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**INAUGURAL ADDRESS BY
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THE PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF TURKEY
AND CHAIRMAN OF THE COMCEC
AT THE THIRTIETH SESSION OF COMCEC
(İstanbul, 27 November 2014)**

Distinguished Ministers,
Distinguished Secretary-General,
Excellencies,
Esteemed Delegates,
Ladies and Gentlemen

I would like to express my pleasure in gathering with the esteemed delegates of member countries, and wholeheartedly greet you all at the 30th Ministerial Session of the Standing Committee for Economic and Commercial Cooperation of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (COMCEC).

ASSALAMU ALAIKUM WARAHMATULLAHI WABARAKATUHU

MAY THE PEACE, MERCY AND BLESSINGS OF ALLAH BE UPON YOU

I would like to welcome all guests in Istanbul, Turkey.

I am particularly honored to host esteemed guests for the first time in my capacity as the Chairman of COMCEC. For the next five years, we will hopefully be carrying out COMCEC endeavors all together as I closely followed its activities and exerted every effort to support them during my tenure as a Prime Minister.

It will be my and, I believe, all members' goal for COMCEC to take constructive steps for member countries, people and the entire humanity during this period of time.

If we act from our very best intentions, the outcome will never be a failure.

As I inaugurate the 30th Session, I wish Allah blesses our path, fate, and efforts and I pray for that.

Distinguished brothers,

Islamic countries have made major strides in recent years in terms of both commercial and development indicators.

The share of the Islamic countries in global trade has increased by almost 50 % in the past decade.

The domestic trade has also made considerable progress within the same period of time, and the intra-OIC trade has increased by more than 50 percent.

Likewise, the average global real growth rate was 2.7 percent between 2002 and 2012 whereas Islamic countries grew by 5.4 percent during the same period of time.

There is no doubt that such figures show that Islamic countries have delivered a successful performance in economy.

However, as you may know, Islamic countries with such a good performance in economy concurrently suffer from the worst crises of human history in humanitarian and political terms.

Distinguished brothers,

Some member countries rank among the top countries around the world in per capita income while many others rank at the bottom.

21 out of 57 member countries are in the United Nations' list of the least-developed countries.

We are all human beings after all...

Rest assured that there is no way to explain it to ourselves.

In addition, we all have faith in Allah, the one and only God, and we believe in the DAY OF RECKONING.

Even if we can explain it to ourselves and our conscience, there is no way to explain such an income gap on the Day of Reckoning, in that Great Court.

We all are members of the Ummah of a Prophet who answered his hunger by a few dates a day.

We all are followers of a Prophet who shared a few dates presented to himself with neighbors and companions even though he, his family and grandchildren hardly had food, and never left the table with a full stomach even for once throughout his entire life.

We follow the steps of our Prophet who warned his neighbors saying: He is not a believer whose stomach is full while his neighbor is hungry.

As the followers of Islam, the religion of brotherhood and sharing, we are very well aware that there is no way to explain and justify this current situation.

It is not only a question of poverty or income inequality...

My brothers and sisters...The Islamic world has never been identified with blood, pain, tear and conflicts this much.

We bear witness to another incident of Karbala in various countries each and every day.

Our brothers and sister lose their lives every day.

Every day, our children die, our children are orphaned.

Our mosques, masjids, tombs, which are supposed to be the safest places, unfortunately are dreadfully, barbarically and violently turned into grounds of massacre by the very people who claim to be Muslims.

As we fail in making our own mosques the safest places from the murderers who refer to themselves as Muslims, one of our most sacred places Masjid Al-Aqsa is trampled by barbarians right in front of our eyes.

Brothers and sisters,

Believe me, we have the power to solve our own problems and to stop the attacks from outside, and establish peace permanently both across our region and on the Earth.

If so demanded, it might be possible to stop the bloodshed in Iraq.

If so desired, we can prevent the death of children in Syria.

If we unite and act in solidarity, we can put an end to the shame of Palestine's solitude which has lasted for almost a century.

No one from outside will come and solve our problems. We and only us who are to solve our problems.

Look, I say bluntly: Those who come from the outside love the oil, gold, and diamonds of the Islamic World, and they love its cheap labor, its conflicts, its fights and its disagreements.

Yes...Those who come from the outside, those who seem to be our friends, love our corpses, and the corpses of our children.

How long shall we remain indifferent?

How long shall we be patient about this, how long shall we tolerate?

How long shall we seek refuge in excuses for this gloomy scene?

I ask: Can being a Shiite be an excuse to watch children being killed in Syria, three hundred thousand innocent people being murdered in Syria, seven million displaced?

I ask again: Can being a Sunni justify the attacks at the tombs, the terrorist organizations, the ouster of elected officials by a coup d'etat, the shooting of people protesting in the streets to demand their rights?

I wholeheartedly, frankly and consideringly call upon and invite the entire Islamic World and all my Muslim brothers and sisters regardless of their sects:

Please, stand aside and look at the scene.

Who wins? Who loses?

Who benefits from the deaths?

Who benefits from the conflicts?

Who benefits from the existing problems amongst us?

If we can provide these questions with answers, if we can take even the smallest step required by those answers, only then will it mean that we paved the way for solutions.

Brothers and sisters,

I have been subject to the harshest criticism and insults by the Western media because I have attracted the attention to the centenary of the World War I, to the policies framed for the Islamic World.

Only 2 weeks ago, at the First Latin American Countries Muslim Religious Leaders Summit, I said that the Americas were discovered by Muslims before Columbus, and the Western media and those alienated people with inferiority complex targeted me since I simply reiterated this thesis based on scientific facts.

Those who label Muslims as 'terrorists' without any exception do not take any notice of our warnings about Islamophobia.

Those who label Muslims as 'backward' turn a deaf ear to our warnings about racism, injustice, and double standards.

They do not want us to ask any question.

They do not want us to question at all.

They are extremely annoyed by the fact that we remind them of historical facts, history of civilizations, politics, military, and science.

They are even annoyed by the fact that we defend the rights of the poor regardless of their religion, language and race, and that we speak of solidarity and peace across the entire world.

And believe me they do whatever it takes for the sake of an economic system built on injustice.

But neither to them nor to us shall we deem proper such discrimination.

We can never join the ranks of people who take lives, even the lives of children, out of lasting greediness for oil, diamond, gold and energy routes.

We can not have tolerance towards terrorism, attacks on temples, racism and anti-semitism.

We will not be merciless and offensive against them or ourselves.

Brothers and sisters...What is more painful than the sufferings of the Islamic World is, believe me, the ongoing meaningless conflicts.

What is more severe than the tragedy we have been experiencing is indifference, silence and taking refuge in groundless excuses.

In the world, we can find justifiable excuses but, believe me, when the Day of Reckoning comes, all of these excuses will be void.

The innocent children of Iraq, Palestine and Syria will hold accountable not only those killers but also those who pat the back of those killers and even those who remain silent against those killers.

On the occasion of this Meeting, I would like to remind and reiterate:

As Turkey, we never ever have any intentions towards a country's territorial integrity, internal peace, local affairs and politics.

Turkey is a country that seeks to be a member of the European Union, looks towards the West, yet wishes to longingly embrace her brothers neglected for decades.

We do not look at any issue in our region from the perspective of interest.

Just like you, we look at every issue in our region from humanitarian and Islamic perspective.

Brothers and sisters,

Unity, solidarity and alliance are essential to overcome crises in the Islamic World that has been going through the most unfortunate days in its history.

Rest assured that we can solve anything.

Rest assured that we can overcome any problem.

As long as we are one.

As long as we stand together.

As long as ‘we hold firmly to the rope of Allah all together and do not become divided’ as commanded by the Holy Quran.

Whoever has any personal problems, whoever has any sectarian problems or even national interest, must leave them aside and strive for the peace, stability and welfare of the region.

I would like to point out that, with its 57 member countries and 5 observer countries, the Organisation for Islamic Cooperation has the highest number of members after the United Nations.

As the United Nations remain indifferent while our children are bleeding, the Organisation for Islamic Cooperation cannot stand and watch.

With the Organisation for Islamic Cooperation, COMCEC, other committees, our institutions, our non-governmental organisations and our universities, we have the strength to make a difference for the world peace.

We can again make great contributions to global science.

We can make greater contributions to world peace and world politics.

We can mitigate any conflict not only in our region but also in the world and we can hold the hand of any downtrodden or poor people.

We are already making great contributions in the global economy, but we can also set the course for the global economy.

Praise be to Allah, we have all the power, know-how, experience and the potential to put all that into effect.

All we need is alliance, unity and to fulfil the requirements of the law of fraternity.

It is our greatest wish that the 30th Session of COMCEC will be a new beginning for this new concept of alliance.

Distinguished brothers and sisters,

The COMCEC Strategy, which we have started to implement last year, envisions a working method in which the member countries play active roles.

We expect the relevant institutions of our member countries to be driving forces in the realization of the principles and objectives of the Strategy.

I would like to take this occasion to call upon my esteemed brothers and sisters.

Let us please actively participate in all COMCEC endeavours, particularly in the working groups established for the main cooperation areas.

Let us efficiently engage all our relevant ministries in COMCEC efforts.

Distinguished delegates,

As known to you, the Trade Preferential System of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, which is the most important project of COMCEC in the area of trade, has been pending for almost twenty years.

Only a few steps need to be taken by our relevant member countries in order for the Trade Preferential System, the legal ground of which has been finalized in 2011, to be operational.

Taking this opportunity, I would like to call upon all relevant countries and kindly request them to take the necessary steps for the Trade Preferential System to be operational as soon as possible.

Another most important project of COMCEC in the field of trade is the Standards and Metrology of Islamic Countries.

I would like to express my appreciation for the completion of the organizational infrastructure of this Institution and for the fact that the number of members is increasing day by day and I expect all our member countries to maintain their invaluable support.

Another prominent topic related to trade, which has been considered important by COMCEC, is Trade Financing.

Trade Financing has played a major role in increasing the Intra-OIC trade from 10 percent from 15 years ago, to over 18 percent since 2013.

The trade financing provided by the International Islamic Trade Finance Corporation, which has been operating under the umbrella of the Islamic Development Bank Group, has reached a significant level.

I would like to thank these two institutions and congratulate them on their vigorous efforts.

There are many endeavors in which both sector representatives and institutions of member countries have contributed under COMCEC.

Stock Exchanges Forum, COMCEC Capital Markets Regulatory Bodies Forum and Central Banks and Monetary Authorities Meetings have been carrying on their activities in a highly successful manner.

I believe that the COMCEC Stock Exchanges Index, which is a result of the efforts exerted under the Stock Exchanges Forum, will contribute substantially to the capital flows into our member countries in the upcoming period.

I call upon all member countries and relevant institutions to exert any effort required to translate this index into an active investment instrument.

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

We are holding a series of special events such as panels, special sessions and exhibitions in this year meeting on the occasion of the 30th Anniversary of COMCEC.

I hope that you, distinguished ministers and delegates, will actively participate in these events which I believe will be very useful.

I expect that the 15th International Fair organized by MUSIAD will particularly attract your interest and I strongly recommend you to visit this fair.

International Business Fora of MUSIAD and DEIK (Foreign Economic Relations Council) will, I believe, make our COMCEC summit more colorful.

The Palestine Business Forum and the Palestinian Products Exhibition organized by Turkish Union of Chambers and Commodity Exchanges and Islamic Development Bank are also expecting your interest.

To conclude, I once again supplicate to Allah almighty that the 30th Session of COMCEC will be a channel for the accomplishment of the good.

I would like to extend my special appreciation and gratitude to our ministers and delegates who actively contributed to the works of COMCEC for 30 years and the scientific community and our relevant institutions who contributed to the deepening of our cooperation with their academic studies.

Once again I do reiterate the pleasure of hosting you in our beautiful city of Istanbul and I hope the works of COMCEC would bring fruitful outcomes for our countries, nations and the entire humanity and I salute you all with my deepest love and respect.
