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**REPORT  
OF THE THIRTY SIXTH SESSION  
OF THE STANDING COMMITTEE FOR ECONOMIC  
AND COMMERCIAL COOPERATION OF THE OIC  
(Virtual Meeting, 25-26 November 2020)**

1. The Thirty Sixth Session of the Standing Committee for Economic and Commercial Cooperation of the Organization of the Islamic Cooperation (COMCEC) was held virtually on 25-26 November 2020.
2. The Session was attended by representatives of the following Member States of the Organization of the Islamic Cooperation (OIC):
  - 1- Islamic Republic of Afghanistan
  - 2- Republic of Albania
  - 3- Republic of Azerbaijan
  - 4- Kingdom of Bahrain
  - 5- People's Republic of Bangladesh
  - 6- Republic of Benin
  - 7- Brunei Darussalam
  - 8- Burkina Faso
  - 9- Republic of Cameroon
  - 10- Republic of Chad
  - 11- Republic of Cote d'Ivoire
  - 12- Republic of Djibouti
  - 13- Arab Republic of Egypt
  - 14- Republic of Gabon
  - 15- Republic of The Gambia
  - 16- Republic of Guinea
  - 17- Republic of Indonesia
  - 18- Islamic Republic of Iran
  - 19- Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan
  - 20- Republic of Kazakhstan
  - 21- The State of Kuwait
  - 22- Kyrgyz Republic
  - 23- Republic of Lebanon
  - 24- State of Libya

- 25-Malaysia
- 26-Republic of Maldives
- 27-Republic of Mali
- 28-Kingdom of Morocco
- 29-Republic of Niger
- 30-Federal Republic of Nigeria
- 31-Sultanate of Oman
- 32-Islamic Republic of Pakistan
- 33-The State of Palestine
- 34-State of Qatar
- 35-Kingdom of Saudi Arabia
- 36-Republic of Suriname
- 37-Republic of Tajikistan
- 38-Republic of Tunisia
- 39-Republic of Turkey
- 40-Republic of Turkmenistan
- 41-Republic of Uganda
- 42-State of the United Arab Emirates
- 43-Republic of Uzbekistan
- 44-Republic of Yemen

3. The Russian Federation, Kingdom of Thailand and Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus participated in the Session as observers.
4. In addition to the OIC General Secretariat, the COMCEC Coordination Office and the following OIC Organs/ Institutions attended the Session:
  - 1- Federation of Contractors from Islamic Countries (FOCIC)
  - 2- Islamic Center for the Development of Trade (ICDT)
  - 3- Islamic Research Center for Islamic History, Art and Culture (IRCICA)
  - 4- Islamic Development Bank (IDB) Group
  - 5- Islamic Chamber of Commerce, Industry and Agriculture (ICCIA)
  - 6- Islamic Conference Youth Forum for Dialogue and Cooperation (ICYF-DC)
  - 7- Islamic University of Technology (IUT)
  - 8- Islamic Organization of Food Security (IOFS)
  - 9- Standards and Metrology Institute of Islamic Countries (SMIIC)
  - 10-Statistical, Economic and Social Research and Training Center for Islamic Countries (SESRIC)

5. Representatives of the following international organizations attended the Session:
- 1- Association of National Development Finance Institutions (DFIs) in Member Countries of the Islamic Development Bank (IDB) (ADFIMI)
  - 2- Developing Eight (D-8)
  - 3- Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO)
  - 4- International Trade Centre (ITC)
  - 5- Islamic Financial Services Board (IFSB)
  - 6- Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD)
  - 7- United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)
  - 8- United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (UNESCWA)
  - 9- World Trade Organization (WTO)
  - 10- World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC)

*(A copy of the List of Participants of the Thirty Sixth Session of the COMCEC is attached as Annex I.)*

6. The Meeting of Senior Officials of the 36th COMCEC Session that preceded the Ministerial Session was held virtually on 18-19 November 2020 under the Chairmanship of H.E. Ambassador Mehmet Metin EKER, Permanent Representative of the Republic of Turkey to the OIC. The Senior Officials deliberated on the agenda items and prepared the Draft Resolutions for consideration by the Ministerial Session.

### **Opening Session**

7. The Opening Ceremony of the Thirty Sixth Session of the COMCEC was held on November 25<sup>th</sup>, 2020 under the Chairmanship of H.E. Recep Tayyip ERDOĞAN, President of the Republic of Turkey and the Chairman of the COMCEC.
8. Welcoming the delegates, H.E. ERDOĞAN expressed his condolences for those who lost their lives due to the COVID-19 pandemic spread all over the world and extended his best wishes for the recovery from these difficult times. Moreover, H.E. ERDOĞAN also conveyed his condolences upon the important losses of Community of Organization of Islamic Cooperation recently.
9. His Excellency ERDOĞAN underlined the importance of learning crucial lessons from the pandemic by expressing that all humanity shares the same destiny regardless of religion, language and race. Emphasizing the significance of being planned and prepared for crisis management, His Excellency ERDOĞAN stressed the need for acting together as the member countries of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation.
10. H.E. ERDOĞAN drew attention to this year's theme of promoting entrepreneurship and competitiveness for tourism industry by noting that tourism is a sector heavily affected by the pandemic. H.E. ERDOĞAN continued his statement by stressing the role of trade facilitation in mitigation of negative economic effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. In this context, expressing his appreciation for the recent steps taken for the implementation of Trade Preferential System (TPS-OIC), H.E. ERDOĞAN highlighted that the Trade

Negotiating Committee Meeting, which is proposed to be held in 2021, will be an important step for the effectuation of the System. Furthermore, H.E. ERDOĞAN stated that the OIC Arbitration Center would be operationalized soon after the completion of its institutional structure.

11. H.E. ERDOĞAN also invited the Islamic Chamber of Commerce, Industry and Agriculture to cooperate more closely with the Standards and Metrology Institute of Islamic Countries in the fields of halal food standardization and certification.
12. H.E. ERDOĞAN continued his statement by stressing the importance of fighting against Islamophobia and xenophobia in western countries and stated that this would only be achieved through stronger cooperation among the Islamic Countries. H.E. ERDOĞAN also underlined that strengthening our economic structures would also be effectual in having a louder voice in international platform on this crucial issue as well.
13. H.E. ERDOĞAN expressed his gratitude for the convening of the COMCEC Working Group Meetings regularly and to all member countries that took part in these meetings. H.E. ERDOĞAN underlined the importance of the recently initiated COMCEC COVID-19 Intervention Program for supporting the member countries in overcoming the negative economic effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. His Excellency ERDOĞAN also highlighted the importance of the COMCEC Al-Quds Program for improving the socio-economic conditions of Al-Quds as the one of the most important holy cities of the Islamic World.
14. While concluding his speech, H.E. ERDOĞAN expressed his wishes the Session will be beneficial for the member countries and the Islamic World.

*(A copy of the text of the Inaugural Statement of H.E. Recep Tayyip ERDOĞAN is attached as Annex II.)*

15. Following the Inaugural Statement made by H.E. ERDOĞAN, the Secretary General of the OIC made a statement.
16. His Excellency Dr. Yousef Al-OTHAI MEEN, the Secretary General of the OIC, thanked the Government of the Republic of Turkey for excellent preparations made for this virtual meeting. H.E. Al-OTHAI MEEN stated that the negative economic impacts of COVID-19 pandemic on trade of goods, services, transport and global tourism, will further lead to an increase in unemployment levels and poverty in the member countries of the OIC.
17. In this framework, H.E. Al-OTHAI MEEN stressed that OIC has mobilized all its resources and institutions in order to support its members in establishing national plans for mitigating the economic, financial and social effects of the pandemic. H.E. Al-OTHAI MEEN called upon the member countries having surplus of resources to share with the member countries in need so they would better face with the consequences of pandemic. In this respect, H.E. Al-OTHAI MEEN, underlined the significance of coordination, solidarity, complementarity and mutual support among the member countries. Al-OTHAI MEEN commended all the Member States that have continued to support the activities of the OIC, including the contribution to various OIC projects, hosting of OIC several events, signing and ratification of the OIC agreements in the economic domain.

18. The Heads of Delegations of Kuwait, Nigeria and Bangladesh made statements on behalf of Arab, African and Asian Geographical Groups of the OIC regions during the Opening Ceremony. They expressed their gratitude for the excellent preparations for the virtual meeting and extended their condolences for the victims of the devastating earthquake in Izmir. Highlighting the importance of Tourism sector in terms of its direct links to other sectors such as transportation, food, accommodation and finance, the Head of Delegation of Kuwait emphasized, among others, the urgent need for finding solutions to the difficulties emanating from the pandemic and the recovery from its damage. The Head of Delegation of Nigeria, after mentioning how COVID 19 pandemic slowed down the economic growth of OIC, stressed the necessity of exploring ways and means to increase social entrepreneurship for the growth in tourism sector and welcomed the efforts towards making Africa the most preferred tourism destination. The Head of Delegation of Bangladesh also mentioned the negative effects of COVID 19 on economy and the policy measures taken for mitigation negative effects of pandemic in Bangladesh and underlined the support given by Bangladesh to the main OIC projects such as TPS-OIC. He also underlined that the member countries may enhance their cooperation in the field of Information Technologies (IT).
19. Furthermore, Mikayil JABBAROV, Minister of Economy of the Republic of Azerbaijan, delivered a statement in the opening ceremony. H.E. JABBAROV highlighted the importance and the support they attach to economic cooperation among OIC member states. H.E. JABBAROV also emphasized the significance of the political solidarity among Islamic countries. In this respect, H.E. JABBAROV expressed his special thanks to Turkey, Pakistan and Afghanistan and other Islamic countries for the support extended to Azerbaijan recently on Karabagh issue.
20. H.E. Dr. Bandar M. H. HAJJAR, President of the Islamic Development Bank (IDB) Group also delivered a statement at the Opening Session. H.E. Dr. HAJJAR expressed his thanks and appreciation to the Member Countries for their continuing support to the activities of the IDB Group. H.E. Dr. HAJJAR, in his statement, mentioned the efforts of IsDB group in the fields of value chains, digital platforms, and the supports provided for financing health sector and SMEs for job creation during and post Pandemic environment.
21. Mr. Rifat HİSARCIKLIOĞLU, President of the Union of Chambers and Commodity Exchanges of Turkey (TOBB) and the Vice-President of the Islamic Chamber of Commerce, Industry and Agriculture (ICCIA) also made a speech at the Opening Session. Mr. HİSARCIKLIOĞLU stressed the importance of solidarity and cooperation among the Islamic countries and expressed that one of the best ways to boost the solidarity and cooperation is to increase trade among the OIC member states. Mr. HİSARCIKLIOĞLU stated that TOBB, in collaboration with ICCIA, is undertaking the final preparations for making the OIC Arbitration Center operational soon, which would contribute to enhancement of the intra-OIC trade and investments. Mr. HİSARCIKLIOĞLU also stressed that visa issues continue to be a problem and invited the member states to ease the visa procedures for business people.

## Ministerial Working and Closing Session

22. The Ministerial Working and Closing Session of the Thirty-Sixth Session of the COMCEC was held virtually on November 26<sup>th</sup> 2020, under the Chairmanship of H.E. Fuat OKTAY, Vice President of the Republic of Turkey.
23. Following the adoption of the agenda, Mr. Bilal Khan PASHA, Head of Delegation of Pakistan, as the Rapporteur of the Senior Officials Meeting (SOM), presented the summary of the outcomes of the deliberations during the SOM.
24. Afterwards, Mr. Fatih ÜNLÜ, Director General of COMCEC Coordination Office, made a presentation on the new “COMCEC Covid Response Program”. After briefly mentioning about the programs, projects and initiatives of the COMCEC and the relevant OIC Institutions during the COVID-19 Pandemic, Mr. ÜNLÜ presented the key aspects of the COMCEC COVID Response Programme launched in the purpose of assisting member states in their efforts to alleviate the negative effects of the COVID-19 Pandemic.
25. Mr. Jeff POOLE, Senior Vice President of The World Travel and Tourism Council, has delivered a keynote speech on the impact of COVID-19 on Travel & Tourism Sector and the various ways of economic recovery. After providing some insights about the current situation in tourism and travel sector particularly on negative effects of pandemic on these sectors, Mr. POOLE elaborated on the private sector recommendations on promoting entrepreneurship in tourism sector.
26. Following the presentation of Mr. Jeff POOLE, the Exchange of Views Session of the 36<sup>th</sup> Session of the COMCEC was held with the theme of “Promoting Entrepreneurship for Tourism Industry Competitiveness”.
27. Within this framework, the Ministers and Heads of Delegations of the Member Countries made statements and interventions on their country experiences with regards to promoting entrepreneurship for tourism industry competitiveness in their respective countries. In this respect, they emphasized the crucial role of tourism industry in global and national economies since it is closely interlinked with the other sectors such as transportation and agriculture. They also underlined that some member countries are heavily dependent on tourism and suffered tremendously from the Pandemic. In the presentations, several crucial issues were also highlighted such as developing global tourism brands from the OIC region, supporting SMEs which are the backbone of the tourism sector, promoting tourism entrepreneurship, taking necessary precautions for compensating for loss of millions of job due to COVID Pandemic, adopting the tourism sector to new hygiene norms, new certifications and insurance schemes, disseminating digitalization and providing financial support programs to individual entrepreneurs, tax exemptions and credit support programs.
28. During the Closing Session, the Resolution OIC/COMCEC/36-../RES. was adopted.
29. Afterwards, H.E. Khaled OSAILY, Minister of National Economy of Palestine made a statement on behalf of all participating states. H.E. Khaled OSAILY extended his gratitude to the OIC and CCO for the efforts towards the promotion of cooperation among the member states and for the success of the meeting despite the pandemic. H.E. Khaled OSAILY underlined the importance of electronic platforms and digitalization for the

effective communication during the pandemic, and solidarity as well as cooperation for overcoming the negative effects of pandemic.

30. H.E. Fuat OKTAY, Vice President of the Republic of Turkey, delivered a closing statement. H.E. OKTAY underlined the importance of global food security by stating that 690 million people have lack of food and 130 million additional people are under the risk of being pushed to the edge of starvation by the end of the year 2020. H.E. OKTAY drew attention to the fact that these figures may worsen if the pandemic continues and stressed the importance of supporting the programs and projects launched by OIC institutions as a response to the negative repercussions of the Pandemic, including the COMCEC COVID Response Program.
31. H.E. OKTAY emphasized that tourism is one of the most heavily affected sectors from the pandemic and these effects would result in a decrease in global tourism volume up to 80%. H.E. OKTAY also highlighted that this pandemic, on the other hand, provides an opportunity for the member countries to revisit their structural problems in tourism sector, such as, limited investments, poor infrastructure, insufficient institutional and human capacity, low service quality and low per capita on tourist expenditures. H.E. OKTAY expressed that encouraging tourism entrepreneurship and building local entrepreneurship capacity are among the efficient ways to address the present and future challenges in tourism industry.
32. H.E. OKTAY underlined the role of trade cooperation for easing the negative effects of the challenging periods during the global economic uncertainties. In this context, H.E. OKTAY stressed the importance of Trade Preferential System among OIC Member Countries (TPS-OIC) and OIC Arbitration Center as important instruments for increasing intra-OIC trade. H.E. OKTAY expressed his hope for the operationalization of the TPS-OIC soon. He also stressed that the operationalization of the OIC Arbitration Center would be an encouraging case point for the other endeavours in various cooperation areas.
33. H.E. OKTAY, by referring to the Palestinian cause as the basis of the establishment of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, underlined the importance of having a common stance on the Palestine issue. In this context, H.E. OKTAY expressed his appreciation for the launch of COMCEC Al-Quds Program aiming to improve the socio-economic conditions in Palestine, in particular Al-Quds Al-Sharif.
34. H.E. Fuat OKTAY concluded his statement by expressing his thanks to all member country delegations, COMCEC Coordination Office, the General Secretariat of the Organization for Islamic Cooperation, the Institutions of the Organization for Islamic Cooperation and other international organizations for their active and valuable contributions.

*(The text of the Closing Statement of H.E. Fuat OKTAY is attached as Annex III.)*

35. All documents submitted to the 36<sup>th</sup> Session of COMCEC will be available on the COMCEC web site ([www.comcec.org](http://www.comcec.org)).