Somali capital, Mogadishu. The unravelling developments in Sudan also figured high on the meeting’s work agenda.

In parallel, the Ministers examined a conceptual paper on the OIC’s future role in maintaining peace, security and resolving conflicts in the Member States. The paper sets out from the premise that the Muslim world needs to have peacekeeping troops, as myriad conflicts are waged within Muslim territories, not to mention that OIC Member States provide the largest contribution to UN peacekeeping forces.

Combating Islamophobia and the fight against the defamation of Islam were also on the agenda of the meeting. The OIC Islamophobia Observatory published on the occasion its Second Annual Report on Islamophobia. The report highlights the abuses perpetrated against Muslims and Islam, and features the reality of the phenomenon of Islamophobia across the world.

The Ministers also discussed the issue of Muslim communities and minorities in non-OIC Member

States, such as the situation of Muslims in the Philippines, the situation of the Turkish Muslim minority in Western Thrace in Greece, the situation of Muslim groups in the Republic of Myanmar, and the situation of Muslims in southern Thailand.

Additionally, the Ministers looked in detail into the economic endeavours associated with the implementation of the OIC Ten-Year Programme of Action as well as issues of science and technology, health-care, higher education, environment in the Muslim world, and media in the OIC Member States.

The 36th CFM Meeting adopted the Damascus Declaration, which underlined that the itinerary of the OIC over the past forty years, along with the critical developments unravelling across the world today and emphasized the importance of boosting Islamic solidarity in the face of current political and economic developments.

The Damascus Declaration mentioned that global developments have been associated with a hectic campaign seeking to smear not just the image of Islam as the cultural and religious reference of Muslim peoples, but it also targeted Muslims in a bid to isolate and discredit them. The Declaration called for avoiding pointing fingers at others for the situating in the Muslim world; Muslims, it stressed, are largely responsible for the conditions that prevail in the Muslim world.

The final communiqué issued at the conclusion of the CFM Meeting highlighted the Muslim Ummah's unwavering commitment to the return of all Palestinian territory that was occupied in 1967, including Al-Quds city and the establishment of an independent Palestinian state in line with international resolutions and the Arab peace initiative.

The CFM underscored the centrality of the issue of Al-Quds city for the Muslim Ummah and the commitment of Muslims to the city's Arabo-Islamic identity. The final communiqué rejected Israel's attempts to judaise and conduct aggressive acts against Islamic holy sites in Al-Quds. It also denounced

Israel's tampering with the demographic structure of the city. The CFM meeting decided to undertake action at the international level to put an end to Israeli attacks, strive to support the resistance of Jerusalemites and preserve the city's Arabo-Islamic character.

Workshop on "Impact of Food Prices Volatility on Economies of OIC Member States"

In line with Resolution of the 24th Session of the COMCEC which designates "The Impact of Food Crisis on the Economies of OIC Countries" as the theme for the Exchange of Views at the 25th Session of the COMCEC, it requests the IDB/ICDT, in collaboration with the SESRIC (the coordinating institution for the exchange of views sessions), the OIC General Secretariat, the relevant OIC institutions and other related international organisations to organise a workshop on this topic prior to the 25th Session of the COMCEC and to submit its report to the said COMCEC Session. The Islamic Centre for Development of Trade (ICDT), in collaboration with the Ministry of Foreign Trade of the Kingdom of Morocco, the International Islamic Trade Finance Corporation (ITFC) of the Islamic Development Bank, and the SESRIC, coordinating institution, co-organised a two days workshop on "The Impact of Food Crisis on the Economies of the Member States of the Organisation of the Islamic Conference (OIC) and the Developmental Prospects of Trade and Investments in the Agricultural Sector" on 17 – 18 June 2009 in Casablanca, Kingdom of Morocco. Mr. Mazhar Hussain, Researcher, represented the Centre thereat and presented a working paper titled "Socio-economic Impacts of Food Prices Volatility in the OIC Member States".

The objective of the workshop was to assess the impacts of the World Food Crisis on the OIC Member States and to examine the developmental prospects of trade and investment in the agricultural sector. The workshop was attended by experts from the OIC Member States, the OIC institutions, and

regional/international organisations. In the first session of the first day of the workshop, international organisations, such as FAO, UNCTAD, IFPRI and IFAD, made their presentations on the crisis with more concentration on the major causes of food crisis and the preventive actions and measures taken by the governments at both national and international levels. The ICDT and SESRIC also presented their research findings about the impacts of food crisis on the OIC Member States during the second session. In addition to that and in the following third session, some OIC specialised and affiliated institutions such as IDB, ITFC, ICD, ICIEC and ICCI made their presentations and informed the participants about the initiatives they have taken so far to facilitate and promote agriculture and food industry in the OIC member states by providing the necessary financial and managerial services.

The Second day was dedicated to the OIC Member States to deliver their national experiences during the food crisis and the measures they have taken to mitigate its negative impacts and to share information about the potential opportunities for trade and investments in the agricultural sectors and agro-food industry in the OIC Member States.

The report and recommendations of this workshop will be submitted to the Ministerial Session of the Ministers of Commerce of the OIC which will be held during the 25th Session of the COMCEC in İstanbul, Republic of Turkey on 5 – 9 November 2009.

OTHER MEETINGS

International Conference on Islamic Economics and Economies of the OIC Countries

The rapid progress of Islamic Economics and its applications, particularly in the area of banking and finance, has captured the interest of many to participate in intellectual discussions to find solutions to contemporary issues. The severity of the recent

financial crisis enhances the need to consider Islamic Economics as a possible panacea. Although achievements in the development of Islamic Economics have been laudable, there is still a compelling need for more serious work on the

theoretical and applied side of Islamic economics, Islamic banking and finance, and economic cooperation among Muslim countries.

In view of this need, the Department of Economics, International Islamic University Malaysia (IIUM), being one of the pioneers in the development of Islamic economics and finance, together with the Islamic Research and Training Institute (IRTI) of the Islamic Development Bank (IDB) organised the International Conference on Islamic Economics and Economies of the OIC Countries, which took place in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia on 28 – 29 April 2009.

The Conference focused on the following areas:

- ▶ Islamic Economics: Evaluating the current situation in various sub-areas, from environmental economics to monetary economics as well as theoretical and policy studies dealing with the development of Islamic economics
- ▶ Islamic Banking and Finance: Fundamentals of Islamic finance, regulatory structures, shariah compliant investment, takaful, risk management, branding opportunities for

shariah compliant products, socially responsible investment strategy, wealth management, sukuk, zakat, hedge funds and derivatives, housing finance and shariah compliant mortgage products

- ▶ Economies of the OIC Countries: Evaluating performance and current status of economic development in the OIC countries, and the role of the OIC and IDB in facilitating development in OIC countries
- ▶ Economic cooperation among the OIC Countries: Current status, challenges and problems, strategies to increase cooperation and trade, and the potential role of the OIC and IDB in enhancing economic integration

The Conference was addressed by H.E. Prof. Ekmeleddin İhsanoğlu, Secretary General, OIC; Dr. Savaş Alpay, Director General, SESRIC, Ankara, Turkey, and Dr. Abbas Mirakhor, Former Executive Director, IMF. More detailed information about the Conference and the list of presented papers can be found at <http://www.iiu.edu.my/enmjournal/icie.html>

4th Forum on Arab Statistical Capacity Building and Regional Meeting on “Measuring Progress of Arab Societies”

The 4th Forum on Arab Statistical Capacity Building and the Regional Meeting on “Measuring the Progress of Arab Societies” was held in Cairo, Egypt on 25 – 27 May 2009. The Forum and the Meeting were attended by representatives of the National Statistical Organisations (NSOs) of the Arab Countries as well as representatives of some international organisations, namely, AITRS, IDB, MEDSTAT II, OECD PARIS21, UNSD, UNESCWA and the World Bank. Dr. Sıdıka Başçı, Director of the Statistics and Information Department, represented the SESRIC thereat and made a presentation titled “Exchange of Training Expertise among the Arab Countries and Developing NSDS”.

Within the framework of enhancing the statistical capacity building in the Arab region, the forum was organised by the Arab League and Central Agency for Public Mobilisation and Statistics (CAPMAS) of Egypt with financial and technical support from

PARIS21. Representatives of NSOs at various stages of “National Strategies for the Development of Statistics (NSDS)” made presentations reflecting their experiences. The international organisations presented their views on how they can support the development of these strategies in terms of donors, technical support, or training activities. The last day was devoted to the Regional Meeting on “Measuring the Progress of Arab Societies”. It was a pre-meeting of the 3rd OECD World Forum on Statistics, Knowledge and Policy, which will be held on 27 – 30 October 2009 in Busan, South Korea.

During the forum, Dr. Başçı had the opportunity to discuss the future possibilities of cooperation with the representatives of the participating international organisations, especially in the area of training. Moreover, she exchanged views with the representatives of NSOs of the Arab Countries on various issues related to statistics.

34th Annual Meeting of Board of Governors of the Islamic Development Bank

The 34th Annual Meeting of Board of Governors of the Islamic Development Bank took place in

Ashgabat, Turkmenistan on 2 – 3 June 2009. H.E. Dr. Savaş Alpay, Director General of the SESRIC

represented the Centre thereat. About 600 participants representing governments, regional and international financial institutions, Islamic banks, national development finance institutions and unions of contractors and consultants from OIC Member States gathered for the meeting.

The Meeting was inaugurated by speeches from H.E. Gurbanguly Berdimuhamedov, President of Turkmenistan; and H.E. Dr. Ahmad Mohamed Ali, President of the Islamic Development Bank Group. The following meetings were held during the same period:

- ▶ *The 16th Meeting of the Board of Governors of the Islamic Corporation for the Insurance of Investment and Export Credit (ICIEC):* During the meeting, the Republic of Albania and the Sultanate of Oman have been accepted as the new members of the ICIEC.

- ▶ *The 9th General Assembly of the Islamic Corporation for the Development of the Private Sector (ICD):* ICD decided to increase its capital from USD 1 Billion to USD 2 Billion. The Republic of Côte d'Ivoire was accepted as a new member of the ICD.
- ▶ *The 4th General Assembly of the International Islamic Trade Finance Corporation (ITFC):* ITFC has elected the representative of the Republic of Uganda as the vice chairman of ITFC.
- ▶ *The 2nd Annual Meeting of the Board of Governors of the Islamic Solidarity Fund*

The 20th Annual Symposium of IDB was on the theme: "Shaping the Post-Crisis World: Regional Implications and Coordinated Responses by Member Countries".

UPCOMING EVENTS FOR THE THIRD QUARTER OF 2009

July

- ▶ 9th Session of the Standing Committee on Information and Cultural Affairs (COMIAC), Dakar, Senegal
- ▶ 10th Session of ISESCO General Conference, 2-4 July 2009, Tunis, Tunisian Republic
- ▶ MEDSTAT II - Training Task Force, 14-15 July 2009, İstanbul, Republic of Turkey
- ▶ Brainstorming Session on "Enhancing Economic and Commercial Cooperation among the Member Countries of the Organisation of the Islamic Conference (OIC)", 20-21 July 2009, İstanbul, Republic of Turkey

August

- ▶ 3rd International Conference on Environmentally Sustainable Development (ESDev 2009), 16-18 August 2009, Abbottabad, Pakistan
- ▶ 57th Session of the International Statistical Institute, 16-22 August 2009, Durban, South Africa
- ▶ World Water Week in Stockholm, 16-22 August 2009, Stockholm, Sweden
- ▶ International Conference on Education for All, 17-19 August 2009, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia
- ▶ 1st INSANIAH-IRTI International Conference on Islamic Economics, Banking and Finance, 18-19 August 2009, Langkawi, Malaysia

September

- ▶ 64th Session of the UN General Assembly, 15 September 2009, New York, USA
- ▶ Alliance of Civilisations (AoC) Focal Points Meeting, 26 September 2009, New York, USA
- ▶ OIC Annual Coordination Meeting on the Sidelines of the 64th Session of the UN General Assembly, 28 September 2009, New York, USA
- ▶ 2nd Session of the 10th Meeting of OIC Standardisation Expert Group, 28 September 2009 - 02 October 2009, İstanbul, Turkey