



COMCEC

REPORT

THIRTY THIRD SESSION

OF THE COMCEC



İstanbul, 20-23 November 2017

COMCEC Coordination Office

OIC/COMCEC/33-17/REP

COMCEC
Standing Committee for Economic and
Commercial Cooperation of the Organization
of the Islamic Cooperation

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PART ONE

**RESOLUTIONS OF THE OIC FORMING
THE BASIS AND GUIDING THE ACTIVITIES
OF THE STANDING COMMITTEE FOR ECONOMIC
AND COMMERCIAL COOPERATION OF THE OIC**

I

RESOLUTION ADOPTED AT THE THIRD ISLAMIC SUMMIT CONFERENCE ESTABLISHING THE STANDING COMMITTEES OF THE OIC CHAIRED BY HEADS OF STATE

Resolution No. 13/3-P (IS)

The Third Islamic Summit Conference (Palestine and Al-Quds Session), meeting in Mecca Al-Mukarramah, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, from 19th to 22nd Rabi-Al-Awal, 1401 H. (25-28 January, 1981);

Having listened to the proposals by His Majesty King HASSAN II, Chairman of Al-Quds Committee, that three committees will be established and chaired by the Kings and Presidents of the Islamic States,

Proceeding from a firm belief that joint Islamic action needs to be consolidated in the scientific and technological field, and in the economic and trade sphere,

Prompted by the desire to give information and culture a fresh impetus to help world public opinion understand the basic issues of the Islamic nations, particularly those of Al-Quds and Palestine, and to confront the tendentious campaign launched against Islam and Muslims,

DECIDES:

1. To establish three Standing Committees, the first for scientific and technological cooperation, the second for economic and trade cooperation, and the third for information and cultural affairs;
2. These Committees shall undertake to follow up implementation of the resolutions passed, or about to be passed, by the Islamic Conference in those fields; to study all possible means of strengthening cooperation among Muslim States in those fields, and to draw up programmes and submit proposals designed to increase the Islamic States' capacity in those fields;

3. Each Committee shall consist of the representatives of ten Islamic States, at ministerial level, and shall be chaired by the Head of State of an Islamic State;
4. Members of these Committees shall be elected by the Islamic Foreign Ministers' Conference for a renewable term of three years;
5. A Committee shall hold a meeting, if invited to do so by its Chairman or by a majority of its members; its meeting shall be valid if attended by a majority.

II

**FINAL COMMUNIQUE
OF THE FOURTH ISLAMIC SUMMIT CONFERENCE
ENTRUSTING THE CHAIRMANSHIP OF THE STANDING COMMITTEE
FOR ECONOMIC AND COMMERCIAL COOPERATION TO
H.E. KENAN EVREN, PRESIDENT OF THE
REPUBLIC OF TURKEY**

Final Communique No. IS/4-84/E/DEC

".... The Conference decided to entrust H.E. Mr. Kenan EVREN, President of the Republic of Turkey, with the Chairmanship of the Permanent Committee on Economic and Commercial Cooperation..." (Page 18, para 40).

III

**CAIRO FINAL COMMUNIQUÉ
OF THE TWELFTH SESSION OF THE ISLAMIC SUMMIT CONFERENCE
“THE MUSLIM WORLD: NEW CHALLENGES
AND EXPANDING OPPORTUNITIES”
ARAB REPUBLIC OF EGYPT
(6-7 February 2013)**

Final Communiqué No. (OIC/SUM-12/FC/FINAL)

“... We welcome various initiatives aimed at expanding intra-OIC cooperation in such sectors as agriculture and food security, tourism, health, labour, environment, transportation and Islamic finance. In this regard, we commend the role of COMCEC and all OIC committees and programmes in operationalizing the OIC projects and activities, particularly the frameworks for tourism, transportation and agriculture, respectively as well as the OIC Dakar-Port Sudan Railway Project. We call on the General Secretariat and IDB to take necessary measures to speed up the implementation of the project. We also commend the initiative of His Highness the Emir of the State of Kuwait to establish a Decent Life Fund with US\$100 million, from which several Member States have benefitted to support their food security programme.” (Page 28, para 130)

“... We also commend the endeavours under the COMCEC for deepening economic and commercial cooperation among the member states, in particular the operationalisation of the Standard and Metrology Institute for Islamic Countries (SMIIC), the launch of S&P OIC/COMCEC Index 50 Shariah Index, establishment of COMCEC Capital Markets Regulators’ Forum, establishment of OIC/COMCEC Private Sector Tourism Forum and Transport Cooperation Framework within the OIC (Izmir Document 2011). We request the member states to actively participate in the programmes and projects developed under the auspices of the COMCEC.” (Page 28, para 131)

“ ... We welcome the COMCEC Progress Report submitted by H.E. President Abdullah Gul, President of the Republic of Turkey and Chairman of the Standing Committee for Economic and Commercial Cooperation of the OIC (COMCEC), and appreciate his valuable efforts and commendable stewardship for the COMCEC to enhance its effectiveness and improve its institutional set up.” (Page 28, para 132)

PART TWO

**AGENDA, RESOLUTION AND REPORT
OF THE THIRTY THIRD SESSION
OF THE COMCEC**

I

**AGENDA
OF THE THIRTY THIRD SESSION
OF THE COMCEC**

(İstanbul, 20-23 November 2017)

Original: English



**AGENDA
OF THE 33rd SESSION OF THE COMCEC
(İstanbul, 20-23 November 2017)**

1. Opening of the Meeting and Adoption of the Agenda
2. Report on the COMCEC Strategy and Its Implementation
3. The Implementation of the OIC-2025: Programme of Action
4. World Economic Developments with Special Reference to the OIC Member Countries
5. Intra-OIC Trade
6. Enhancing the Role of Private Sector in Economic Cooperation
7. Improving Transport and Communications
8. Developing a Sustainable and Competitive Tourism Sector
9. Increasing Productivity of Agriculture Sector and Sustaining Food Security
10. Alleviating Poverty
11. Deepening Financial Cooperation
12. Exchange of Views on “Improving Transnational Transport Corridors among the OIC Member Countries”
13. Date of the 34th Session of the COMCEC
14. Any Other Business
15. Adoption of the Resolutions

II

RESOLUTION OF THE THIRTY THIRD SESSION OF THE COMCEC

(İstanbul, 20-23 November 2017)

Original: English

**RESOLUTION
OF THE THIRTY THIRD SESSION
OF THE COMCEC
(İstanbul, 20-23 November 2017)**

The Thirty-Third Session of the Standing Committee for Economic and Commercial Cooperation of the Organization of the Islamic Cooperation (COMCEC) was held on 20-23 November 2017 in İstanbul, Turkey;

Recalling the relevant resolutions of the 13th Session of the Islamic Summit Conference, held in Istanbul, Republic of Turkey on 14-15 April 2016, which commended the role of the COMCEC under the chairmanship of the President of the Republic of Turkey in contributing to the realization of OIC objectives in the economic domain and expressed its profound appreciation for the successful implementation of the COMCEC revised statute and strategy adopted at the 4th Extraordinary Summit;

Recalling the relevant Resolutions of the Islamic Summit Conferences, the Council of Foreign Ministers (CFM) and the COMCEC, the 4th Extraordinary Islamic Summit Conference, the COMCEC Economic Summit in 2009, the 44th Session of the Council of Foreign Ministers, and the 32nd Session of the COMCEC;

Reaffirming the commitment of all Member States to the OIC-2025: Programme of Action adopted at the 13th Session of the Islamic Summit Conference held on 14-15 April 2016 in İstanbul, Turkey and to the COMCEC Strategy adopted by the 4th Extraordinary Islamic Summit Conference held on 14-15 August 2012 in Makkah Al-Mukarramah;

Taking note of the submission of the progress reports, working papers and studies on the different agenda items submitted by the OIC General Secretariat, the COMCEC Coordination Office, the Statistical, Economic and Social Research and Training Center for Islamic Countries (SESRIC), the Islamic Center for Development of Trade (ICDT), the Islamic Development Bank (IDB) Group, the Islamic Chamber of Commerce Industry and Agriculture (ICCIA) and the Standards and Metrology Institute for Islamic Countries (SMIIC);

Expressing its appreciation to the Member States for hosting Ministerial Conferences, Meetings, workshops, fairs and other activities in the cooperation areas;

Commending the efforts made by the OIC General Secretariat, the COMCEC Coordination Office and the OIC institutions working in the area of economic and commercial cooperation, namely SESRIC, ICDT, IDB Group, ICCIA, OISA and SMIIC.

Report on the COMCEC Strategy and Its Implementation (Agenda Item: 2)

1- **Welcomes** the Progress Report submitted by the COMCEC Coordination Office highlighting the progress achieved in the implementation of the Strategy; **commends** the Member States and OIC Institutions for their valuable contributions to its implementation and **requests** the Member States and OIC Institutions to further their full support to the implementation of the Strategy.

2- **Requests** the COMCEC Coordination Office to regularly report the progress in the implementation of the COMCEC Strategy to the COMCEC Sessions, the Follow-up Committee Meetings and other relevant OIC fora.

3- **Welcomes** the successful convening of the COMCEC Working Groups in the cooperation areas in accordance with the relevant resolutions of the 32nd Session of the COMCEC and **also welcomes** the research studies and sectoral outlooks conducted and prepared by the COMCEC Coordination Office specifically for enriching the discussions in each COMCEC Working Group Meeting.

4- **Commends** the efforts of the Working Groups towards approximating policies among the Member States in their fields of competence and **welcomes** the policy recommendations made by the Working Groups in their meetings held in February-April and September-November 2017.

5- **Also commending** the efforts of the Member Countries and OIC Institutions for the realization of COMCEC Ministerial policy recommendations, **invites** all the Member Countries to exert efforts, to the extent possible, to implement the policy recommendations and **urges** relevant OIC Institutions to support the Member States in this regard.

6- **Welcomes** the finalization of the nine projects funded under the COMCEC Project Funding in 2016 and the progress achieved in the implementation of the fourteen new projects under the fourth project call in 2017, and **also welcomes** the fifth project call, made by the COMCEC Coordination Office in September 2017.

- 7- **Invites** the Member Countries to utilize the COMCEC Project Funding to implement the policy recommendations developed in the COMCEC Working Groups and adopted by the COMCEC Ministerial Sessions.
- 8- **Calls on** the COMCEC National and Working Group Focal points to work more closely with the COMCEC Coordination Office for effective coordination and communication.
- 9- **Requests** the COMCEC Coordination Office to continue to update member states' missions in Ankara as well as OIC permanent representatives about the work of the COMCEC.
- 10- **Invites** the Member Countries to ensure the participation of the COMCEC National Focal Points and COMCEC Working Group Focal Points, to the COMCEC Follow-up Committee Meetings and the COMCEC Sessions.
- 11- **Encourages** the Member States, which have registered to the COMCEC Working Groups to actively participate in the upcoming Meetings of the relevant Working Groups and benefit from the COMCEC Project Funding for realizing their cooperation projects.
- 12- **Noting with appreciation** that the number of Member Countries having registered to at least one working group has reached 50, **requests** the Member States which have not done so yet, to register to the COMCEC Working Groups and actively participate in the upcoming Meetings of the Working Groups.
- 13- **Welcomes** the holding of the Fifth Annual Coordination Meeting of the COMCEC Working Group Focal Points, organized by the COMCEC Coordination Office on 23-25 May 2017 in Ankara, Turkey.
- 14- **Calls upon** the Member States concerned to respond to the "Evaluation Forms" circulated each year by the COMCEC Coordination Office with a view to following-up the implementation of the COMCEC Policy Recommendations.
- 15- **Also calls upon** the working group focal points to be actively involved in the knowledge production efforts of the COMCEC through, among others assisting in collection and verification of country specific data and providing feedbacks to research studies.

16- **Underlines** that the COMCEC Project Funding can be utilized more effectively by the member countries having advanced capacities in various cooperation areas for sharing their experience with the other member countries.

17- **Expresses** its appreciation to the COMCEC Coordination Office, SESRIC, ICDT, IDB Group, ICCIA, and SMIIC for their efforts towards the implementation of the COMCEC Strategy.

18- **Adopts** the recommendations of the 33rd Meeting of the Follow-up Committee of the COMCEC held on 10-11 May 2017 in Ankara, Turkey.

Implementation of the OIC-2025: Programme of Action (Agenda Item: 3)

19- **Takes note of** the report presented by the OIC General Secretariat on the implementation of the economic and commercial component of the OIC-2025: Programme of Action.

20- **Recalling** the relevant resolutions of the 31st and 32nd Session of COMCEC, **underlines** the importance of the active follow-up of the economic and commercial section of the OIC 2025: Programme of Action by the COMCEC and **requests** the OIC General Secretariat to regularly submit comprehensive progress reports on the implementation of the Programme to the COMCEC Sessions and the Follow-up Meetings.

21- **Taking note of** the preparations by the OIC General Secretariat for the Implementation of the OIC-2025: Programme of Action, **calls upon** to Member Countries and relevant OIC Institutions/Organs which have not done so yet to share their inputs and comments to the economic sections of the Implementation Plan of OIC-2025: Programme of Action for its further development and **requests** the OIC General Secretariat to make the necessary modifications in the relevant sections of the implementation plan in accordance with the observations and report them to the 34th Session of the COMCEC for consideration.

22- **Calls upon** the OIC General Secretariat to invite the relevant OIC Institutions and Organs, including the COMCEC Coordination Office to the Annual Coordination Meetings of the OIC Institutions for ensuring the effective coordination and synergy in the economic activities to be undertaken under the OIC-2025: Programme of Action.

23- **Recalling** the relevant resolutions of the COMCEC Sessions, **requests** the Member States to sign and ratify the agreements in the economic domain for furthering economic and commercial cooperation among the OIC Member States.

World Economic Developments with Special Reference to the OIC Member States (Agenda Item: 4)

24- **Takes note of** the 2017 edition of SESRIC's annual economic report titled "Industrial Development for Structural Transformation". Given the inadequate share of OIC countries in global manufacturing activities, growing trade deficit in manufacturing products and lack of industrial competitiveness, as found in the report:

- **Calls upon** Member States to refocus their attention to effective industrialization policies with a view to enhancing economic diversification and productivity in manufacturing sector, narrowing the gap in economic development and increasing industrial competitiveness at global level.
- **Invites** Member States to establish a strong collaboration at regional level by ensuring better connectivity, integration of production processes (value chains), alignment of regulatory policies, and effective support to trade and investment policies with a view to utilizing huge market for manufactures in facilitating economies of scale for national industries, creating incentives to specialize and trade in diversified products, and improving production efficiency.

25- **Highlighting** the importance of the issues regarding youth unemployment, SME development, productivity, vocational education, trade in services and knowledge economy, **called upon** the SESRIC and the other relevant OIC Institutions to elaborate more on these topics in their future programmes and activities.

26- **Entrusts** the SESRIC to continue monitoring world economic developments and their implications on the Member States and to report thereon to the annual sessions of the COMCEC.

Intra-OIC Trade (Agenda Item: 5)

27- **Taking note with appreciation of** the convening of the Ninth Meeting of the COMCEC Trade Working Group on March 9th, 2017 in Ankara with the theme of "Single Window Systems in the OIC Member Countries", **welcomes** its following policy recommendations:

- Strengthening Single Window efforts in OIC Member States by developing integrated Single Window strategies that reflect national and regional requirements and actively engage the stakeholders in this process,
- Improving the effectiveness of Single Window projects by identifying and implementing necessary changes in the laws and regulatory framework and operational practices,
- Prioritizing flexibility, scalability, safety and interoperability of IT architecture of Single Windows Systems,
- Promoting cross-border interconnectivity and interoperability of the national Single Window Systems in the OIC Region towards establishing Regional Single Window Systems.

(Ref: Document Code OIC/COMCEC/33-17/D(9))

28- **Taking note with appreciation** of the convening of the Tenth Meeting of the COMCEC Trade Working Group on November 2nd, 2017 in Ankara with the theme of “Special Economic Zones in the OIC Member States”, **welcomes** its following policy recommendations:

- Designing and programming Special Economic Zones (SEZ) in line with national economic strategies for ensuring their complementarity with national economic growth targets and industry sector priorities,
- Improving economic performance of SEZ programmes through developing unique incentives frameworks – fiscal and non-fiscal - which attract investments and foster effective and efficient business environments,
- Improving the competitive advantage of SEZ programmes through effective site and sector targeting based on a robust understanding of national economic priorities and competitive advantages,
- Designing an efficient legal and regulatory framework to create a ‘special’ economic operating environment, which considers and complements the existing legal and regulatory environment,
- Assigning/Establishing a single SEZ authority to regulate all SEZs within the country and supporting SEZ programmes through active involvement of key stakeholders and development of SEZ working groups.

(Ref: Document Code OIC/COMCEC/33-17/D(10))

29- **Calls upon** the Member States which have registered to the COMCEC Trade Working Group to attend the 11th Meeting of the COMCEC Trade Working Group to be held on 7-8 March 2018 in Ankara with the theme of “Facilitating Trade: Improving Customs Risk Management Systems in the OIC Member States” and the 12th Meeting to be organized on November 1st, 2018 in Ankara with the theme of “Improving Authorized Economic Operators Programs in the OIC Member States” and **also calls upon** the Member States, who have not done so yet, to register to the COMCEC Trade Working Group.

30- **Commends** the efforts of Uganda in partnership with Turkey and Egypt for the successful implementation of the project titled “Improving delivery of trade facilitation services” under the third project call within the framework of the COMCEC Project Funding in 2016.

31- **Also commends** the efforts of Palestine, Suriname and ICDT for the following projects to be finalized in 2017 under the fourth project call within the framework of the COMCEC Project Funding:

- The Project titled “Facilitating Trade Relations between Palestine and Islamic Countries” being implemented by Palestine in partnership with Saudi Arabia and Algeria,
- The Project titled “Strengthening SME Support Services in Suriname and Guyana to Enhance Participation in Global Value Chains” being implemented by Suriname in partnership with Guyana and Turkey,
- The Project titled “Facilitating Trade: Identifying NTBs among the OIC Member States” being implemented by ICDT in partnership with Kingdom of Morocco, Senegal and Arab Republic of Egypt.

32- **Expresses its appreciation** to the United Arab Emirates for hosting and ICDT and IDB for organizing the workshop on “Trade Facilitation and Single Window in OIC Member States” on 16 - 18 April 2017 in Dubai, United Arab Emirates.

33- **Notes with appreciation that** the “3rd Meeting of the OIC Member States Trade Promotion Organs” was hosted by the Kingdom of Morocco and organized by ICDT on 11-12 October 2017 in Casablanca, Kingdom of Morocco in collaboration Exports Promotion Centre of Morocco (Maroc-Export) and ITFC.

34- **Expresses its appreciation to** the Kingdom of Morocco for hosting and ICDT for organizing the “Workshop on Non-Tariff Barriers among the OIC Member States” on 24-25 October 2017 in Rabat, Kingdom of Morocco under the COMCEC Project Funding.

35- **Also expresses its appreciation to** the Republic of Cote d’Ivoire for hosting and ICDT and ITFC for organizing the “Buyers-Sellers Meeting on Pharmaceuticals and Related Industries” on 2-3 November 2017 in Abidjan, the Republic of Cote d’Ivoire.

36- **Requests** the Member States to actively participate in the trade related activities to be organized by the COMCEC Coordination Office, SESRIC, ICDT, IDB Group (ITFC), ICCIA, and SMIIC in 2018 and also **requests** these institutions to send invitations and documents to the Member States sufficiently in advance of their meetings so as to ensure the widest possible participation.

i) TPS-OIC

37- **Welcomes** the signing and ratification of the TPS-OIC Framework Agreement by Brunei Darussalam and **calls upon** the Member States which have not yet signed or ratified TPS-OIC Agreements, namely the Framework Agreement, PRETAS and Rules of Origin, to do so at their earliest convenience.

38- **Welcomes** the submission of updated concession lists to the TNC Secretariat by Turkey, Malaysia, Bangladesh, Pakistan, Jordan, Islamic Republic of Iran and Morocco.

39- **Invites** the concerned participating Member Countries to convey their updated concession lists at their earliest convenience to the TNC Secretariat with a view to operationalize the TPS-OIC.

40- **Expresses its appreciation to** the Republic of Indonesia for hosting and ICDT for organizing the “Training Workshop on Trade Preferential System among the OIC Member States” in collaboration with the COMCEC Coordination Office on 13 - 14 September 2017 in Jakarta, Indonesia.

41- **Welcomes** the notification made by Pakistan, Bangladesh, Jordan, Morocco and Turkey to the TNC Secretariat on their relevant internal measures to be undertaken for the implementation of the TPS-OIC Rules of Origin, and **requests** the other participating Member States to notify the TNC Secretariat of their relevant internal measures to be undertaken for the implementation of the TPS-OIC Rules of Origin at their earliest convenience.

42- **Requests** the ICDT, COMCEC Coordination Office, IDB and other relevant OIC Institutions to continue organizing awareness raising and capacity building activities with regard to TPS-OIC.

ii) Islamic Trade Fairs

43- **Commends** the improvements in the number and quality of Islamic Trade Fairs and Exhibitions, and **expresses** its thanks and appreciation to the following Member States for hosting Islamic Trade Fairs and Exhibitions in cooperation with ICDT:

- Malaysia for hosting and ICDT for co-organizing with OIC BIZ Malaysia, the 8th OIC World BIZ in Kuala Lumpur on 18-21 September 2017;
- The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia for hosting and ICDT for organizing the “10th Exhibition of Agribusiness Industries of the OIC Member States” in Jeddah on 23- 26 April 2017.
- The Republic of Senegal for hosting “1st OIC Green Economy Expo” on 26-29 October 2017

44- **Welcomes** the offer of the following Member States to host Islamic Trade Fairs and Exhibitions in cooperation with ICDT in 2017-2018 and **requests** all Member States to encourage active participation of their private sector and relevant institutions in these events:

- The Republic of Turkey to host the “5th OIC Halal Expo” in Istanbul on 23-25 November 2017 in cooperation with SMIIC,
- The State of Kuwait to host an “Exceptional OIC Trade Fair” in Kuwait-City on 6-10 February 2018,
- The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia to host the “2nd Exhibition on Furniture and Decoration of the OIC Member States” on 13-16 March 2018 and “11th Exhibition of Agribusiness Industries of the OIC Member States” on 20- 23 March 2018 in Jeddah
- The Republic of Senegal to host the “1st OIC Fisheries and Marine Expo” in May 2018 in Dakar,
- Cote d’Ivoire to host the “4th Health Fair” in 2018 and “1st Forum on Social Economy and Solidarity among the Member Countries” and “Ivorian Handicraft Market” on 30 March- 8 April 2018 in Abidjan in collaboration with the IDB.
- The Islamic Republic of Iran to host the “Islamic Clothing Fashion Expo and Conference” on 22-25 April 2018 in Tehran,

- The Kingdom of Morocco to host the “Conference and Expo of Arab African on Logistics and Transportation” in Rabat on 25-27 April 2018,
- The Arab Republic of Egypt to host the “3rd Tourism Fair of the OIC Member States” in Cairo in the second half of 2018,
- The Kingdom of Morocco to host the “4th Higher Education Services among the OIC Member States” in Casablanca on 26-29 April 2018,
- The Republic of Turkey to host the “6th OIC Halal Expo” in Istanbul on 29 November-1 December 2018 in cooperation with SMIIC.

45- **Reiterates** its request to ICDT to continue holding sector specific fairs in cooperation with the Member States and submit regular progress reports on the fairs to the COMCEC Sessions.

46- **Also reiterates** its request to the Member States to encourage their private sector to actively participate in the Islamic Trade Fairs.

iii) WTO Related Technical Assistance

47- **Expresses** its thanks and appreciation to the IDB Group and ICDT for organizing WTO- related training courses and seminars for the benefit of the Member States.

48- **Calls on** IDB and ICDT to continue providing technical assistance to the Member States on WTO-related issues and to enhance their efforts in sensitizing the Member States to the impact of WTO trade negotiations on their economies and **requested** IDB and ICDT to synergize and coordinate their efforts to strengthen the human and institutional capacities of the OIC Member States, so as to facilitate their full integration into the multilateral trading system on an equitable and fair basis.

49- **Calls upon** the WTO members of the OIC to assist non-WTO Members of the OIC in their accession process to WTO.

50- **Expresses its appreciation** to the Kingdom of Morocco for hosting and ICDT for organizing the Workshop on “Mechanisms for Settlement of Trade and Investment Disputes for OIC Member States” in Casablanca, Morocco on 20-21 February 2017.

51- **Also expresses its appreciation** to the Kingdom of Morocco for hosting and ICDT, IDB and SESRIC for jointly organizing the Workshop on “Trade in Services in OIC Member States” in Casablanca, Morocco, on 22-23 March 2017 and the Workshop on the

“Preparation of WTO Ministerial Conference 11: An African Perspective” on 17-19 July 2017, Casablanca, Kingdom of Morocco.

52- **Requests ICDT and IDB Group** to submit a working paper for the consideration of the next COMCEC meeting about practical options to increase OIC Ministers of Trade Coordination vis-à-vis recent developments in the negotiations at the WTO and to formulate positions on priority issues for OIC countries in the current Doha Development Round and on new issues currently being proposed in the WTO.

iv) Trade Financing Activities

53- **Appreciates** the trade finance, promotion and development activities of ITFC and the mobilization of funds from the international market and development partners for funding the trade operations in the Member States, contributing towards the achievement of intra-OIC trade target of 25 percent.

54- **Takes note with appreciation** that ITFC’s cumulative approvals and disbursement in trade finance reached, since its inception until now, US\$38.6 billion and US\$28.8 billion respectively, and its total approvals and disbursement in 2016 reached US\$4.5 billion and US\$4.8 billion respectively.

55- **Also takes note with appreciation** IDB Group’s (ITFC and ICIEC) increased regional presence through the Dakar Regional Office and Country Gateway Offices in Dhaka, Istanbul, Jakarta and Dubai which brought ITFC and ICIEC closer to clients and enabled it to serve member countries' needs.

56- **Commends** the efforts of ITFC in financing SMEs and Least Developed Member Countries and **takes note** of its efforts to diversify its portfolio and extend more financing for agriculture sector that has direct and prominent impact on improving productivity, job creation, increasing export revenues and alleviating poverty.

57- **Calls upon** the Member States to complete their membership requirements for the institutions of the IDB Group (ITFC and ICIEC) so that the IDB Group implements its mandate successfully.

58- **Also takes note** of the efforts of the ITFC to organize a Trade Development Forum to raise awareness of the private sectors of the Member States on the trade development and finance facilities of the ITFC and **encourages** the private sector organizations of the Member States to actively participate in the Forum.

59- **Takes note of** the trade promotion and capacity development initiatives being implemented by ITFC under its various flagship programs including Aid for Trade Initiative for Arab States (AFTIAS), Arab Africa Trade Bridge Program (AATB), Trade Knowledge Network and Trade Development Forum to raise awareness of the private sectors on the activities of the ITFC.

60- **Takes note** of the efforts of the ITFC in implementing integrated Trade Programmes for commodity development through blending its trade finance facilities with its trade related technical assistance interventions and **requests** ITFC to develop similar programs for other strategic commodities.

61- **Also takes note** of ITFC's efforts for the diversification of Islamic Financial Instruments, supporting training programs on Islamic finance and promoting Islamic Finance solutions at international fora.

62- **Welcomes** the organization of the launching Forum of the Arab-Africa Trade Bridges (AATB) on 22-23 February 2017 in Rabat in collaboration between Kingdom of Morocco and ITFC.

63- **Appreciates** the ITFC's introduction of the Development Impact Framework as a tool to measure the impact of all ITFC interventions in the OIC Member Countries.

64- **Takes note of** the proposal made by ICIEC on "Business Intelligence Center" and **requests** the ICIEC to further elaborate on the proposal in cooperation with the relevant OIC Institutions and prepare a detailed concept note and submit it to the 32nd Meeting of the COMCEC Sessional Committee and 34th Meeting of the COMCEC Follow-up Committee.

v) Trade Related Activities of SMIIC

65- **Welcomes** the activities of Standards and Metrology Institute for Islamic Countries (SMIIC) in the area of standardization, metrology and accreditation and their impact on trade facilitation and capacity building projects for Member States.

66- **Welcomes** the Republic of Azerbaijan, Republic of Djibouti, and Republic of Iraq as the new members and Kingdom of Thailand as observer to SMIIC, which has increased the number of SMIIC Member States to 33 along with 3 Observers and **invites** the Member States to become a member of SMIIC and actively participate in its technical committees (TCs), Metrology and Accreditation Councils.

67- **Welcomes** the increasing visibility of the SMIIC and **expresses** its appreciation to the SMIIC for organizing capacity building activities in its field of competence.

68- **Welcomes** the establishment of four new Technical Committees in SMIIC on Halal Management System, Dangerous Goods Transportation Requirements on Transportation, Jewellery and Petroleum and Petroleum Products and the reactivation of the Terminology Committee (15 technical committees in total) and the organization of the 3 Technical Committee Week Meetings in 2017.

69- **Expresses its appreciation** to the Republic of Turkey for hosting and SMIIC for supporting the World Halal Summit in Istanbul on 15-17 December 2016 and **calls upon** the Member States to participate in the next World Halal Summit to be held on 23-25 November 2017 in Istanbul under the auspices of the Presidency of the Republic of Turkey.

Enhancing the Role of Private Sector in Economic Cooperation (Agenda Item:6)

70- **Takes note of** the efforts of the ICCIA in organizing Forums, Training Program, B2B Meetings, Seminars and Workshops in order to galvanize the role of the Private Sector to expand their network and increase their trading and investment opportunities.

71- **Encourages** the Chambers of Commerce of the Member States to be actively involved in the ICCIA's activities.

72- **Takes note of** the organization of the Workshop on Key Infrastructure Development for Rural Growth for OIC Countries, in Istanbul, Turkey on 24-25 April 2017 and the Training Program on Entrepreneurship Development through IT for OIC Countries in Sharjah, on 7-9 August 2017.

73- **Also takes note** of the following activities to be organized by the ICCIA and **calls upon** the private sector of the Member States to actively participate in the following activities:

- The 17th Private Sector Meeting for the OIC Member States, to be held in the State of Kuwait in 2018,
- The 10th Businesswomen Forum in Islamic Countries to be held in Sudan / Egypt in 2018,
- The Trade Exchange Forum/Exhibition (Sector-wise) to be held in 2018,
- A Training Program on “Technology Entrepreneurship Advocacy and Management of Business Incubation & Technology Parks” to be held in 2018,

- A Specialized Workshop/Training Program on (Development of SMEs / Skill Development / Food Security/ Textile & Garments/ Renewable Energy and Tourism) to be held in 2018,
- Chambers of Commerce Forum in 2018,
- Conference on Muslim Business-Owners in 2018.

74- **Takes note of** the progress made by the ICCIA and the Union of Chambers and Commodity Exchanges of Turkey (TOBB), Konya Chamber of Commerce and Konya Commodity Exchange to introduce the best practices adopted by Konya for the exchange of commodities in Sudan and to the other interested member countries.

75- **Recalling** the relevant resolutions of the 43rd and 44th Meeting of the Council of Foreign Ministers and 32nd Session of the COMCEC, **takes note** of the briefing by the ICCIA and the Union of Chambers and Commodity Exchanges of Turkey (TOBB) on setting up of the OIC Arbitration Center in İstanbul, **welcomes** the offer of the TOBB to host a series of task force meetings in 2018 to finalize technical preparations for the establishment of the Center and **requests** ICCIA and TOBB to submit a report to the 34th Meeting of the Follow-up Committee and 34th Session of the COMCEC.

Improving Transport and Communications (Agenda Item: 7)

76- **Taking note with appreciation** of the convening of the 9th Meeting of the Transport and Communications Working Group held on March 16th, 2017 in Ankara, Republic of Turkey with the theme of “Increasing Broadband Internet Penetration in the OIC Member Countries”, **welcomes** its following policy recommendations;

Policy Recommendations for all OIC Member Countries

- Preparing national broadband strategies with the involvement of the all relevant stakeholders,
- Enhancing digital literacy by embedding programs in the formal education system and encouraging non-formal initiatives targeting specific segments of the population,

Policy Recommendations for the OIC Member Countries with Different Stage of Broadband Development

- **OIC Member Countries at an advanced stage of broadband development**
- Achieving high-speed Internet coverage in rural and isolated areas through regulatory holidays and direct subsidies with the purpose of improving the broadband investment business case,
- Enactment of financial incentives to operators for deploying 4G,

- OIC Member Countries at an intermediate stage of broadband development

- Reducing cost of broadband services through targeted public policy initiatives,
- Lowering the cultural and linguistic barriers through development of local platforms, content, and applications,

- OIC Member Countries at an initial stage of broadband development

- Offering a low-priced broadband service for consumers by state-owned and government subsidized telecommunications operators,
- Offering a low-priced or free broadband service targeted for disadvantaged segments of the population.

(Ref: Document Code OIC/COMCEC/33-17/D(22))

77- **Taking note with appreciation** of the convening of the Tenth Meeting of the COMCEC Transport and Communications Working Group on October 18-19, 2017 in Ankara, Turkey with the theme of "Improving Transnational Transport Corridors in OIC Member States: Concepts and Cases", **welcomes** its policy recommendations.

(Ref: Document Code OIC/COMCEC/33-17/D(23))

78- **Calls upon** the Member States, which have registered to the COMCEC Transport and Communications Working Group, to actively participate in the Eleventh Meeting of the Transport and Communications Working Group to be held on March 15th, 2018 with the theme of “Governance of Transport Corridors in OIC Member States: Challenges, Cases, and Policy Lessons”, as well as its 12th Meeting to be held on October 11th, 2018 with the theme of “The Planning of National Transport Infrastructure in the OIC Member Countries” and **also calls upon** the Member States, who have not done so yet, to register to the COMCEC Transport and Communications Working Group.

79- **Commends** the efforts of Turkey in partnership with four other Member Countries for the successful implementation of the project titled “Assessment and Enhancement of Air Cargo Interconnectivity among the OIC Member States: the Air Cargo Co-modality Approach (ACCMA) to Facilitate Intra-OIC Trade” under the third project call within the framework of the COMCEC Project Funding in 2016.

80- **Also commends** the efforts of Cote d’Ivoire for the project titled “Improving the Capacity on Road Safety in Cote d’Ivoire, Burkina Faso and Mali”, to be finalized in 2017 in partnership with Burkina Faso and Mali under the fourth project call.

81- **Welcomes** the offer of the Republic of Sudan to host the Second Islamic Conference of Transport Ministers in 2018 in Khartoum, Sudan and **calls upon** the Member Countries and the relevant OIC Organs and Institutions including the COMCEC Secretariat to actively participate in this important event.

82- **Takes note of** the efforts of the OIC General Secretariat to sensitize the concerned OIC Member States to the need to include the respective national segments along the OIC Dakar-Port Sudan Railway corridor in their national development plans, **requests** the Member states concerned to submit their well-designed feasibility studies to the IDB Group and other international development banks for securing adequate technical support and financing for this project and **also requests** the General Secretariat to regularly inform the concerned Member Countries about the progress in the realization of the project.

83- **Commending** the efforts of the member countries and the relevant OIC organs/institutions on improving transnational transport corridors, logistics infrastructure and air transport services in the OIC region, **takes note** of the following proposals of Tunisia:

- Developing transnational transport corridors and integrated transport networks in the OIC region, aligning legislations and streamlining procedures as well as joining relevant international/regional agreements.
- Improving logistics infrastructure in the OIC region along with the organization of logistics related trainings and capacity building activities and enhanced coordination in a way to support trade initiatives among the OIC Member States and their integration to the international supply chains.
- Developing air transport services in the OIC region with a view of enhancing intra-OIC tourism.

Developing a Sustainable and Competitive Tourism Sector (Agenda Item: 8)

84- **Taking note with appreciation** of the convening of the 9th Meeting of the Tourism Working Group on February 16th, 2017 in Ankara with the theme of “Muslim Friendly Tourism (MFT): Regulating Accommodation Establishments in the OIC Member Countries”, **welcomes** the COMCEC MFT Guideline as a reference document produced by the Working Group.

(Ref: Document Code OIC/COMCEC/33-17/D(28))

85- **Taking note with appreciation** of the convening of the 10th Meeting of the Tourism Working Group on September 21st, 2017 in Ankara with the theme of “Risk and Crisis Management in Tourism Sector: Recovery From Crisis in the OIC Member Countries”, **welcomes** its following policy recommendations;

- Establishing a national committee/task force with the responsibility for tourism risk and crisis management, which will be formed by the national tourism authority of each country and include representation from the stakeholders,
- Increasing awareness of resilience and crisis, including the identified stages of a crisis and how to prepare for and respond to each stage,
- Analyze and understand the risks and plan for crisis, both in terms of external crises and risks affecting the tourism industry generally and individual businesses,
- Ensuring market awareness and positive destination perceptions, and developing new markets and products.

(Ref: Document Code OIC/COMCEC/33-17/D(29))

86- **Calls upon** the Member States which have registered to the COMCEC Tourism Working Group to actively participate in the 11th Meeting of the Tourism Working Group to be held on February 15th, 2018 in Ankara with theme of “Destination Development & Institutionalization Strategies in the OIC Member Countries” and its 12th Meeting to be held on September 13th, 2018 with the theme of “Destination Marketing Strategies in the OIC Member Countries” and **also calls upon** the Member States, who have not done so yet, to register to the COMCEC Tourism Working Group.

87- **Commends** the efforts of Malaysia in partnership with ten other Member Countries for the successful implementation of the project titled “Short course on strategies in enhancing tourism workforce in community-based tourism within OIC Member Countries” under the third project call within the framework of the COMCEC Project Funding in 2016.

88- **Also commends** the efforts of the Gambia in partnership with Senegal and Mali for the successful implementation of the project titled “Enhancing the capacity of craft producers in OIC Member Countries” under the third project call within the framework of the COMCEC Project Funding in 2016.

89- **Further commends** the efforts of Mozambique, Sudan, Gambia and SESRIC for the following projects being implemented in 2017 under the fourth project call within the framework of the COMCEC Project Funding:

- The Project titled “Enhancing Capacity of Muslim Friendly Tourism Workforce” being implemented by Mozambique in partnership with Mali and Senegal,
- The Project titled “Enhancing The Capacity of Craft Producers and Customers in the OIC Member Countries” being implemented by Sudan in partnership with Chad and Djibouti,
- The Project titled “Developing a Training and Certification Program for the Muslim Travel, Tourism and Hospitality Industry” being implemented by Gambia in partnership with Nigeria and Senegal,
- The Project titled “Training Program on the Development and Promotion of Muslim Friendly Tourism in the OIC Member Countries” being implemented by SESRIC in partnership with 18 member countries.

90- **Welcomes** the holding of the 10th Tehran International Tourism Exhibition on 6-9 February, 2017 in Tehran, the Islamic Republic of Iran.

91- **Also welcomes** the offer of the People’s Republic of Bangladesh to host 10th Session of the Islamic Conference of Tourism Ministers on 5-7 February 2018 in Dhaka and **calls upon** the Member Countries and the relevant OIC Organs and Institutions including the COMCEC Secretariat to actively participate in this important event.

92- **Takes note** of the report of the 5th Meeting of the OIC/COMCEC Private Sector Tourism Forum held on May 4th, 2017 in İstanbul with the theme of “Crisis Communication and Management in Tourism: Recent Challenges and Solutions in OIC Countries” **calls upon** the Member Countries to participate in the 6th Meeting of the Forum to be held on March 8th, 2018 in İstanbul, Turkey with the theme of “Cultural Heritage as a Tool of Sustainable Tourism in the OIC Region.”

Increasing Productivity of Agriculture Sector and Sustaining Food Security (Agenda Item: 9)

93- **Taking note with appreciation** of the convening of the 9th Meeting of the Agriculture Working Group on February 23rd, 2017 in Ankara with the theme of “Reducing Food Waste in the OIC Member Countries”, **welcomes** its following policy recommendations;

- Developing a specific legislative framework and road map for reducing food waste in a holistic context including supply chain,
- Promotion of food banks and food distribution networks,
- Conducting cohesive initiatives and campaigns to increase awareness on food waste in supply chain and consumption.

(Ref: Document Code OIC/COMCEC/33-17/D(34))

94- **Taking note with appreciation** of the convening of the 10th Meeting of the COMCEC Agriculture Working Group held on September 28th, 2017 with the theme of “Improving Agricultural Market Performance: Creation and Development of Market Institutions”, **welcomes** its following policy recommendations;

- Establishing/improving a Farmer Registry System for farmers/farmer organizations to provide customized supports and assistance as well as extension and market information for farmers,
- Developing policies/programs/mechanisms to improve farmers’ timely access to quality inputs (e.g. seeds, pesticides, fertilizers, and other key ingredients) with a view to increasing quality, quantity and marketability of end products,
- Providing need based capacity development support and training to farmers and farmer associations for increasing their access to warehousing and storage capacity,
- Establishing/improving the ingredient and input traceability as well as marketing oriented product standardization and certification to enhance safety and marketability of agricultural products in both domestic and international markets.

(Ref: Document Code OIC/COMCEC/33-17/D(35))

95- **Calls upon** the Member States which have registered to the COMCEC Agriculture Working Group to actively participate in the 11th Meeting of the Agriculture Working Group to be held on February 22nd, 2018 in Ankara with theme of “Improving Agricultural Market Performance: Developing Agricultural Market Information Systems” and its 12th Meeting to be held on September 20th, 2018 with the theme of “Analysis of Agri-food Trade Structures to Promote Agri-food Trade Networks among the OIC Member Countries” and **also calls upon** the Member States, who have not done so yet, to register to the COMCEC Agriculture Working Group.

96- **Commends** the efforts of Iran, Palestine and Turkey for the successful implementation of the following projects respectively under the third project call within the framework of the COMCEC Project Funding in 2016:

- The Project titled “Rural household empowerment on management of production, supply and market access”; which was implemented by Iran in partnership with Azerbaijan and Turkey,
- The Project titled “Improving small ruminates productivity by using different technologies as silage, feed block and hydroponic” which was implemented by Palestine in partnership with Jordan and Tunisia,
- The Project titled “Establishment of database, network connection and webpages of smallholders/ family farmers’ agricultural cooperatives between the OIC Member States” which was implemented by Turkey in partnership with 24 Member Countries.

97- **Also commends** the efforts of the Gambia and Indonesia for the following projects being implemented in 2017 under the fourth project call within the framework of the COMCEC Project Funding:

- The Project titled “Reduction of Post-Harvest losses in Cereals for Improve Rural Livelihood” being implemented by Gambia in partnership with Indonesia and Nigeria,
- The Project titled “Improving income of small and medium scale farmers in the OIC Member States through Reducing Losses of Livestock Production” being implemented by Indonesia in partnership with Brunei Darussalam, Arab Republic of Egypt, Malaysia and Sudan.

98- **Welcomes** the offer of the Republic of Turkey to host the Eighth OIC Ministerial Conference on Food Security and Agricultural Development in 2018 in İstanbul and **calls upon** the Member Countries and the relevant OIC Organs and Institutions including the COMCEC Secretariat to actively participate in this important event.

Alleviating Poverty (Agenda Item:10)

99- **Taking note with appreciation** of the convening of the 9th Meeting of the Poverty Alleviation Working Group on April 6th, 2017 in Ankara with the theme of “Malnutrition in the OIC Member Countries: A Trap for Poverty”, **welcomes** its following policy recommendations;

- Developing and implementing nutrition-specific and nutrition-sensitive interventions, especially towards women of reproductive age from vulnerable groups,
- Improving infant and young child feeding (IYCF) practices,
- Ensuring universal access to healthcare, safe water and sanitation, and launching educational campaigns on infectious diseases to eliminate all forms of undernutrition,
- Providing access to safe and nutritious food for all with community-based initiatives and by forming resilient capacities for food-security.

(Ref: Document Code OIC/COMCEC/33-17/D(39))

100- **Taking note with appreciation** of the convening of the 10th Meeting of the Poverty Alleviation Working Group held on October 5th, 2017 in Ankara, with the theme of “Education of Disadvantaged Children: The Key to Escape from Poverty”, **welcomes** its following policy recommendations;

- Improving access of poor and disadvantaged children to education through eliminating/reducing school fees and by developing conditional cash transfer and school feeding programmes,
- Enabling access of children in rural and remote areas by establishing new schools or providing free transportation for the children living in these regions,
- Increasing access to inclusive education for children including those having disabilities by formulation of necessary political and legal framework as well as by providing them better assistance in the school environment,
- Prioritizing gender equality and equity in access to education,
- Mobilizing and optimizing more financial resources and human capital towards improving the quality of education.

(Ref: Document Code OIC/COMCEC/33-17/D(40))

101- **Calls upon** the Member States which have registered to the COMCEC Poverty Alleviation Working Group to actively participate in the 11th Meeting of the Working Group to be held on April 5th, 2018 in Ankara with the theme of “*Quality of Education in the OIC Member Countries*”, as well as its 12th Meeting to be held on October 4th, 2018 with the theme of “*Skills Development and Vocational Education in the OIC Member*

Countries” and **also calls upon** the Member States, who have not done so yet, to register to the COMCEC Poverty Alleviation Working Group.

102- **Commends** the efforts of Indonesia in partnership with Malaysia and Turkey for the successful implementation of the project titled “Developing local initiatives for poverty alleviation through community based sustainable livelihood in OIC Member Countries” under the third project call within the framework of the COMCEC Project Funding in 2016.

103- **Also commends** the efforts of Albania, Gambia, Indonesia and Suriname for the following projects being implemented in 2017 under the fourth project call within the framework of the COMCEC Project Funding:

- The Project titled “Creation of a Road Map for an Integrated Social Service for Housing” implemented by Albania in partnership with Turkey and Azerbaijan,
- The Project titled “Training on Entrepreneurship and Management of Small Business for Women in The Gambia, Senegal and Sierra Leone” implemented by Gambia in partnership with Sierra Leone and Senegal,
- The Project titled “Strengthening Community-Based Sustainable Livelihood for Activating Poor by Opening Marketing Channel through E-Commerce” implemented by Indonesia in partnership with Turkey and Malaysia,
- The Project titled “Professionalization of Childcare in Selected OIC Countries” implemented by Suriname in partnership with Nigeria and Guyana.

i) Islamic Solidarity Fund for Development (ISFD) and Special Program for the Development of Africa (SPDA)

104- **Commending** the Member Countries, who have contributed to the ISFD recently, **reiterates its requests** to the Member Countries which have pledged to the ISFD to fulfill their commitments and those who have not yet pledged to the ISFD to do so in order to enable the Fund to undertake more developmental projects in the member countries and **also requests** the Member Countries to consider making additional commitments on a voluntary basis.

105- **Takes note** of the observations of the Member Countries for improving the performance of the Fund in serving the purpose of poverty alleviation through, among others, augmenting the project base and outreach of the Fund by focusing on greater number of projects, especially grant based small/medium sized projects and **requests** the

ISFD to take these observations into consideration during planning its future programmes and activities.

106- **Also requests** the ISFD to increase its efforts for resource mobilization and advocacy from different resources including the private sector in the Member States.

107- **Welcomes** the efforts of the Islamic Development Bank (IDB) for mobilization of resources from different financing institutions for the implementation of the Special Programme for the Development of Africa (SPDA).

108- **Recalling** the relevant resolutions of the 31st and 32nd Sessions of the COMCEC, **reiterates its request** to the IDB to finalize the allocation of the funding to the SESRIC's capacity building project for the successful finalization of the OIC Cotton Programme.

ii) OIC-VET Program

109- **Appreciates** the continuous efforts of SESRIC towards initiating and implementing various capacity building programmes and training courses in different fields and areas of interest to the Member States with a view to enhancing the capacities and quality of human resources in these countries and **called upon** SESRIC to mobilize more financial resources towards the programme.

110- **Taking note of** the report presented by SESRIC on OIC-VET Programme and appreciating SESRIC's contribution to the establishment of a Vocational Training Center at the Islamic University in Uganda, **requests** SESRIC and other OIC Institutions to exert efforts in the establishment of a similar capacity within the projected Islamic University in Kabul.

111- **Calls upon** the Member States to participate in and support the various capacity building programmes of SESRIC under the OIC-VET Programme.

iii) Implementation of the SDGs

112- **Recalling** the relevant resolution of the 32nd Session of the COMCEC, **takes note of** the list of SDGs-related activities of the relevant OIC Institutions compiled by the COMCEC Coordination Office towards the implementation of the SDGs in the Member Countries and **calls upon** the Member States and relevant OIC Institutions to closely follow up and participate in these activities.

113- **Request** the COMCEC Coordination Office to continue compiling the SDGs related activities of the relevant OIC Institutions and submit the list to the annual COMCEC Sessions.

114- **Taking note with appreciation** of the report presented by SESRIC on Tendency Survey on SDG Priorities of OIC Member Countries, **invites** the Member States, who have not done so yet, to complete the “Tendency Survey on SDG Priorities of OIC Member Countries” designed and circulated by the SESRIC and **requests** SESRIC to submit a report on the results of the survey to the 34th Follow-up Committee Meeting and 34th COMCEC Session.

Deepening Financial Cooperation (Agenda Item: 11)

115- **Taking note with appreciation** of the convening of the 8th Meeting of the COMCEC Financial Cooperation Working Group on March 30th, 2017 in Ankara with the theme of “Improving Public Debt Management in the OIC Member Countries”, **welcomes** its policy recommendations;

- Strengthening/Setting up an independent Public Debt Management Unit with well-defined functions and a dedicated debt management strategy,
- Developing/improving domestic debt market,
- Broadening and diversifying the creditor base,
- Lengthening the average maturity of the public debt,
- Applying macroeconomic risk management methods.

(Ref: Document Code OIC/COMCEC/33-17/D(48))

116- **Taking note with appreciation** of the convening of the 9th Meeting of the COMCEC Financial Cooperation Working Group on October 26th, 2017 in Ankara with the theme of “Diversification of Islamic Financial Instruments”, **welcomes** its following policy recommendations;

- Improving the Islamic Finance Infrastructure through Developing Necessary Legal/Regulatory Frameworks for its each Component namely, Islamic Banking, Islamic Capital Markets and Takaful towards Creating an Enabling Environment for Islamic Finance,

- Developing a Sound and Effective Governance Framework for National and Strengthening Coordination of Shariah Governance Standards and Policies across Different Jurisdiction,
- Establishing/Developing Islamic Finance Rating Standards,
- Strengthening Human Capital in Islamic Finance in the OIC Member Countries through Enhanced Financial Literacy and Awareness Programs/Projects by Governments, Universities and Private Sector,
- Facilitating Experience Sharing among the OIC Member Countries in sub-sectors of the Islamic Finance Industry for a Sustainable and Harmonized Growth of the Industry.

(Ref: Document Code OIC/COMCEC/33-17/D(49))

117- **Calls upon** the Member States which have registered to the COMCEC Financial Cooperation Working Group to actively participate in the 10th Meeting of the Financial Cooperation Working Group to be held on March 29th, 2018 with the theme of “Role of Sukuk in Islamic Capital Markets”, as well as its 11th Meeting to be held on October 25th, 2018 with the theme of “Islamic Fund Management” and **also calls upon** the Member States, who have not done so yet, to register to the COMCEC Financial Cooperation Working Group.

118- **Commends** the efforts of the Gambia in partnership with Nigeria and Sierra Leone for the successful implementation of the project titled “Towards an improved institutional framework for Islamic finance” under the third project call within the framework of the COMCEC Project Funding.

i) OIC Member States’ Stock Exchanges Forum

119- **Welcomes** the report of the Eleventh Meeting of the Forum, which has been hosted by Borsa İstanbul on October 31st, 2017 in İstanbul.

120- **Takes note** of the report of the 11th Meeting of the OIC Member States’ Stock Exchange Forum on the various options towards the realization of the highly adaptable web-based gold trading and clearing platform with the ultimate aim of establishing a gold exchange/platform among the volunteering member countries and **requests** the Forum’s Secretariat to finalize the necessary work and report the progress to the 34th Meeting of the Follow-up Committee and 34th COMCEC Session.

121- **Invites** the interested member states to actively support Forum's Task Force to finalize necessary works through accelerating the process of integration of exchanges and harmonization of regulatory frameworks.

122- **Welcomes** the offer of the Borsa Istanbul as the Secretariat of the OIC Stock Exchanges Forum, to host the 12th Meeting of the Forum in 2018 in İstanbul and **requests** all the Member States to actively participate in this Meeting.

123- **Requests** the Member States and IDB to support the promotion of both the S&P OIC/COMCEC Index and sub-indices.

ii) Cooperation among Capital Markets' Regulatory Bodies

124- **Welcomes** the report of the 6th Meeting of the Forum, which has been hosted by Capital Markets Board of the Republic of Turkey on October 31st, 2017 in İstanbul.

125- **Recalling** the relevant resolution of the 32nd Session of the COMCEC, the Session **takes note** of the briefing by the Forum/the Forum's Secretariat on the establishment of the COMCEC Real Estate electronic platform/COMCEC Real Estate Exchange among the interested OIC Member States and **requests** the Forum/the Forum's Secretariat to finalize necessary legal, administrative and technological preparations for establishment of the COMCEC Real Estate electronic platform before the 34th Session of the COMCEC and submit an interim report to the 34th Meeting of the Follow-up Committee on the progress achieved.

126- **Calls upon** the interested member states to actively participate in the establishment of the COMCEC Real Estate electronic platform and invites them to identify their authorized bodies and notify them to the Forum's Secretariat before the 34th Meeting of the COMCEC Follow-up Committee Meeting.

127- **Welcomes** the efforts carried out by the Task Forces of COMCEC Capital Market Regulators Forum namely Capacity Building, Market Development and Financial Literacy and **calls upon** the Member States to support the efforts of the Forum through participating in its meetings, contributing to the accomplishment of the mandates of the Task Forces.

128- **Welcomes** the offer of the Capital Markets Board of Turkey as the Secretariat of the COMCEC Capital Market Regulators Forum, to host the 7th Meeting of the Forum in 2018 in İstanbul and **requests** all the Member States to actively participate in this Meeting.

iii) Cooperation among the Central Banks and Monetary Authorities

129- **Welcomes** the organization of the 15th Meeting of the Central Banks and Monetary Authorities of the OIC Member States on 21-22 September 2017, which was hosted by the Central Bank of Turkey in Bodrum/Turkey and **also welcomes** the offer of Central Bank of Turkey to host its 16th Meeting in 2018.

130- **Further welcomes** the offer of Central Bank of Turkey to host upcoming Meetings annually in Turkey and **requests** all the Member States to actively participate in the upcoming Meetings.

131- **Commends** the training and capacity building programs organized by the SESRIC among the Central Banks and Monetary Authorities of the Member States in different aspects of cooperation and **requests** the SESRIC to continue organizing such activities for the relevant institutions of the Member States.

Exchange of Views on “Improving Transnational Transport Corridors among the OIC Member Countries” (Agenda Item: 12)

132- **Adopts** the COMCEC Ministerial Declaration on Improving Transnational Transport Corridors in the OIC Member States.

(Ref: Document Code OIC/COMCEC/33-17/D(23))

Theme of the next Exchange of Views Session

133- **Decides** on “Facilitating Trade: Improving Customs Risk Management Systems in the OIC Member States” as the theme for the Exchange of Views Session at the 34th Session of the COMCEC and **requests** the COMCEC Trade Working Group in its 11th Meeting, in cooperation with the relevant OIC Institutions, to come up with concrete policy recommendations on this topic and report it to the 34th COMCEC Session.

Date of the 34th Session of the COMCEC (Agenda Item: 13)

134- **Decides** that the 34th Meeting of the Follow-up Committee will be held on 9-10 May, 2018 in Ankara, Turkey and the 34th Session of the COMCEC will be held on 26-29 November, 2018 in İstanbul, Turkey.

III

REPORT OF THE THIRTY THIRD SESSION OF THE COMCEC

(İstanbul, 20-23 November 2017)

Original: English

**REPORT
OF THE THIRTY THIRD SESSION
OF THE STANDING COMMITTEE FOR ECONOMIC
AND COMMERCIAL COOPERATION OF THE OIC
(İstanbul, 20-23 November 2017)**

1. The Thirty-Third Session of the Standing Committee for Economic and Commercial Cooperation of the Organization of the Islamic Cooperation (COMCEC) was held on 20-23 November 2017 in İstanbul.

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- People's Democratic Republic of Algeria
- 4- Republic of Azerbaijan
- 5- Kingdom of Bahrain
- 6- People's Republic of Bangladesh
- 7- Republic of Benin
- 8- Brunei Darussalam
- 9- Republic of Cameroon
- 10-Republic of Cote d'Ivoire
- 11-Republic of Djibouti
- 12-Arab Republic of Egypt
- 13-Republic of Gabon
- 14-Republic of Gambia
- 15-Republic of Guinea
- 16-Republic of Indonesia
- 17-Islamic Republic of Iran
- 18-Republic of Iraq
- 19-Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan
- 20-The State of Kuwait
- 21-Kyrgyz Republic
- 22-Republic of Lebanon
- 23-Libya
- 24-Malaysia
- 25-Republic of Maldives
- 26-Republic of Mali

- 27-Islamic Republic of Mauritania
- 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 Senegal
- 37-Republic of Sierra Leone
- 38-Republic of Somalia
- 39-Republic of Sudan
- 40-Republic of Tajikistan
- 41-Republic of Togo
- 42-Republic of Tunisia
- 43-Republic of Turkey
- 44-Republic of Uganda
- 45-State of the United Arab Emirates
- 46-Republic of Yemen

3. The Russian Federation, Kingdom of Thailand and Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus participated in the Session as observers.

4. The Republic of Kosovo participated in the Session as a guest.

5. In addition to the OIC General Secretariat and the COMCEC Coordination Office the following OIC Organs/ Institutions attended the Session:

- 1- Standing Committee on Scientific and Technological Cooperation of the OIC (COMSTECH)
- 2- Standing Committee for Information and Cultural Affairs (COMIAC)
- 3- Statistical, Economic and Social Research and Training Center for Islamic Countries (SESRIC)
- 4- Islamic Center for the Development of Trade (ICDT)
- 5- Islamic Research Center for Islamic History, Art and Culture (IRCICA)
- 6- Standards and Metrology Institute of Islamic Countries (SMIIC)
- 7- Islamic Development Bank (IDB) Group
- 8- Islamic Chamber of Commerce, Industry and Agriculture (ICCIA)
- 9- Organization of the Islamic Ship-owners Association (OISA)
- 10- Federation of Contractors from Islamic Countries (FOCIC)
- 11- Islamic University of Technology (IUT)

12- Association of National Development Finance Institutions in Member Countries of the Islamic Development Bank (ADFIMI)

6. Representatives of the following international organizations attended the Ministerial Session and Special Sessions:

- 1- Developing Eight (D-8)
- 2- Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO)
- 3- Economic Cooperation Organization Trade and Development Bank (ECOBANK)
- 4- Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC)

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

7. The Meeting of Senior Officials of COMCEC that preceded the Ministerial Session was held on 20th and 21st November 2017 under the Chairmanship of H.E. Ambassador Salih Mutlu ŞEN, 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

8. The Opening Ceremony of the Thirty-Third Session of the COMCEC was held on November 22nd, 2017 under the Chairmanship of H.E. Recep Tayyip ERDOĞAN, President of the Republic of Turkey and the Chairman of the COMCEC.

9. Welcoming the delegates, H.E. ERDOĞAN underlined the importance of consultation in İslam, by recalling a verse from the Holy Quran, which is “Their dealings shall be through consultation” and in the Hadith of the Prophet Mohammad (PBUH) “one who, in performing a task, consults a person adept at it, will deserve the best of outcomes”, however, H.E. ERDOĞAN highlighted that for these consultations during the meeting to achieve their intended purpose, they have to be sincere and the decisions taken need to be implemented and realized.

10. H.E. ERDOĞAN also expressed that the Islamic world has been going through a period of economic, political and social troubles in recent years despite having extensive potential with respect to population, natural resources and geography. In this respect, H.E. ERDOĞAN underlined the significance of utilizing this potential properly by transforming Islamic geography into a remarkable manufacturing base through taking the required economic, technological and cultural development strides and to produce a model for this.

11. H.E. ERDOĞAN continued his statement by highlighting the importance of utilizing all the existing means, particularly the COMCEC, under which the cooperation activities have gained a significant momentum since the operationalization of the COMCEC Strategy in 2013. H.E. ERDOĞAN called upon the member countries to actively participate in the COMCEC Working Groups and to benefit more actively from the COMCEC Project Funding, which are two mechanisms of the COMCEC Strategy for mobilizing the institutional and human resources of the Member Countries.

12. H.E. ERDOĞAN also touched upon the ongoing efforts for the realization of some important COMCEC Projects. Thus, H.E. ERDOĞAN invited all the concerned Member Countries to take action for the operationalization of Trade Preferential System among the OIC Member States (TPS-OIC). Furthermore, while increasing the trade and investments among the Member Countries, H.E. ERDOĞAN stressed developing the ability to resolve their own challenges. Within this perspective, H.E. ERDOĞAN expressed that the establishment of the OIC Arbitration Center would enable rapid, least costly and fair resolution of commercial and investment-related disputes.

13. H.E. ERDOĞAN pointed out the need for paying special attention to the young generations, who provide assurance for the future. Accordingly, this can be achieved by educating qualified and self-confident individuals.

14. Before concluding his speech, H.E. ERDOĞAN emphasized the significance of this year's Ministerial Session's theme that is "Improving Transnational Transport Corridors in the OIC Member Countries."

(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 at the Opening Session.

16. His Excellency Dr. Yousef Al-OTHAIMEEN the Secretary General of the OIC thanked the Government of the Republic of Turkey for the traditional hospitality and excellent arrangements made for the success of this annual event. H.E. Al-OTHAIMEEN stressed the readiness of the General Secretariat to accord greater priority to the socio-economic agenda of the Organization as espoused in the OIC 2025-Programme of Action, which was adopted during the 13th OIC Summit held in Istanbul, Republic of Turkey in April 2016. H.E. Al-OTHAIMEEN expressed that the cooperation activities of the OIC in various areas, including trade promotion and financing as well as cross-border infrastructure for trade and investment have impacted positively on the socio-economic development in the member states.

17. H.E. Al-OTHAIMEEN also expressed that the annual deliberations within the framework of COMCEC transforms the OIC to a veritable international economic actor and contributes effectively to the global agenda on sustainable socio-economic development.

(The text of the Statement of the Secretary General of the OIC is attached as Annex III.)

18. The Heads of Delegations of the State of Qatar, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, the Federal Republic of Nigeria and Islamic State of Afghanistan made statements during the Opening Ceremony. They appreciated the consistent support of the Government of the Republic of Turkey to the COMCEC's activities over the years and thanked H.E. ERDOĞAN for his wise guidance and leadership in enhancing economic and commercial cooperation among the OIC Member States. Highlighting the importance of transnational transport corridors for the development of the member countries, they emphasized the need for deepening socio-economic cooperation and exchanging knowledge in various fields, particularly, science and technology.

19. 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 permanent support to the activities of the IDB Group. He also informed the delegations about the important projects in the field of transport corridors, namely the Trans-Saharan road corridor and Kazakhstan-Turkmenistan-Iran Railway Corridor, for which the Bank has provided financial support for their realization.

(The text of the Statement of the IDB Group President is attached as Annex IV.)

20. 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 also made a speech at the Opening Session. Mr. HİSARCIKLIOĞLU underlined the importance of enhancing solidarity among the Member Countries for the expansion of intra-OIC trade and the realization of the potential of the private sector in this regard.

21. A special signing ceremony was held during the Opening Ceremony of the Ministerial Session. 2 loans agreement were signed between the Undersecretary of Treasury of the Republic of Turkey and the IDB Group. H.E. Mehmet ŞİMŞEK, Deputy Prime Minister of the Republic of Turkey and H.E. Bandar HAJJAR signed the above-mentioned loan agreements.

22. Following the Opening Ceremony, H.E. Recep Tayyip ERDOĞAN received the Heads of Delegation.

Ministerial Working Session

23. The Ministerial Working Session of the Thirty-Third Session of the COMCEC was held on November 22nd, 2017 under the Chairmanship of H.E. Lütfi ELVAN, Minister of Development of the Republic of Turkey.

24. The Session adopted the Agenda of the Thirty-Third Session of the COMCEC.

25. Following the adoption of the agenda, H.E. Ambassador Salih Mutlu ŞEN, as the Chairman of the Senior Officials Meeting (SOM), informed the Session of the outcomes of the Senior Officials Meeting as well as the recommendations of the 10th Meeting of COMCEC Transport and Communications Working Group on “Improving Transnational Transport Corridors in OIC Member States: Concepts and Cases” deliberated by the SOM and submitted to the consideration of the Ministerial Session.

26. H.E. Ibrahim Yousif Mohamed ABDALLA, State Minister of Transport, Roads and Bridges has delivered a keynote speech on improving transnational transport corridors. H.E. ABDALLA highlighted the importance of having smooth functioning transport corridors for enhancing trade and economic development. Afterwards, H.E. ABDALLA, underlined that Dakar- Port Sudan railway project is of particular importance for facilitating trade and investment for enroute countries.

27. Following the presentation of H.E. Ambassador Salih Mutlu ŞEN, the Exchange of Views Session of the 33rd Session of the COMCEC was held with the theme of “Improving Transnational Transport Corridors among OIC Member Countries.”

28. H.E. Dr. Bandar M. H. HAJJAR, President of the Islamic Development Bank (IDB) Group, made a statement on the importance of transnational transport corridors for the development endeavors of the Member Countries. In this sense, H.E. HAJJAR mentioned the significance of developing inter-country corridors and promoting regional connectivity for enhancing regional integration in the OIC geography, as well as improving the connection of the landlocked countries to the international ports and maritime routes.

29. Afterwards, the Ministers and heads of delegations of Member Countries made presentations on their country experiences with regards to transnational transport corridors in the Member Countries.

Side Events/Special Sessions

30. The 31st Meeting of the Sessional Committee was held on November 19th, 2017 as a sideline event with the participation of the relevant OIC Institutions.

(A copy of the report of the 31st Meeting of the Sessional Committee is attached as Annex V.)

31. The side event on the “COMCEC Project Funding: Experiences of the Project Owners” was made on November 21st, 2017. During the event, the owners of the successful projects funded under the third project call of the COMCEC Project Funding made presentations with respect to the implementation of their projects.

32. The special session on “Private Sector Perspective on Transnational Transport Corridors” was held on November 23rd, 2017. The session was moderated by Mr. Turgut ERKESKİN, Chairman of Logistics Business Council, Foreign Economic Relations Board of Turkey (DEİK). The speakers for this special session were as follows: Mr. François DAVENNE, Secretary General of Intergovernmental Organisation for International Carriage by Rail (OTIF), Mr. Majid Sabbagh KERMANI, Director of ICD, IDB Group, Mr. Medih DİZDAR, Director of Oyak-Renault.

33. The special session on the “Governance of Transnational Transport Corridors: a Managerial Perspective” was held on November 23rd, 2017. The session was moderated by Mr. Mircea CIOPRAGA, Secretary General of the TRACECA. Mr. Elias Leju LEONARDO, Director for Monitoring and Evaluation of NCTTCA, Mr. Ali Haider ALTAF, Director of ETS SAARC Secretariat and Mr. Sinan KUŞÇU, Deputy Director General of the Ministry of Transport, Maritime Affairs and Communications of the Republic of Turkey were the speakers of this special session.

34. The special session on “Economic Impacts of Transnational Transport Corridors” was held on November 23rd, 2017. The session was moderated by Prof. Roger VICKERMAN, University of Kent. The speakers of this special session were as follows: Prof. Eduardo HADDAD, University of Sao Paulo, Prof. Euijune KIM, Seoul National University and Prof. Dr. Carolina Cosculluela MARTÍNEZ, King Juan Carlos University.

35. The special session on “Developing Special Transnational Transport Corridors” was held on November 23rd, 2017. The session was moderated by H.E. Ibrahim Yousif Mohamed ABDALLA, State Minister of Transport, Roads and Bridges. The other speakers at this session were, H.E. Hamid OPELOYERU, Assistant Secretary General Organization of Islamic Cooperation; Prof. James Jixian WANG, Research Centre of One-Belt-One-Road the City University of Hong Kong and Mr. Cavid QURBANOV, Chairman of Azerbaijan Railways.

36. The Forum on Transnational Transport Corridors was held on November 23rd, 2017. The session was moderated by Prof. Roger VICKERMAN, University of Kent. The speakers of this special session were as follows: H.E. Ibrahim Yousif Mohamed ABDALLA, State Minister of Transport, Roads and Bridges, Mr. Turgut ERKESKİN, Chairman of Logistics Business Council, Foreign Economic Relations Board of Turkey (DEİK) and Mr. Mircea CIOPRAGA, Secretary General of the TRACECA.

37. As a sideline event of the 33rd Session of COMCEC, COMCEC Project Funding Exhibition took place on 20-23 November 2017.

Closing Session:

38. The Closing Session of the Thirty-Third Session of the COMCEC was held on November 23rd, 2017 under the Chairmanship of H.E. Lütfi ELVAN, Minister of Development of the Republic of Turkey.

39. H.E. Yousaf JUNAID, Rapporteur of the Senior Officials Meeting, summarized the outcomes of the Senior Officials Meeting and Ministerial Declaration on Improving Transnational Transport Corridors in the OIC Member States and highlighted some salient points in the Resolutions and Declaration.

40. The Session adopted Resolution OIC/COMCEC/33-17/RES. and Ministerial Declaration on Improving Transnational Transport Corridors in the OIC Member States.

41. H.E. Ambassador Hameed OPELOYERU, Assistant Secretary General read out the message of H.E. Dr. Yousef Al-OTHAIMEEN, Secretary General of the OIC. In his message H.E. Al-OTHAIMEEN extended his congratulations to the Republic of Turkey for hosting the 33rd Session of the COMCEC and to all participants for the successful conclusion of the Session.

42. H.E. Salim MUSLUMOV, the Minister of Labour and Social Protection of the Republic of Azerbaijan, made a statement on behalf of all participating Member Countries. His Excellency the Minister thanked the Government of the Republic of Turkey and all OIC and other institutions for contributing to the successful conclusion of the 33rd Session of the COMCEC. H.E. MUSLUMOV emphasized the need for active cooperation and solidarity among the Member Countries in this difficult period. H.E. MUSLUMOV also highlighted the importance of OIC Labour Center for enhancing cooperation in this important area. His Excellency also thanked the Government of the Republic of Turkey for the warm hospitality extended to all delegations.

43. H.E. Lütfi ELVAN, Minister of Development of the Republic of Turkey, made a closing statement at the Session. Quoting the famous hadith of Prophet Mohammed (PBUH) “Engage in trade, for nine tenths (ninety percent) of rizq (sustenance) is derived from trade” and underlining the critical role of trade for economic development, H.E. ELVAN expressed his concern for the sharp decrease in the Member Countries’ exports in the last four years. H.E. ELVAN also stressed the Member Countries need to take all required actions for economic diversification and

decreasing their dependence on raw materials and single commodities. H.E. ELVAN highlighted the importance of TPS-OIC, which can be used as an important tool for eliminating tariff and non-tariff barriers, facilitating regional integration and thus, increasing commerce among the Member Countries.

44. H.E. ELVAN also expressed that efficient transport corridors have an indispensable role in linking countries and regions. Accordingly, H.E. ELVAN stated that transport corridors connect seaports to inland markets and landlocked countries and regions with others. Moreover, H.E. ELVAN pointed out that improved transport corridors reduce transit times, decrease the costs of freight transport between remote locations. These are all critical for boosting our competitiveness.

45. H.E. Lütfi ELVAN concluded his statement by expressing the significance of Member Countries' active participation in various cooperation programs and projects conducted under the COMCEC.

(The text of the Closing Statement of H.E. Lütfi ELVAN is attached as Annex VI.)

46. All documents submitted to the 33rd Session of COMCEC will be available on the COMCEC web site (www.comcec.org).

A N N E X E S

ANNEX

1

Original: English

LIST OF PARTICIPANTS
33rd COMCEC MINISTERIAL SESSION
(İstanbul, 20-23 November 2017)

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- Mr. ALI AHMAD SAADAT
Regional Development Director of the Minister of Economy
- Mr. HOMAYOUN SEDDIQ
Senior Advisor to the Minister of Economy

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- H.E. ENIS ALIKO
Deputy Minister, Ministry of Infrastructure and Energy of the Republic of Albania

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- Ms. BAHIA LEB CIR
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- Mr. DJAMEL ALILI
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- Mr. ABDELHAMID BELLAHDA
Deputy Director, Ministry of Commerce
- Ms. KARIMA AMEUR
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REPUBLIC OF AZERBAIJAN

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- Mr. KOMAIL ABDULLA RAMADHAN
Third Secretary, Embassy of Bahrain in Ankara
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- Mr. YUSIF AHMED AL GHUSAINI
Head of Arab and Islamic Organizations, Ministry of Commerce and Industry
- Mr. ALI SAID AL JABRI
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- Mr. RABEA AL KHALILI
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ISLAMIC REPUBLIC OF PAKISTAN

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- Mr. SALEEM ULLAH KHAN
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Public Relations Officer, Consulate General of Pakistan in İstanbul

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THE STATE OF PALESTINE

- H.E. Amb. MUSTAFA FAED
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- Mr. MANAL ALI DASOUQI
Director General of Trade, Ministry of National Economy
- Mr. RAFAT OMAR RAYYAN
Director International Organization Department, Ministry of Economy

STATE OF QATAR

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KINGDOM OF SAUDI ARABIA

- H.E. MAJED BIN ABDULLAH AL QASABI

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- H.E. SAAD BIN OTHMAN AL KASABI
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- Mr. SAAD AL-AJLAN
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Director General, Development Bank
- Ms. ASU MUHTAROĞLU
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Consul, TRNC Ministry of Foreign Affairs
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- H.E. REJHAN VUNIQI
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Adviser to the Minister, Ministry of Foreign Affairs
- Mr. JETLIR ZYBERAJ
Chief of Cabinet and Senior Political Advisor, Ministry of Foreign Affairs

- Mr. FATOS SHALA
Official Cameraman

C. THE OIC GENERAL SECRETARIAT

- H.E. Dr. YOUSEF A. AL OTHAIMEEN
Secretary General
- H.E. Amb. HAMEED AJIBAIYE OPELOYERU
Assistant Secretary General
- Mr. BILAL KAMEL SASSO
Director of Protocol and Public Relations
- Mr. LAWAL YAHAYA
Director
- Mr. ALIM ABDALLAH
ASG
- Mr. JAKHONGIR KHASANOV
Professional Officer
- Mr. NAGHI JABBAROV
Professional Officer
- Mr. WAJDI SINDI
Professional Officer
- Mr. HANI SALEM SONBOL

D. THE OIC SUBSIDIARY ORGANS

ISLAMIC CENTER FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF TRADE(ICDT)

- Dr. EL HASSANE HZAINE
Director General
- Mr. MAMOUDOU BOCAR SALL
Head of Department
- Mr. ABDELAZIZ ALAMI
Head of Marketing Department

RESEARCH CENTER FOR ISLAMIC HISTORY, ART AND CULTURE(IRCICA)

- Mr. HALİT EREN
Director General, IRCICA
- Mr. SADIK ÜNAY
Assistant Director General, IRCICA
- Ms. ZEYNEP DURUKAL
Advisor to Director General, IRCICA

ISLAMIC UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY(IUT)

- Mr. MUNAZ AHMED NOOR
Vice Chancellor

STATISTICAL, ECONOMIC, SOCIAL RESEARCH AND TRAINING CENTER FOR ISLAMIC COUNTRIES(SESRIC)

- Mr. MUSA KULAKLIKAYA
Director General
- Mr. ONUR ÇAĞLAR
Technical Cooperation Specialist
- Dr. KENAN BAĞCI
Senior Researcher
- Dr. ATILLA KARAMAN
Senior Researcher

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ISLAMIC DEVELOPMENT BANK(IDB)

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President
- Dr. KEREM KINIK
President, Turkish Red Crescent
- Dr. İBRAHİM ALTAN
Director General, Turkish Red Crescent
- Mr. ABDULHAKIM ELWAER
Director, CRMD
- Mr. ELMANSOUR FETEN
Director
- Mr. BAYRAM SELVİ
Director of Immigration Department, Turkish Red Crescent
- Mr. ADIL MOHAMED ALSHARIF
Adviser to the President, Islamic Development Bank
- Mr. CLAUDIO TOMASI
Country Director, UNDP
- Mr. SALEH JELASSI
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- Ms. DİLÂN BURCU KALİÇ
Assistant to the Resident Representative
- Mr. SELÇUK DAĞ
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- Mr. ABDUL BASIT JAM
Specialist, CRMD
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Energy Specialist
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Senior Specialist
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Protocol Officer, Islamic Development Bank Group
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- Mr. MARWAN TOUHAMI ABID
Manager, ITFC
- Mr. PAUL LOIACONO
Director, ITFC
- Mr. HARUN ÇELİK
Senior Relationship Manager, ITFC
- Mr. HABIB AHMED SYED
Advisor to the CEO, ITFC
- Ms. RAGHDA ELSHARAWY
Manager Corporate Marketing, ITFC
- Mr. NAZIH HISHAM AL NASER
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- Mr. ABDULLAH DENİZ
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- Mr. AYMEN KASEM
Division Manager, ITFC
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- Mr. DJAMEL GHRIB, ICIEC
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Director General, ISFD
- Mr. KHEMAS SALEM EL GAZZAH
Senior Advisor, ISFD
- Dr. AZHARI GASIM AHMED
Lead Economist, ISFD

F. AFFILIATED ORGANS OF THE OIC

ISLAMIC CHAMBER OF COMMERCE, INDUSTRY AND AGRICULTURE (ICCIA)

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Assistant Secretary General, ICCIA
- Mr. ELSADIG GADALLA MUKHAYER IBRAHIM
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ASSOCIATION OF NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT FINANCE INSTITUTIONS IN MEMBER COUNTRIES OF THE ISLAMIC DEVELOPMENT BANK (ADFIMI)

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Chief Executive Officer, General Manager of Ziraat Katılım Bank
- Mr. NURİ BİRTEK
Secretary General
- Mr. ÖMER BERKLİ
Corporate Communication Manager, ADFIMI

ORGANIZATION OF THE ISLAMIC SHIPOWNERS ASSOCIATION (OISA)

- Dr. ABDULLATIF BIN ABDULLAH BIN SULTAN

Secretary General
- Mr. MOHAMMAD ZAFAR BHATTI
Director Finance

STANDARDS AND METROLOGY INSTITUTE FOR ISLAMIC COUNTRIES (SMIIC)

- Mr. İHSAN ÖVÜT
Secretary General
- Mr. LOTFI BEN SAID
Assistant Secretary General

G. OIC STANDING COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE FOR INFORMATION AND CULTURAL AFFAIRS (COMIAC)

- Mr. OMAR SECK
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I. OTHER INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTIONS

ECONOMIC COOPERATION ORGANIZATION(ECO)

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ECONOMIC COOPERATION ORGANIZATION TRADE AND DEVELOPMENT BANK(ECOBANK)

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Vice President
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Deputy Director

GULF COOPERATION COUNCIL(GCC)

- Mr. SAID FAYIL BAIT AL QADHAR
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Senior Specialist, Negotiations and International Relations Department

L. SPEAKERS

SPEAKER

- Mr. CAVID GURBANOV
Chairman of Azaerbaijan Railways
- Mr. FRANCOIS DAVENNE
Secretary General, OTIF
- Mr. ALI HAIDER ALTAF
Director, SAARC Secreraiat
- Prof. Dr. EUIJUNE KIM

- Ms. CAROLINA COSCULLUELA MARTINEZ
Doctor, King Juan Carlos University
- Prof. Dr. JAMES JIXIAN WANG
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- Mr. ELIAS LEJU LEONARDO
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O. COMCEC COORDINATION OFFICE

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- Mr. BURAK KARAGÖL
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- Mr. SELÇUK KOÇ
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- Mr. İSMAİL ÇAĞRI ÖZCAN
Expert
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Expert
- Mr. MEHMET TARAKÇIOĞLU
Expert
- Mr. CAFER BİÇER
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- Ms. VİLDAN BARAN
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- Mr. EREN SÜMER
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Expert
- Mr. M. ADİL SAYAR
Expert
- Mr. NİHAT AKBALIK
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- Mr. OKAN POLAT
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- Mr. HASAN YENİGÜL
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ANNEX

2

Original: Turkish

**INAUGURAL ADDRESS BY H.E. RECEP TAYYİP ERDOĞAN,
PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF TURKEY AND
CHAIRMAN OF THE COMCEC
FOR THE 33RD SESSION OF THE COMCEC
(İstanbul, 22 November 2017)**

BİSMİLLAHİRRAHMANİRRAHİM.

Distinguished Ministers,

Distinguished Secretary-General,

Esteemed Delegates,

My Dear Brothers and Sisters,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

ASSALAMU ALAIKUM WARAHMATULLAHI WABARAKATUHU.

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

I would like to respectfully greet all of you with the most heartfelt feelings, affection and respect as we open the 33rd Ministerial Session of COMCEC, the Standing Committee for Economic and Commercial Cooperation of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation. As the Term Chairman of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation and Chairman of the COMCEC, I would like to welcome all our guests to our country.

We are elated to be hosting such a distinguished and select community at this cross-roads of continents, civilizations and cultures, in the venerable city of İstanbul that was much praised by the Prophet (s.a.w.).

I call upon the Almighty to bless this COMCEC meeting we are holding at a critical juncture and I pray that the Session will be fruitful for our countries, the region and the world of Islam.

In our holy book the Koran, the guiding light of our lives, the Almighty says:

“VE EMRUHUM SÛRÂ BEYNEHUM”, in other words, that “THEIR DEALINGS SHALL BE THROUGH CONSULTATION”.

Also, Rasul-i Ekrem (S.A.W.) says that “one who, in performing a task, consults a person adept at it, will deserve the best of outcomes.”

We have been striving to implement this principle through the COMCEC and through the Chairmanship of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, for which we have assumed the Term Chairmanship for one and a half years.

At almost every opportunity, we seek to learn the views, opinions and, more importantly, the criticism voiced by our brothers and sisters.

Insh'Allah, we will today have the opportunity to listen first-hand to the thoughts and opinions of you, our valuable friends.

In addition to the economic, social and commercial matters on our agenda today, we will, without doubt, also discuss the circumstances in which our region and the Islamic world finds itself today.

As COMCEC, we will not only examine this year, which is now drawing to a close, but will also consider our projects for the future.

I want to sincerely thank in advance all our brothers and sisters who will enrich our meeting with their proposals, thoughts, criticism and comments;

however, there is one point, one that we feel to be lacking, to which I would like to draw your attention to that point.

For these consultations to achieve their intended purpose, they have to be sincere and moreover the decisions taken need to be implemented and realized.

Regardless of how inspiring and eye-opening it may be, an idea that cannot be implemented is doomed to remain as a pleasant yet hollow statement.

These meetings should have meaning, a purpose, one that goes beyond the exchange of views.

In this respect, we also have to strive to ensure that the matters we discuss and on which we take decisions here can be transformed from intentions into actions.

It is only then that our efforts will gain true meaning, and yield results that may remedy the troubles of the ummah.

I believe that with your contributions and efforts, COMCEC will, Insh'Allah, continue on its path with this perspective.

My Dearest Brothers and Sisters,

We have a wise saying that goes: "PEOPLE SPEAK THROUGH THEIR PAIN".

And today, I wish to speak with you openly, WITHOUT DRAWING any VEIL between MY HEART and MY WORDS.

It is obvious that the Islamic world has, in recent years, been going through a period of economic, political and social troubles, a period that may aptly be called a TIME of STRIFE.

Our cities, which for centuries have stood as centers of science, learning and wisdom are now writhing under the weight of destruction, suffering and tears.

From cities that were once havens of peace not only for their inhabitants, but also for the oppressed people from all corners of the world, now rises the cries and laments of mothers desperately clinging to the lifeless bodies of their children.

The sound of the azan is no longer heard from many of Aleppo's centuries-old mosques.

The once dazzling brightness and luster of Damascus has faded long ago.

Baghdad's once wealthy libraries and centuries-old manuscripts have been plundered.

Locations in Yemen that once enchanted visitors are now gradually turning into ruins.

As well as our cities, our joint history and the heritage of our 1400 years-old civilization is being destroyed, piece by piece, before our very eyes.

What is being destroyed and turned to rubble is not merely our buildings, our works, and our material and spiritual heritage; it is also our future.

What is being obliterated is not just the traces that the Muslim civilization has left on these lands, but also our honor and our dignity.

Those apparently responsible for these events that deeply wound our hearts are of course the dictators that oppress their people, and terror organizations that thrive on blood and tears.

We have all seen how packs of murderers such as DAESH, AL QAEDA, BOKO HARAM, YPG and FETÖ are committing widespread massacres in our region, from Syria to Iraq, and from Yemen to Libya;

however, these pawns we see at the front of the stage should not prevent us from seeing the main actors and the screenwriters hiding behind the curtains.

As Mevlana once said, "IT IS NOT FIRE THAT BURNS THE MAN, BUT HIS OWN HEEDLESSNESS."

As told in the hadith-i sheriff in which our Prophet (S.A.W.) says, "BEWARE OF THE INTUITON OF THE BELIEVER!" VERILY HE SEES WITH THE LIGHT OF

ALLAH!”, we must also approach the events in our region with this intuition and insight.

The picture we have in front of us clearly points to a simple fact:

There is a malevolent scenario at play, aiming to destroy the unity, solidarity, richness and, most important of all, the future of the Islamic world.

There is a dedicated attempt to unravel Muslim societies from within, by exploiting sometimes the ethnic, and at other times the religious and sectarian differences in these societies.

They want the Muslim world to waste its energy in internal conflicts by deepening the fault lines among us.

They are aiming to achieve a conflicted, disputed social structure where neighbors consider themselves to be enemies; even brothers and sisters consider each other as enemies and worst of all, they marginalize each other.

Clearly, the West is now trying to guarantee its future by exporting all the malicious issues coming from its past to the Islamic world.

By increasing the tension, they make the resources of the Muslims, through inappropriate means, available to the weapons industry, usurers, speculators, and barons using hot money resources.

In this way, the funds that should have been spent for the youth, women, people in need and for the improvement and construction of our cities are unfortunately being spent for the benefit of the western countries and companies.

Some two to three centuries ago, during the COLONIALIST era, the western world established a prosperity order based on the resources and blood of the oppressed.

The west of today, the time which we can also define as the NEO-COLONIALIST era, is making an effort to maintain and prolong their exploitative system, again upon the resources, pains and lives of the oppressed.

My Dear Friends,

Of course, it is not only our oil, natural resources and labor force targeted here.

What is plundered is not only our earthly wealth.

The main target now is to destroy the life sources of the Islamic civilization.

Their objective is to crush the spine of Muslim societies, and to paralyze all of us economically, politically and socially.

This is because Muslims have succeeded in maintaining their ambitions globally despite the difficulties, problems and attacks they have faced during the last two centuries.

Traits such as unity, justice, freedom and social ethics are still standing as the main pillars of the Islamic faith.

Islam is still considered to be the only way for salvation from the grip of nihilism and materialism that have captured the modern individual.

The reputation of western institutions and organizations has been increasingly crumpled.

Established after the first world war and strengthened with the second world war, the global system has generally been one of the biggest obstacles to, rather than, ensuring justice and freedom.

Indifference to the atrocities being witnessed in Syria for seven years, inhuman treatments to refugees at border gates, and irresponsiveness against the genocide in Arakan have shown the true nature of the west.

Values, such as democracy, human rights and freedoms, have been superseded by increasing Islamophobia, Neo-Nazism and racism.

This list could be made much longer.

My Brothers and Sisters,

In the face of the current picture, I believe that we should sincerely ask ourselves the following questions.

Who are the actual winners for the hundred billion dollar orders being placed for arms by Islamic countries to western countries?

Who are benefiting by setting the sisters and brothers turning towards the same *Qibla* everyday for five times against each other, sometimes over their origin, sometimes over their sect and sometimes their ideological differences?

Who are actually benefiting from fracturing our countries by artificial borders?

I believe that the sincere answers to be given to these questions will lead us to have a new perspective and let us approach the issues in a different manner.

When we succeed we will not only crush the traps, we will also prevent the ones who grow upon our resources.

Muslims cannot unquestioningly accept the role they are given, and they cannot give consent to such roles which will lead to the demolishing of their future through internal conflicts.

As we know now who brought up, nourished and raised this pack of killers, which is blindingly obvious, we can not sit back and watch these enemies of Islam.

Incriminating the entire Muslim world over the activities of the terrorist organizations and grabbing the most fundamental rights on this basis reveals the true intention.

On the other hand, of course if you are ambitious then you should have the resources as well.

Muslims indeed have extensive potential with respect to population, underground resources and geography.

The main point here is to value all of these potential properly, in other words to prepare halva by blending flour, sugar and butter.

Our mission here is to transform Islamic geography into a remarkable manufacturing base by taking the required economic, technological and cultural development strides and to produce a model for this.

Developing our economic and commercial cooperation has become indispensable for assuring the prosperous lives that our people much deserve.

Therefore, we should find the ways to utilize the platforms such as Organization of Islamic Cooperation and COMCEC more efficiently.

but at this point we are still encountering serious problems.

We cannot utilize the means we have as effectively as they should be.

We cannot have any immediate control over the developments in our region and the problems effecting our respective countries.

We can obviously see that our economic and human relations are not at the desired level.

In order to overcome these problems, we have to utilize all the means we have, particularly COMCEC, as an effective platform.

As you know, since the implementation of the COMCEC Strategy in 2013, the cooperation activities have gained significant momentum, although it is still not enough.

The Working Groups and Project Funding Mechanism, established for oversee the implementation of the strategy, are continuing their activities with the support of COMCEC member countries.

The policy recommendations of these groups are implemented with multilateral cooperation projects supported by the COMCEC Project Funding.

Thus, while the institutional and human capacities of our countries are being mobilized on the one hand, a culture of working together for the solution of common problems is also being developed.

I call on the member countries to actively participate in the Working Groups and to benefit more actively from the COMCEC Project Funding mechanism.

My Dearest Brothers and Sisters,

We should focus on projects aimed at increasing trade among us.

For this purpose, we should immediately ensure that the Trade Preferential System (TPS-OIC), which has long been on our agenda, is in operation.

Frankly speaking, every day that we delay in taking action on this matter is a huge loss for us.

I invite all relevant Member Countries to move in this direction.

I also see the work of the STANDARDS and METROLOGY INSTITUTE for ISLAMIC COUNTRIES (SMIIC), which we host in Turkey, as crucial.

The Institute is carrying out serious activities in the standards in various fields, especially in the determination of halal standards in member countries and throughout the world.

We do our best to provide the highest contribution to this work.

Within this scope, we established a Halal Accreditation Committee.

We also expect our member countries to actively participate in the SMIIC's activities.

As we increase our trade and investments, we should also develop the ability to resolve our own challenges.

In my speech at the 13th Islamic Summit last year, I have stated that we need to develop a mechanism for the settlement of trade and investment disputes among Member Countries.

For this purpose, I emphasized the importance of establishing an Arbitration Center within the Organization of Islamic Cooperation.

I am closely following the work for the establishment of this Center being jointly conducted by the Union of Chambers and Commodity Exchanges of Turkey (TOBB) and the Islamic Chamber of Commerce, Industry and Agriculture (ICCIA).

I believe that with the establishment of this Center, we will gain an organization that will enable the rapid, least costly and fair resolution of commercial and investment-related disputes.

Furthermore, it is my hope that the work related to the establishment of the COMCEC Real Estate and Gold Exchanges will soon be completed.

In this regard, we will be pleased to share with you the serious experience and infrastructure that we have in BORSA İSTANBUL (the ISTANBUL STOCK EXCHANGE).

Distinguished Guests,

There is an old saying: “IF YOU’RE THINKING OF ONE YEAR AHEAD, GROW WHEAT. IF YOU’RE THINKING OF TEN YEARS AHEAD, PLANT TREES. IF YOU’RE THINKING FOR 100 YEARS AHEAD, EDUCATE PEOPLE.”

We also need to pay special attention to our young generations, who provide the assurance for our future.

This can be achieved by educating qualified, cognizant and self-confident individuals.

In 2017 we took an important step for this objective, when we organized the Science and Technology Summit of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation in Astana.

During this event, we took crucial decisions about the scientific and technological cooperation among our countries.

At this summit we accepted the OIC Science, Technology and Innovations (STI) Agenda 2026.

The initiatives that we will launch in science, industry and technology, and the innovations that we will make in the field of manufacturing technology and services will provide extremely valuable contributions to our economic development and cooperation.

We need to increase the mobility of our students and academicians in order to fully implement the decisions we have taken.

We, as Turkey, offer higher education opportunities every year to 4500 students coming from 155 countries through the Türkiye Scholarships.

The majority of these students are our own children from Islamic countries.

At present, 9,500 students from OIC member countries are continuing their higher education at Turkish universities through these scholarships.

I hope this number will continue to increase every year, Insh'Allah.

None of our problems is unsolvable.

There is no insurmountable obstacle as long as we act in solidarity and unite our forces.

We must develop cooperation, not only among our member countries but also among diaspora communities spread across scores of countries around the world.

Our people living abroad are of great importance especially in the fight against Islamophobia, xenophobia and cultural racism.

I appreciate the recent steps taken in this perspective and wish its continuation.

I find it particularly significant that this year's Ministerial Session's theme has been given the title "The Improvement of Trans-border Transport Corridors in Member Countries."

I believe that our ministers will take important decisions about the development of transport corridors.

Furthermore, in the special sessions to be held tomorrow, the perspective of stakeholders in relation to transport corridors will be discussed in detail, from all dimensions.

I invite all our delegates to actively take part in these important events.

Before concluding my speech with these thoughts, I would once again like to express my pleasure in welcoming you as guests to our city of Istanbul.

I hope that the 33rd COMCEC meetings will prove to be most beneficial for our countries, and I wish every success to the participants in their work.

May Allah be our supporter and helper.

May Allah open our path and destiny.

Take good care of yourselves...

ANNEX

3

Original: Arabic

**SPEECH OF H.E. DR. YOUSEF AL-OTHAIMEEN,
THE SECRETARY GENERAL OF THE ORGANISATION
OF ISLAMIC COOPERATION (OIC)
FOR THIRTY THIRD SESSION OF THE COMCEC
(İstanbul, 22 November 2017)**

Your Excellency, Recep Tayyip Erdogan, President of the Republic of Turkey and
Chairman of COMCEC,

Your Excellencies, Ministers and Heads of Delegation

Honourable Delegates

Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen

Assalamu Aleykum wa-Rahmatullahi wa-Barakatuhu.

It is, for me, a great honour and privilege to address the 33rd Session of the OIC Standing Committee for Economic and Commercial Cooperation (COMCEC). Allow me to express my sincere appreciation to His Excellency, Recep Tayyip Erdogan, President of the Republic of Turkey, the current Chairman of the OIC Summit and that of COMCEC for his constant support for the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation over the years. In the like manner, I wish to thank the Government and people of Turkey for their traditional hospitality and excellent arrangements made for the success of this annual event.

In my speech before this august gathering last year, I stressed the readiness of the General Secretariat to accord greater priority to the socio-economic agenda of our Organisation as espoused in the OIC 2025-Programme of Action, which was adopted during the 13th OIC Summit held in Istanbul, Republic of Turkey on 15th April 2016. The various cooperation activities of the Organisation ranging from trade promotion and trade financing to the expansion of access to OIC markets under the OIC Trade and Preferential System and the development of cross-border infrastructure for trade and investment have impacted positively on the socio-economic development in our member states.

Accordingly, the recent outlook of OIC economies has recorded a steady but impressive increase in the average growth rate from 3.4% in 2015 to 3.6% and 4.0% in 2016 and 2017 respectively. Similarly, OIC countries witnessed an increasing trend in economic activity with their Gross Domestic Product increasing from US\$ 13.9 trillion in 2011 to US\$ 17.1 trillion in 2015.

In the domain of trade, OIC countries registered a total of US\$709 billion intra-OIC merchandise trade in 2015, thereby raising the level of intra-OIC trade to 20.3% in early 2016, as opposed to 19.33% in the previous year. It is gratifying to note that 32 OIC member states have reached or surpassed the target of 20% intra-OIC trade, while efforts are being directed on those countries with low intra-OIC trade penetration through fostering intra-OIC public and private investment and industrial capacity-building.

Your Excellency,

Distinguished Heads of Delegation

In giving effect to the decision of COMCEC, the General Secretariat has always secured the concurrence of the Council of Foreign Ministers (CFM) and coordinated actively with all OIC institutions for the speedy implementation of the various decisions of this Standing Committee. In the past year, the implementation of the various decisions of the OIC is reflected in the increase in the trade financing interventions by the relevant OIC organs, thereby increasing support for Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises in our respective countries.

Specifically, the International Trade Finance Corporation (ITFC) approved, in 2016, 58 operations in 20 countries, featuring 21% for Least developed Member States. This is in addition to the impressive trade finance approvals and disbursements, which amounted to US\$4.8 billion and US\$4.48 billion respectively. Similarly, the trade expansion transactions of the Islamic Corporation for the Insurance of Investment and Export Credit (ICIEC) have been robust, considering the fact that insurance operations increased by 10% from US\$4.06 billion in 2015 to US\$ 4.47 billion in 2016.

Similarly, the OIC demarches on infrastructure development are gaining momentum with the imminent commencement of regional and sectoral validation processes for the draft OIC Infrastructure Development and Regional Integration

Policy (IDRIP). The proposed policy aims at building effective cooperation and mutual assistance among OIC member states in the area of transportation, energy, trade, industry, agriculture and communications. The sectoral scope of this Policy has received adequate inspiration from the key cooperation activities under the COMCEC Strategy with the overarching objective of transforming OIC markets to a large competitive trading zone and the development of necessary physical and institutional infrastructures for intra-OIC integration and economic revival.

Considering the fact that this COMCEC General Assembly will be addressing transport corridor development during its exchange of views session, it is pertinent to note that the forthcoming 2nd OIC Ministerial Conference on Transportation scheduled to hold in Khartoum, Sudan in February 2018 would, among other issues, review the transport segment of IDRIP, which will undoubtedly utilize the outcome of the brainstorming session to be conducted during this meeting. This is in addition to the robust high-level discussions on transport corridor development taking place on the sidelines of this meeting, the outcome of which would certainly feed into the proceedings of the forthcoming OIC ministerial meeting in Khartoum, Sudan.

In the agricultural sector, the OIC cooperation has received the needed boost with the implementation of the OIC 5-year Action Plan on agricultural development and food security. The major aspect of the plan is the creation of a food security reserve, which will address emergency food security challenges in our member states, including the resolution of the perennial post-harvest losses in our member states. In this regard, I happy to note that the Government of Turkey has graciously accepted to host the 8th OIC Ministerial Conference on Food Security and Agricultural Development here in Istanbul next year. It is my sincere hope that this meeting would further enhance the growing cooperation efforts in our member states, especially the need to create regional food security hubs in our member states.

Your Excellency,

Distinguished Delegates,

As I conclude this speech, let me underscore the significance of our annual deliberations within the framework of COMCEC, particularly as we seek to consolidate the various gains made towards transforming the OIC as a veritable

international economic actor, capable of contributing effectively to the global agenda on sustainable socio-economic development and responding in a timely and effective manner to the aspirations of our teeming populations for increased welfare and socio-economic development.

I thank you for your kind attention and I wish this meeting successful deliberations.

Wassalamu Alaykum wa-Rahmatullahi wa-Barakatihu.

ANNEX

4

Original: Arabic

**ADDRESS BY THE PRESIDENT OF THE ISLAMIC DEVELOPMENT BANK
(IDB GROUP),
AT THE OPENING SESSION OF THE THIRTY THIRD MINISTERIAL SESSION
OF THE COMCEC
(İstanbul, 22 November 2017)**

*In the name of Allah, the Most Compassionate and the Most Merciful,
Praise be to Allah, peace and blessings be upon our Prophet Muhammad and his
companions*

Your Excellency Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, the Turkish President, the Chairman of the Islamic Summit and the Chairman of the Standing Committee for Economic and Commercial Cooperation of the Organization for Islamic Cooperation (COMCEC),

Mr. Lütfi Elvan, the Turkish Minister of Development,

Esteemed Ministers,

Mr. Yusuf El-Useymin, the Secretary-General of the OIC,

Esteemed Delegates,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

May All Peace, Mercy and Blessing of Allah Be Upon You.

I am honored to take part in the Thirty-Third Ministerial Session of the Standing Committee for Economic and Commercial Cooperation of the Organization for Islamic Cooperation in such an ancient and beautiful city of Istanbul. I also would like to extend my heartfelt thanks to the Turkish Government and the People for the warm welcome accorded to us since we arrived and for the perfect organization of the event.

At the outset of my address, please let me extend my thanks and gratitude to H.E. President for his tangible initiatives to boost economic collaborations in Islamic countries. In addition, I would like to express the full support of the Islamic Development Bank Group to your valuable suggestion to accelerate our efforts in order to kick off more initiatives towards the promotion of economic cooperation in Islamic countries as His Excellency emphasized in his speech.

The Islamic Development Bank Group takes pride in exclusive relations established over years with the COMCEC to put into practice the strategic partnership, many initiatives and programmes in the implementation of COMCEC resolutions, set the strategy of the

COMCEC, and to promote the Preferential Trade System and the intra-trade among the member states. In the same vein, the Islamic Development Bank Group, which is represented by the The Islamic Corporation for the Insurance of Investment and Export Credit (ICIEC), is pleased to present a new initiative to establish a COMCEC Business Intelligence Center that would support public and private stakeholders and partners in making strategic business decisions.

Your Excellency Mr. President,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Our countries face many challenges such as the rapid increase in population, the spread of diseases and epidemics, and the growing unemployment among young people in particular. In an attempt to overcome such challenges, the Bank has recently introduced a Five-Year Programme intended to deepen and expand partnerships with governments, the private industry, charities, non-governmental organizations, universities, research centers and individuals. As the challenges faced by our member countries are a lot, deep and complicated and they require a collective effort by all the development partners, the Bank has taken major steps to establish a network of development partners in a variety of fields based on the implementation of common value chains, draw up an integrated support package that covers financing, individual and corporate capacity building, improvement in law and preparation of studies, and increase the developmental impact of the Bank Group's responses in member countries, make transition to decentralization, and launch regional centers in an effort to allow the Bank Group to converge with member countries, and safeguard quick responses to developmental needs.

The five-year programme additionally contains the use of electronic platforms in order to galvanize financial and human resources, exchange expertise, introduce science and innovation in all the operations of the Bank Group, and promote the initiatives of the member countries to create smart green cities and environmentally-friendly infrastructure.

Immunity and protection are of particular importance for the Programme against economic, social and environmental disasters, and the Bank has recently introduced a specialized department to take on this task.

Your Excellency Mr. President,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Science, technology and innovation are the main driving forces of development and proven to be an effective instrument to offer solutions to developmental challenges across the world.

Among a few of those challenges are clean energy, drinking water, drought, elimination of diseases, poverty alleviation, improvement in quality of education, placement of importance to health care and so on. Hence, the five-year programme offers a roadmap and an action plan that provide the member countries with assistance to establish an integrated setup and secure sustainable development, and encourage scientists, investors, universities and research centers to offer innovation solutions to developmental problems in order to improve the quality of life for people, and find proper mechanisms to connect such agencies to one another. To this end, the Bank has created a fund worth USD 500 million for science, technology and innovation. In addition to the Bank's contribution to the fund for USD 100 million, the Islamic Solidarity Fund for Development has donated USD 100 million, and the fund was welcomed by the Islamic world leaders at the first Science, Technology and Innovation Summit held in Astana, Kazakhstan. The Bank will soon kick off an unprecedented electronic platform for science, technology and innovation, and connect all scientists, innovators, decision-makers, universities, research centers and other agencies to one another. This platform will enable scientists and innovators to offer their views that would be turned into commercial products later on. For the first time, the people of the member countries will enjoy the opportunity to register their innovations through the Islamic Development Bank.

Your Excellency Mr. President,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The promotion of economic cooperation and integration among the member countries has always been the focus of the programmes and projects carried out by the Islamic Development Bank Group. In addition, it constitutes one of the fundamental pillars for the five-year programme as a catalyst to increase economic growth and boost the contribution of the private industry to development. In this respect, the Islamic Development Bank Group has attached importance to the quest for new ways and methods of increasing cooperation among the member states and assumed a variety of initiatives accordingly. For instance, the Arab-African Trade Bridges Programme was kicked off this year in an effort to promote the trade among the member states of the two regions. In 2013, the Trade Assistance Programmes were initiated for the Arab States. On the other hand, the Group adopted the Reverse Linkages to exchange information and experience in the Southern countries that would transfer the expertise, know-how and technology of the Member States to other Member States. Additionally, the Bank is on the verge of completing the regional cooperation and integration strategy. The strategy will be put into effect as a part of six regional programmes that cover various economic industries such as energy, agriculture, transport and trade. As a part of the strategy, the majority of the Bank's annual financing will

be allocated to the regional projects and programmes such as the Special Programme for the Central Asia and the Special Programme for the Development of Africa. We wish that such regional projects will pave the way for further integration among the Member States.

Your Excellency Mr. President,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is pleasing to see that the session on exchange of views, which is held under the theme of Improving Transnational Transport Corridors in the OIC Member Countries, is related to transport. The transport corridors are of top priority for the Group's regional cooperation and integration strategy, and the Bank Group has recently made contributions to the financing of various transnational transport corridors such as Trans-Saharan Road Corridor and Kazakhstan-Turkmenistan-Iran Railway Corridor. The Bank has also provided assistance to the energy corridors such as CASA-1000 project that link energy networks in Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Pakistan and Afghanistan with one another. The Group has made commitments to establish more transport corridors in an effort to facilitate more efficient and easier movement of goods and people. Thus, it has contributed to the promotion of regional integration. To this end, we are looking forward to hearing about the recommendations to be made by the session participants.

Your Excellency Mr. President,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

As I am about to conclude my remarks, let me sum up three initiatives that I was honored to present during your excellent previous session: Consolidation and dissemination of the economic empowerment programme for the Palestinian people, activation of the youth's role and integration of their vision to development and civilization formation, strengthening crisis prevention and activation of the Red Crescent system along with coping mechanisms. As you are well aware, the Bank organized the very first youth-focused summit on the sidelines of the 42nd annual meeting held in Jeddah this year, and the Bank Group has already put the recommendations of the summit into effect. On the other hand, the Bank has attached particular importance to the establishment of a department within its body with focus on this substantial matter. The Bank additionally attended the preparation meetings on the Red Crescent system along with the respective OIC agencies.

I am pleased to present a short movie concerning the Bank's accomplishments for this major programme and its directives for the future with regard to the consolidation and dissemination of the economic empowerment programme dedicated to the Palestinian people.

In addition, I am delighted to announce that the Bank is set to sign an agreement here today in the presence of august participants to kick off the first phase of "the Project for the Economic Empowerment of Palestinian Refugee Families Crossing into Turkey from Syria". The project is intended to create new resources and open the gates of partnership among the people, public and private industries and philanthropists (Public Private People Philanthropic-Partnership) (PPPP-P). I would like to avail myself of this occasion to extend my thanks to all the stakeholders of the project: The Turkish Cooperation and Coordination Agency, the Turkish Red Crescent, the Statistical, Economic and Social Research and Training Centre for Islamic Countries, the United Nations Development Programme, the International Wafaa Organization based in Indonesia, the Turkish Disaster and Emergency Management Presidency (AFAD), the Turkish Credit Guarantee Fund (KGF), and the Turkish Union of Chambers and Commodity Exchanges (TOBB).

Last but not least, I would like to thank all the Member States for their support to the Islamic Development Bank Group. It is because the Islamic Development Bank group could not attain such accomplishments if it was not for their support.

I hope that the Thirty-Third Ministerial Session of the Standing Committee for Economic and Commercial Cooperation of the Organization for Islamic Cooperation will offer tangible solutions and recommendations to promote and strengthen the cooperation among the Member States and wish success.

May All Peace, Mercy and Blessing of Allah Be Upon You.

ANNEX

5

Original: English

**REPORT OF THE 31st MEETING OF
THE SESSIONAL COMMITTEE
(İstanbul, 19 November 2017)**

1. The 31st Meeting of the Sessional Committee of the COMCEC was held on November 19th, 2017 in İstanbul, on the sidelines of the 33rd Session of the COMCEC.

2. The Meeting was chaired by Mr. Selçuk KOÇ, Director at the COMCEC Coordination Office. In addition to the OIC General Secretariat and COMCEC Coordination Office (CCO), the following OIC Institutions attended the Meeting:

- Statistical, Economic and Social Research and Training Center for Islamic Countries (SESRIC)
- Islamic Center for the Development of Trade (ICDT)
- Islamic Development Bank (IDB) Group
- International Islamic Trade Finance Corporation (ITFC)-IDB Group
- The Islamic Corporation for the Insurance of Investment and Export Credit (ICIEC)- IDB Group
- Islamic Chamber of Commerce, Industry and Agriculture (ICCIA)
- Organization of Shipowners Association of the OIC (OISA)
- Standards and Metrology Institute of Islamic Countries (SMIIC)

3. The Meeting agreed on the following agenda items for discussion:

- Implementation of the COMCEC Strategy: Contributions of the OIC Institutions to the COMCEC Strategy
 - The List of Activities of the OIC Institutions Aligned with the COMCEC Strategy and COMCEC Ministerial Policy Recommendations
 - Utilizing COMCEC Project Funding for the implementation of COMCEC Ministerial Policy Recommendations
 - The Issue of Measuring the Impact of the Activities of the OIC Institutions
- Enhancing Cooperation and Coordination Among the OIC Institutions
 - Developing Multi-Year Technical Capacity Building Programs
- Possible Contributions of the OIC Institutions to the Implementation of the SDGs in OIC Member States
- Implementation of the Economic Cooperation Section of the OIC-2025
- Any Other Business

Implementation of the COMCEC Strategy: Contributions of the OIC Institutions to the COMCEC Strategy

4. Emphasizing the significance of the contributions of the OIC Institutions to the realization of the COMCEC Strategy and the COMCEC Ministerial Policy Recommendations, the Committee reviewed the completed and planned activities for the relevant OIC Institutions, aligned with the COMCEC Strategy for the period December 2016- November 2017 and December 2017-November 2018 based on the cooperation areas, namely trade, transport and communications, tourism, agriculture, poverty alleviation and financial cooperation. The Committee was also briefed by the relevant OIC Institutions on their planned activities.

(The list of activities organized and to be organized by the OIC Institutions aligned with the COMCEC Strategy between November 2016 and November 2018 is attached as Annex 1.)

5. The Committee was informed by the CCO that out of 237 activities of the OIC Institutions listed in completed activities since the 32nd Session of the COMCEC, 32.1 percent of the activities were implemented in poverty alleviation area followed by trade (%30.4) and agriculture (%8). The Committee was also informed that with respect to types of the activities, the Institutions specially focused on trainings and technical assistance programs (%34.6), various expert and working group meetings (%16.9) and workshops (%13.5).

6. Taking note of the IDB Group's efforts on raising awareness on strategic commodities in the OIC Member Countries, the Committee highlighted that all OIC Institutions should make this type of activities in all cooperation areas. Moreover, the Committee also agreed on that along with efforts to increase intra OIC trade quantitatively, the quality of trade including its composition and value addition aspect along with efforts for enhancing investments and production base in the member countries should also be paid due attention by the relevant OIC institutions while conducting various programmes and activities.

7. With a view to better reflecting the activities of the OIC Institutions aligned with COMCEC Strategy and Policy Recommendations adopted at the Ministerial level, the Committee requested the OIC Institutions to indicate specifically the relevance between the activities and the policy recommendations in their lists of activities.

8. The CCO informed the Committee about the sectoral themes to be supported by the COMCEC Coordination Office in the 6th Project Call to be made in September

2018, under the COMCEC Project Funding. In this regard, the Committee underlined the importance of the submission of the project proposals by the OIC Institutions through COMCEC Project Funding for the realization of the COMCEC Ministerial Policy Recommendations. The Committee also underscored that the COMCEC Ministerial Policy Recommendations should be utilized by the OIC Institutions in planning their future cooperation activities and programs.

9. The representatives of the relevant OIC Institutions presented their experiences related to measuring the impact of their activities. In this regard, ITFC (IDB Group) informed the participants regarding the “ITFC Annual Development Effectiveness Report”, which assesses the impact of the activities implemented by the ITFC in trade financing and trade development. Moreover, the Committee was briefed by the CCO on the impact assessment practices of the other international organizations.

Enhancing Cooperation and Coordination among the OIC Institutions

10. With respect to ITFC’s efforts on “Developing Multi-Year Technical Capacity Building Programs”, the Committee was briefed by the ITFC (IDB Group) on the comments of the SESRIC and ICCIA to the sample “Multi-year Cooperation/Capacity Building Program of Trade Facilitation for Enhanced Regional Cooperation & Seamless Connectivity”. The Committee thanked the ITFC (IDB Group) for their efforts on raising-awareness on developing multi-year cooperation programs rather than one-shot activity based programming.

Possible Contributions of the OIC Institutions to the Implementation of the SDGs in OIC Member States

11. The Committee was informed by the SESRIC on the results of the “Tendency Survey on SDG Priorities of OIC Member Countries” circulated to the Member Countries in line with the relevant resolutions of the 31st and 32nd Sessions of the COMCEC. It was noted that 33 member countries have communicated their completed or partial responses to the SESRIC. The SESRIC informed the participants that SDG-3 titled “Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages”, SDG-2 titled “End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture” and SDG-1 titled “End poverty in all its forms everywhere” are the most highly prioritized SDGs by the Member Countries. Moreover, the SESRIC informed the Committee that the main challenges for achieving SDGs by the Member Countries are shortage of financial resources, inadequate human resources capacity and lack of political support. The Committee was also informed that SESRIC has prepared a report on the Member Countries’ survey responses to be submitted to the 33rd COMCEC Ministerial Session.

12. The Committee reviewed “the List of Activities of the OIC Institutions Related to the SDGs”, which was compiled by the CCO in line with the relevant resolution of the 32nd COMCEC Ministerial Session for the period of 2017 and 2018. The Committee was also briefed by the relevant OIC Institutions on their planned activities for the implementation of the SDGs. The Committee requested the OIC Institutions to give due regard to the needs and priorities of the Member Countries, which was presented by the SESRIC via the SESRIC’s above-mentioned tendency survey, while planning their activities related to the SDGs.

(The list of activities organized and to be organized by the OIC Institutions related to the SDGs between 2017-2018 is attached as Annex 2.)

Implementation of the Economic Cooperation Section of the OIC-2025

13. Regarding the implementation of the economic and commercial component of the OIC-2025: Programme of Action, the Committee underlined the importance of getting the inputs of the Member Countries as well as the OIC Institutions and Standing Committees to the implementation of the OIC-2025: Programme of Action. The Committee noted that the inputs should be benefited for the improvement of the plan and its effective implementation. In this respect, the Committee also noted that Standing Committees, including COMCEC, can be utilized in their respective fields for expediting the receipt of the inputs from the Member Countries.

Any Other Business

14. ICIEC (IDB Group) made a presentation on their proposal about “Business Intelligence Center.” Highlighting the challenges regarding limited data, quality issues and high cost of information as well as the significance of business intelligence for making decisions, the Committee took note of the proposal made by ICIEC (IDB Group) and requested the ICIEC (IDB Group) to further elaborate on the proposal in cooperation with the other OIC Institutions and prepare a detailed concept note and share it with the relevant OIC institutions one month before the next Sessional Committee Meeting.

15. The Committee Meeting ended with a vote of thanks.

ANNEX

6

Original: English

**THE CLOSING STATEMENT BY H.E. LÜTFİ ELVAN,
MINISTER OF DEVELOPMENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF TURKEY
(İstanbul, 23 November 2017)**

Honourable Ministers,
Distinguished Delegates,

Essalamu Alaikum Wa Rahmatullahi Wa Barakatuh

We have successfully reached the end of the 33rd Session of the COMCEC after fruitful and constructive discussions. We have also significantly benefited from several lively special panels held on transport corridors which was the key theme of our Exchange of Views Session this year. I would like to thank all of the delegates, representatives of the OIC institutions as well as other international institutions and our panelists for their active contributions during the Session.

Esteemed Participants,

The global economic activity has been strengthening both in advanced and emerging countries. Even if growth rates fall behind pre-crisis years, recent developments and also future expectations present a promising picture. According to the IMF, global growth rate is expected to be 3.6 and 3.7 percent respectively for the years 2017 and 2018 which are higher than last year. Having said; one should also keep in mind that if current recovery is not supported with decisive structural policies, sustainability aspect of the growth would be missing.

As we all aware, global economy is still prone to crises due to various factors. However, countries can minimize the impacts of crises with solid and cooperative policies. It is clearly obvious that the countries and regions that have enhanced economic resilience with the help of sound economic policies and effective cooperation initiatives always recover from the crises in a very short time. In other words, spill over impact of any domestic and external volatility would be handled in a healthy way without giving significant harm to the engines of the growth. Therefore, our efforts on achieving sound international financial and economic architecture should also be integrated with solid domestic and regional policies.

None of us are fully self-sufficient and we always need to trade. In fact, Our Prophet Hz. Mohammed Aleyhisselam stated with his transcendental wisdom: **“Engage in trade, for nine tenths (ninety percent) of rizk - sustenance is derived from trade.”** Time has repeatedly shown how right our Prophet (peace be upon him) was. That is the ultimate guidance for us. In this sense, we should bear in mind that trade also includes entrepreneurship and exploring new avenues for business.

Distinguished Delegates,

We should eliminate tariff and non-tariff barriers on trade in order to reduce operating costs and facilitate regional integration. As a key driver of growth and integration, we should benefit more from the ample opportunities offered by trade.

We have important tools such as TPS-OIC in our hands to further increase commerce among our brotherly member countries. In our Session, we have learnt with great satisfaction that Brunei Darussalam recently signed and ratified the TPS-OIC Framework Agreement and Kingdom of Morocco has conveyed their updated list of concessions.

Now, we only need 3 more members and I sincerely hope that other ratifying member countries also convey their updated lists very soon so that we can reap the benefits of this important mechanism inshaAllah soon.

We are closer than ever for realizing this yet unfulfilled dream. Let's spare no efforts for rendering this crucial mechanism operational and then embark on more ambitious trading arrangements.

Dear Colleagues,

The importance of enhancing and diversifying our trade is evident and I have always emphasized this point in our previous sessions. Now I would like to share with Your Excellencies, some alarming indicators as a case point.

Between 2012 and 2016, our exports decreased from 2 trillion 713 billion dollars to 1 trillion 863 billion dollars which denotes 850 billion dollars fall just in four years. That is the main reason why our 600 billion trade surplus has turned into 106 billion trade deficit in the same period.

We need to take all required actions immediately to diversify our economies and decrease our dependence on raw materials and single commodities. Several member

countries have succeeded in this endeavor. In order to adopt their economies to the changing conditions, they are taking regular steps via structural adjustments. This is a dynamic process. For sure, other member countries can also follow a similar approach to attain their specific goals.

Distinguished Participants,

As we all know, transporting commodities and goods through the entire international supply chain, from the seller to the buyer with a low cost significantly increases the trade volumes.

There are many factors that have been affecting transport such as degree of containerization of transport, the traffic on specific routes, the efficiency of transport services and maybe the most important one is the quality of transport infrastructure. In fact, quality of infrastructure and services are gateways to economic growth and trade development. Well-developed and functioning infrastructure not only reduces the distance but also integrates markets and links them at very low costs.

In the same vein, as we have discussed during our Sessions, efficient transport corridors have an indispensable role in linking countries and regions. Transport corridors connect seaports to inland markets and sometimes landlocked countries and regions with others. Improved transport corridors reduce transit times, decrease the costs of freight transport between remote locations. These are all critical for boosting our competitiveness.

All in all, fast, affordable, and reliable transport networks considerably enhance trade and investment volumes which in turn increase employment opportunities and improve living conditions of the people living enroute of corridors and beyond.

I sincerely believe that the Declaration we have adopted today on “Improving Transnational Transport Corridors among OIC Member Countries” will enlighten our way towards infusing efficiency to our transport sector and transport corridors.

Distinguished Colleagues,

We should also upgrade our soft infrastructure including border and custom efficiency and smooth transnational corridors. Custom procedures and passages should also be facilitated while we are building transport corridors.

We have determined the theme of Exchange of Views Session for the next year as “Facilitating Trade: Custom Risk Management in the OIC Member Countries”.

Sharing our experiences and helping other brotherly member countries in this crucial issue would certainly deepen our cooperation efforts and strengthen the governance of our custom institutions.

Esteemed Guests,

Before concluding, I would like to reiterate my heartfelt gratitude to all member country delegations, OIC General Secretariat, OIC Institutions and other international organizations for their valuable contributions.

I would also like to express my sincere thanks to COMCEC Coordination Office, our translators and interpreters and all staff taking part in the organization of our meeting for their untiring efforts to bring this event to a successful conclusion. I sincerely hope that our discussions, deliberations in the exchange of views session and resolutions bear fruitful results for the Islamic World and deepen our cooperation as the Islamic Ummah.

Hoping that you will return to your countries with happy memories from Istanbul, I wish you all a safe trip back home. Thank you very much.

Esselamu Alaikum wa Rahmetullahi wa Barakatuhu.

ANNEX

7

Original: English

**COMCEC MINISTERIAL DECLARATION ON
IMPROVING TRANSNATIONAL TRANSPORT CORRIDORS
IN THE OIC MEMBER STATES**

**33rd Session of the COMCEC
(Istanbul, 20-23rd November 2017)**

We, the Ministers of State and Government of the Member States of the COMCEC (Standing Committee for Economic and Commercial Cooperation of the Organization of the Islamic Cooperation (OIC)), gathered on the occasion of the thirty-third COMCEC Session, in Istanbul, on 20th-23rd November 2017, to underline the importance of smooth functioning of the transnational transport corridors in the OIC Region and close cooperation among the Member States for the effective functioning of the existing transnational transport corridors as well as to propose possible policy recommendations to be implemented by the Member States with the aim of bolstering cooperation and building on shared values and mutual interests.

We, therefore, while:

Reaffirming our commitment to the core principles and objectives enshrined in the COMCEC Strategy in the field of Transport and Communication and, the relevant goals of the OIC-2025 Programme of Action, and **attaching** great importance to the cooperation frameworks developed under the different agreements concluded between the Member States and the momentum created in different fields of cooperation which can underpin and complement each other for meeting the objectives of the COMCEC;

ACKNOWLEDGING that transnational transport corridors are vital for the economic and social development of the countries and have a crucial role in increasing intra-trade volume in the OIC region.

HIGHLIGHTING the economic, social and environmental benefits that an improvement in the efficiency of transnational transport corridors can accomplish.

RECOGNISING that effective cooperation among the member states can improve the functioning of the existing transnational transport corridors in the OIC region, encourage the positive contribution of the private sector, and minimize and resolve difficulties, which may arise from throughout the corridors.

CONSIDERING the main challenges and problems faced by the Member States in terms of transnational transport corridors as the followings;

- Limited awareness of relevant stakeholders, especially at the decision maker level, about the economic benefits of smooth functioning of international transport corridors,
- Weak political will among the enroute countries,
- Inadequate cooperation and coordination among the enroute countries including lack of a common framework and management system. This leads to ineffective coordination in terms of allocation of tasks and responsibilities, including planning and financial aspects, among the enroute countries as well as participating donor agencies,
- Lack of diversified Transnational Transport Strategies/Policies targeting the various needs of private sector,
- Inadequate, inaccurate, or outdated information about the operations concerning transnational transport corridors and effective data collection system,
- Low interoperability and lack of interconnections. In this respect, the main challenges are;
 - Inadequate interoperability among the road, rail and maritime modes of transport,
 - Insufficient harmonized business procedures among the enroute countries throughout the transport corridors,
 - Lack of ICT interconnectivity for travel planning, information, and management
 - Mismatch between international conventions, national laws and regulations, and operational issues,
 - The problems in addressing environmental challenges and providing seamless as well as reliable transport,
- Sub-optimal balance of traffic between road and rail,
- Political issues between the countries that result in trade restrictions and bottlenecks at border crossing points,
- Ensuring the sustainability of transport corridor infrastructure in terms of road maintenance and crucially averting significant losses in asset value,
- The high cost of insuring cargo in transit.

In light of the above-mentioned challenges and problems, **AGREED TO** identify the following policy recommendations to be implemented by the Member States for ensuring the smooth functioning and development of the existing transnational transport corridors in the OIC Region.

A. Political and institutional factors

1. **Transform** transport routes to transport corridors with a permanent secretariat or strengthening the capacity of the established Secretariats,
2. **Develop** a Corridor Treaty template as a benchmark for the utilization of enroute countries,

3. **Increase** awareness of the decision makers regarding the need for enhanced cooperation and coordination as well as shared responsibilities to improve the overall performance of the transnational transport corridors,
4. **Establish** national committees for trade and transport facilitation, comprising different ministries and stakeholders.

B. Economic, financial and social factors:

1. **Promote** simplification and streamlining of business processes/procedures among the enroute member countries including payments at the border crossing points or pre-payments in advance of reaching the borders,
2. **Increase** awareness of public and private stakeholders about the potential economic benefits of transnational transport corridors,
3. **Utilize** international resources including COMCEC Project Funding Mechanism to promote establishing corridor secretariats,
4. **Promote** “through railway tariff” among the countries along the corridor,
5. **Encourage** the preparation of a master plan for the development of transport corridors including short, medium, and long-term financing requirements,
6. **Engage** the private sector to develop, finance and manage transport corridor infrastructure in partnership with the public sector,
7. **Encourage** intra-trade and investments with a view to enhancing movement of people and work opportunities as well as reducing poverty along transport corridors.

C. Trade Facilitation:

1. **Review** the existing trade agreements to identify relevant factors to remove non-physical barriers to trade,
2. **Stimulate** intra-trade to increase demand towards the transnational transport corridors in the OIC region,
3. **Increase** the efficiency of customs inspection by creating One Stop Border Posts, utilizing risk management techniques (such as ASYCUDA system), green channeling and new technologies in customs,
4. **Develop** an efficient trade statistic collection system,
5. **Promote** Single Window Systems,
6. **Facilitate** visa issuance for business people and visa stickers for drivers.

D. Safety, security and legal liability:

1. **Implement** the security-building measures/programs throughout transport corridors,
2. **Enhance** sharing experiences in road safety,
3. **Build** roadside service stations including rest areas to improve drivers’ welfare and minimize fatigue,
4. **Promote** multimodal legal liability.

E. Technical and operational factors:

1. **Improve** the design standards of road and rail infrastructure including road/rail transfer nodes, gauge changing system, and border crossings,
2. **Ensure** the sustainability of transport corridor infrastructure including the maintenance of roads through the application of appropriate user charges,
3. **Ensure** harmonization of vehicle/operational standards, e.g. vehicle weights and dimension, and gross vehicle mass,
4. **Improve** rail interoperability including a common driver licensing/certification and common conditions of carriage,
5. **Improve** communications along the corridor including fiber optic cable and cargo tracking,
6. **Improve** logistics infrastructure, such as multiple-user warehouses through enhanced coordination and cooperation among the relevant stakeholders,
7. **Increase** the number and quality of logistics centers along the corridors.

F. Environmental and energy factors

1. **Promote** intermodal transport particularly encouraging the use of rail and maritime transport through investments in efficient mode transfer facilities,
2. **Stimulate** the use of more environmentally friendly vehicles and vessels through incentives and regulation, for reducing carbon emissions and air pollutions along the corridor.

G. Corridor Performance Monitoring

1. **Develop** a data collection system along the corridors including but not limited to: trade volumes and composition, including the movement of hazardous cargos, traffic flow and composition, journey time and vehicle speed, border crossing processing times, transit costs and fees, road accidents,
2. **Analyze** and **disseminate** the above-mentioned data for reporting on the performance of transport corridors and the implementation of the above policies.

We express our thanks to H.E. Recep Tayyip ERDOĞAN, President of the Republic of Turkey, under his leadership the 33rd COMCEC Ministerial Session reached a successful conclusion.

We also extend our gratitude to the Government and Republic of Turkey for the warm hospitality and the excellent arrangement made for the Ministerial Session.

ANNEX

8

COMCEC MUSLIM FRIENDLY TOURISM (MFT) GUIDELINE FOR REGULATING ACCOMMODATION ESTABLISHMENTS

With the rising numbers of Muslim travelers, who have unique faith-based needs, tourism businesses around the world have started to pay attention to the needs of this growing and lucrative market segment. Muslim Friendly Tourism (MFT) is defined as “the activities of Muslim travelers who do not wish to compromise their faith-based needs while travelling for a purpose, which is permissible.”¹

Given the growing importance of the MFT market, COMCEC commissioned the following three studies on MFT:

1. *Muslim Friendly Tourism: Understanding the Demand and Supply Sides in the OIC Member Countries*
2. *Muslim Friendly Tourism: Developing and Marketing MFT Products and Services in the OIC Member Countries*
3. *Muslim Friendly Tourism (MFT): Regulating Accommodation Establishments in the OIC Member Countries*

The findings of the third MFT study - *Muslim Friendly Tourism (MFT) Regulating Accommodation Establishments in the OIC Member Countries* were presented to the 9th Meeting of the Tourism Working Group held on February 16th, 2017 in Ankara.

In recent years, the tourism industry has started to grasp and address the distinct needs of Muslim travelers. Muslim-friendly travel is seen as a promising niche market by many accommodation providers. There is no current consensus on which MFT elements to incorporate, however, accommodation establishments make their decision based on the ease of implementation, the cost, and the impact on non-Muslim guests. Previous research studies show that needs of Muslim and non-Muslim travelers do overlap in some areas, such as a hotel's location and price, which are critical for travelers, regardless of faith.

¹ “Muslim-Friendly Tourism: Understanding the Demand and Supply Sides in the OIC Member Countries.” COMCEC, Feb. 2016. Web.

Furthermore, Muslim and non-Muslim travelers alike value many of the characteristics captured by conventional quality standards, including cleanliness, spaciousness and convenience. However, research has indicated that Muslim travelers have specific faith-related needs; some of which may even clash with the needs of non-Muslim travelers, including, for instance the absence of alcohol from hotel premises. Given the varying levels of MFT services and facilities offered in the tourism industry, there is a need for regulation, especially in the accommodation sector.

Based on the COMCEC *Muslim Friendly Tourism (MFT) Regulating Accommodation Establishments in the OIC Member Countries* study which includes insights from case studies, surveys, expert interviews as well as an analysis of existing standards, this document presents basic MFT Regulation guidelines for OIC and Non-OIC countries. It presents key considerations in evaluating and setting up of MFT guidelines, and general MFT services & facilities guidelines for different levels of MFT readiness across the OIC Member Countries. Finally, market positioning options for MFT travel are also summarized in this document.

Evaluating & Setting-Up for MFT Guidelines

The aforementioned study strongly recommends the regulation of MFT elements within the accommodation sector (albeit at varying level depending on individual country environment and maturity), given the strong feedback provided by surveys and a clear articulation of the types of services required.

In the consumer survey that was conducted for the purpose of this study, respondents attached great importance to Halal food being regulated by a Muslim-friendly accommodation standard; 99 percent of respondents rated it as important (83 percent rated it as extremely important). This was followed by offering Ramadan services, such as breakfast buffets, which 95 percent of respondents rated as important, followed by having Qibla direction in the hotel room, which 94 percent of respondents rated as important.

MFT regulation provides guests with an assurance of authenticity, especially in case of Halal food, provides consistent expectations, and supports a family-

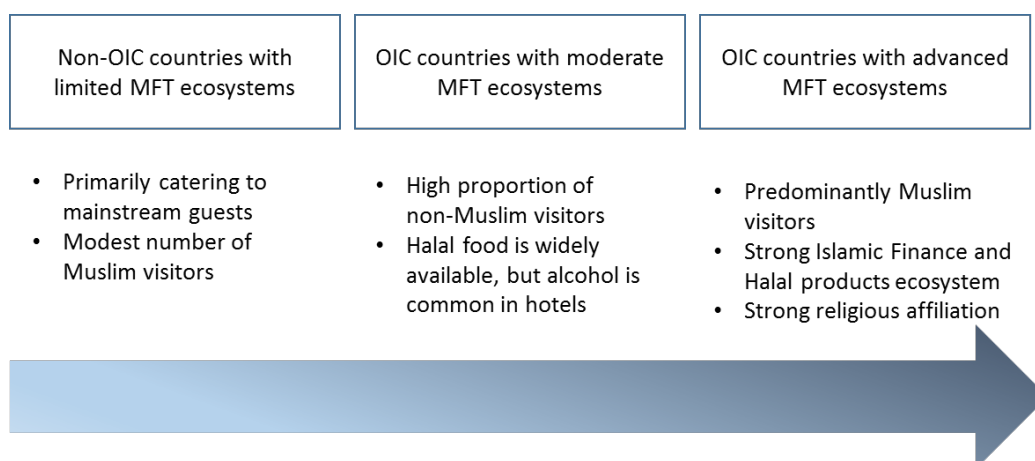
friendly ecosystem, which is beneficial to both Muslim guests as well as to mainstream guests traveling with their families.

The analysis and main findings of the research report titled “*Muslim Friendly Tourism: Understanding the Demand and Supply Sides in the OIC Member Countries*” and “*Muslim Friendly Tourism: Developing and Marketing MFT Products and Services in the OIC Member Countries*” which have already prepared for the COMCEC TWG, can also be utilized by member countries in their efforts towards regulating MFT accommodation establishments.

MFT Services & Facilities – General Guidelines

The relevance of MFT services and facilities will differ by nature of country. The chart below illustrates country segmentation based on whether or not it is an OIC Member Country, and based on the level of MFT ecosystems available.

Country Segmentation - MFT Ecosystem



Based on the review of various existing MFT guidelines, below are a summary listing of MFT services and facilities guidelines per segment category of country described above.

1. MFT Services and Facilities for non-OIC Countries with Limited MFT Ecosystems

In non-OIC countries, establishments can attract Muslim consumers in a practical way by offering low cost basic services that are easy to implement and have a low impact on mainstream guests.

The recommended services and facilities can be summarized as follows:

1. Provide some Halal food options
2. Remove alcohol from the mini-bar for Muslim guests
3. Provide *qibla* (prayer) direction in rooms.
4. Provide list of local Halal restaurants and directions to local mosque
5. Provide a prayer rug and prayer schedule upon request
6. Train staff on awareness of MFT principles

While very important to Muslim guests, most of these services and features have little effect on mainstream guests and are low cost.

2. MFT Services and Facilities for OIC Countries with Modest MFT Ecosystem

There are three practical MFT services that are important to Muslim guests, are easy to implement and have low impact on mainstream guests, which accommodation facilities in OIC countries with modest MFT ecosystems should incorporate. These three services, as illustrated in the following chart, include the following²:

1. Offering exclusively Halal certified food (with a consideration to have the hotel kitchens Halal certified)
2. Providing prayer mats in rooms
3. Accommodating for Ramadan meal timings and menu items.

² An additional service that was rated as important by survey respondents and is not costly to provide is having a “musalla” or prayer area within the hotel.

MFT services and facilities that may be offered by accommodation providers can be segmented based on whether they are low cost or costly to implement as well as on their effect on non-Muslim guests (whether implementing the new service will have a low or high impact on Muslim guests). MFT services that are low cost and have a low impact on mainstream guests are easy to implement, while services that are low cost but have a high impact on mainstream guests are sensitive to implement, etc. (Please refer to Figure 15: MFT Services for Modest Ecosystems in the study).

Additional services, which were rated important and are of medium to high cost to implement are as follows:

1. Installing a bidet or hand shower in bathrooms, both in guest rooms as well as in bathrooms in public areas
2. Providing family-friendly entertainment
3. Being alcohol free and having no casinos or nightclubs on site.
4. Removing adult channels and placing internet content filters
5. Requiring staff to dress modestly

3. MFT Services and Facilities for Countries with Advanced MFT Ecosystems

For OIC countries with advanced MFT ecosystems, the following higher level of MFT services and facilities are recommended in addition to the basic services:

General:

1. Hotel kitchens should be Halal certified
2. No alcohol should be available or allowed inside the hotel
3. Wudu-friendly facilities should be available in public bathrooms and room bathrooms
4. Holy Qurans should be placed in each room
5. Congregational prayers should be held at the musalla/masjid including Friday prayers, and the call to prayer should be broadcast on the speaker system.

6. In Ramadan, in addition to providing iftar and suhoor meals, shuttle transportation should be provided to local mosques
7. Halal certified products should be extended to wellness products such as shampoos and lotions.

Leisure Activities:

8. Gender-separated wellness facilities including gyms, pools, spas, and beaches should be provided, either by having separate facilities, or by allocating certain hours for women.

Managing the business

9. All financing should adhere to Shariah-compliant principles
10. The accommodation's employees should be treated fairly and receive a living wage that is high enough to maintain a normal standard of living
11. Businesses should have eco-friendly processes in place and have an environmental certification.

Family-Friendly and Ethical Positioning

The level of practicality in introducing MFT features varies by country. One of the key considerations is positioning and promoting Muslim-friendly services without alienating non-Muslim customers. Some of the features relating to MFT may be of higher cost and more difficult to implement; however, several MFT features also accentuate the accommodation facility's family-friendly and ethical positioning. For example, the absence of a nightclub or a bar, not only accommodates the needs of Muslim guests, but also strengthens a hotel's family-friendly positioning, since many mainstream families with children would consider such an environment a safer place for their family.

The table below lists MFT services and facilities that strengthen an accommodation facility's family-friendly and ethical positioning across the different MFT ecosystem levels. Having no alcohol, casinos, or nightclubs, in addition to banning adult channels, obscene artwork and placing internet filters, all accentuate an accommodation facility's family-friendly positioning, in addition to being ethical.

Family-Friendly and Ethical MFT Services and Facilities

Minimum requirements	
Halal Food	Halal food options
Alcohol Policy	Alcohol-free minibar for Muslim guests
Good to have	
Alcohol Policy	No alcohol: no bar or alcohol served at hotel restaurants
Entertainment	No nightclubs on site No casinos on site No adult channels available Internet content filters in place (for obscenity) Family-friendly programming and entertainment on site
Staff	Staff to wear modest clothes
Premium	
Alcohol Policy	No alcohol on site (e.g., at restaurant or on demand)
Entertainment	No obscene, music or artwork that may contradict Islamic values, displayed
Environmental	Environmental certification and eco-friendly processes in place

ANNEX

9

Original: English

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE WORKING GROUP MEETINGS

1. POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE TRADE WORKING GROUP

1.1. POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE 9TH MEETING OF THE TRADE WORKING GROUP

The COMCEC Trade Working Group (TWG) has successfully held its 9th Meeting on March 9th, 2017 in Ankara, Turkey with the theme of “*Single Window Systems in the OIC Member States.*” During the Meeting, Trade Working Group, made deliberations for policy approximation among the Member Countries regarding developing Single Window Systems. The Room Document, prepared in accordance with the main findings of the analytical study conducted specifically for the 9th Meeting of the COMCEC Trade Working Group titled “*Single Window Systems in the OIC Member States*” and the answers of the Member Countries to the policy questions sent to the COMCEC Trade Working Group focal points by the COMCEC Coordination Office. During the Meeting, the participants agreed on the policy recommendations included in the Room Document. The existing document includes these policy recommendations highlighted during the Meeting.

Policy Advice 1: Strengthening Single Window efforts in OIC Member States by developing integrated Single Window strategies that reflect national and regional requirements and actively engage the stakeholders in this process

A strategy process leading to a concise strategy document is a crucial step in the process of developing a Single Window. Decisions that are taken in the early phases stages of a Single Window initiative shape the planning, design and development of the system. A Single Window is a long-term commitment to a transformation from a large number of stakeholders. Therefore, these stakeholders, and in particular so the trading community, should be closely involved in the design phase. The trading community’s perspective ensures that the Single Window caters to their needs as much as the needs of the government agencies. The consultative bodies, such as trade facilitation committees, should be integrated into the business strategy development process. Moreover, regional perspective should be considered while designing the Single Window Systems.

The Single Window strategy should rest upon the identification of business and technology requirements and define priorities as well as clear objectives and measurable performance indicators to guide the Single Window project. Once the Single Window is operational it is necessary to continue measuring its performance and set qualitative and quantitative performance for service delivery. A cost and benefit analysis should be conducted while preparing visions and strategy documents.

Policy Advice 2: Improving the effectiveness of Single Window projects by identifying and implementing necessary changes in the laws and regulatory framework and operational practices

Rationale:

A Single Window is a major transformation of the way how the government agencies operate and interact with the trading community. Such a transformation requires changes in regulatory framework that applies to the import, export and transit of goods and in operational practices and business processes. Single Windows can only successfully deliver results if these changes are clearly identified and acted upon in an expedited manner. This requires strong political support to bring about changes across government agencies and departments.

The analysis of agencies' current practices and procedures (AS-IS status) is the starting point for changes as it allows for the identification of prevalent and potential operational bottlenecks. These business processes must be re-designed (TO-BE status) to speed up, simplify and coordinate the processing and interaction. The legal, regulatory and administrative procedures need to be aligned in accordance to the re-designed processes. In this respect, in order to promote paperless or no paper trade, it is of utmost importance that the legal framework for e-documents and digital signature are in place at the national, and where applicable, supra-national level.

Policy Advice 3: Prioritizing flexibility, scalability, safety and interoperability of IT architecture of Single Windows Systems

Rationale:

Single Windows leverage operational changes and IT to achieve improvements to the accessibility, costs and quality of services. The Single Window IT architecture has to be consistently integrated with the business objectives and fully support the functional requirements of the stakeholders that are part of the Single Window environment. All stakeholders need to understand early in the design process how the IT architecture contributes to the delivery of the Single Window objectives and its costs implications.

The IT architecture must be flexible and scalable to accommodate rapid changes of the IT development, diverse technologies, to integrate new technological evolutions and to deliver new services over time. Furthermore, the Single Window IT architecture should have the ability to integrate and support diverse IT systems and applications. Therefore, interoperability, meaning the ability to provide collaborative, networked and interconnected business processes, should be taken into consideration while defining the IT architecture of Single Window Systems. High availability and business continuity is one of the most important aspects of the Single Window System. For ensuring the high availability and business continuity, the IT infrastructure of Single Window Systems needs to be designed to be protected from human and natural disasters with a fault tolerant system and off-site data backup.

Policy Advice 4: Promoting cross-border interconnectivity and interoperability of the national Single Window Systems in the OIC Region towards establishing Regional Single Window Systems

Rationale:

For many years, Single Windows systems were national efforts. With the increasing number of national Single Windows, there is a growing potential to leverage more benefits for the trading and transport community by fostering cross-border exchange and regional Single Window Systems. Such regional approaches aim at the electronic and automatic exchange of information among participating countries.

The main challenges for Regional Single Window Systems initiatives are, the lack of interconnectivity, interoperability and harmonized data and processes among national Single Window Systems. In this respect, while further encouraging national Single Window Systems, it is necessary to support cross-border projects amongst OIC Member countries that already operate a Single Window.

These projects can focus on the exchange of selected documents within clearly determined business processes, such as the Certificate of origin within OIC Member countries that are member of a free trade area or customs union. Such projects will encourage the alignment to common standards for data and information exchange.

Instruments to Realize the Policy Advices:

- ***COMCEC Trade Working Group:*** In its subsequent meetings, the Working Group may elaborate on the above mentioned policy areas in a more detailed manner.
- ***COMCEC Project Funding:*** Under the COMCEC Project Funding, the COMCEC Coordination Office calls for project proposals each year. With the COMCEC Project Funding, the Member Countries participating in the Working Groups can submit multilateral cooperation projects to be financed through grants by the COMCEC Coordination Office. For the above-mentioned policy areas and their sub-areas, the Member Countries can utilize the COMCEC Project Funding and the COMCEC Coordination Office may finance the successful projects. The projects may include seminars, training programs, study visits, exchange of experts, workshops and preparing analytical studies, needs assessments and training materials/documents, etc.

1.2. POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE 10TH MEETING OF THE TRADE WORKING GROUP

The COMCEC Trade Working Group (TWG) has successfully held its 10th Meeting on November 2nd, 2017 in Ankara, Turkey with the theme of “*Special Economic Zones in the OIC Member States.*” During the Meeting, Trade Working Group, made deliberations for policy approximation among the Member Countries regarding developing special economic zones. The Room Document, prepared in accordance with the main findings of the research report conducted specifically for the 10th Meeting of the COMCEC Trade Working Group titled “*Special Economic Zones in the OIC Member States*” and the answers of the Member Countries to the policy questions sent to the COMCEC Trade Working Group focal points by the COMCEC Coordination Office. During the Meeting, the participants agreed on the policy recommendations included in the Room Document. The existing document includes these policy recommendations highlighted during the Meeting.

Policy Advice 1: Designing and programming Special Economic Zones in line with national economic strategies for ensuring their complementarity with national economic growth targets and industry sector priorities

Special economic zones are important tools for improving national and regional economic growth and increasing the national income. Whilst SEZs have been pursued by many countries in recent years to drive economic development objectives and to facilitate investment opportunities, the economic rationale supporting the implementation of a proposed SEZ programme needs to be fully grounded in an appreciation of the existing factors constraining economic growth and performance.

Observation of the performance and success of SEZs within OIC Member Countries and internationally, also suggests that SEZs tend to be more successful where they are programmed and designed as logical components of national and regional economic strategies. This requires a clear indication and quantification of the specific economic strategy priorities that are best served nationally and regionally by SEZs, with an evidence-based case as to why SEZs constitute an appropriate form of policy intervention.

Policy Advice 2: Improving economic performance of SEZ programmes through developing unique incentives frameworks – fiscal and non-fiscal - which attract investments and foster effective and efficient business environments

Rationale:

The reduction of administrative burdens is critical to a successful SEZ programme. Non-fiscal incentives, which facilitate the ease of doing business within SEZs, are

now often cited as more important to investors than the implementation of fiscal benefits. In particular, non-fiscal incentives can be very successful instruments in improving the overall business and investment environment and increasing the ‘ease-of-doing-business’.

With regards to fiscal incentives, they should be focused on the sectors and strategies which are being targeted by the proposed zone programme and should not be used as the main differentiator between competing zones. There should ideally be a clear link between national economic priorities and target industry-sectors suitable for the SEZ programme.

Where possible, incentive frameworks can be standardised at the national level to ensure that competition between zones within a country does not result in the adoption of unsustainable packages of incentives. The use of ‘sunset clauses’ can be effective mechanisms to ensure that SEZ programmes avoid unsustainable guarantees of fiscal incentives over long time periods.

Policy Advice 3: Improving the competitive advantage of SEZ programmes through effective site and sector targeting based on a robust understanding of national economic priorities and competitive advantages

Rationale:

The correct choice of site(s) and sectoral focus for SEZ programmes are identified as critical success factors in ensuring that the comparative advantages of the country, region or site are fully utilised.

Sectoral selection should include consideration of advantages such as labour force, skills and training levels, proximity and capacity of input suppliers and preferential market access. A key component of this is the identification and selection of the most appropriate sectors based on a robust economic understanding of economic policy objectives, existing competitive advantages and activities which would add most value in the context of the vision and rationale for SEZ development.

Forward strategies should also be developed to identify clear pathways to progress up industry value chains with strategies formulated for fostering both backward and forward linkages within the domestic economy. It is also important for SEZ programmes to facilitate complementary policies such as skills development and regional supply chain management to promote these linkages and attract increased investments.

One of the most common factors characterising poor performance within SEZ programmes is poor site location, sometimes determined without economic/technical considerations. It is acknowledged that zones are more successful when they exploit

pre-existing advantages that are the products of concentration, such as the presence of existing infrastructure such as ports or airports which offer international connectivity or economic considerations such as access to markets, feedstocks and supply chains.

Policy Advice 4: Designing an efficient legal and regulatory framework to create a ‘special’ economic operating environment which considers and complements the existing legal and regulatory environment

Rationale:

The legal and regulatory framework will typically differentiate the SEZ from the domestic economy and it is therefore important for the framework and associated regulations to outline how the SEZ programme will be governed and how investors will be attracted and serviced. The institutional and administrative framework should be clearly defined in terms of the role of different government departments or agencies and consideration should be given as to whether a unique SEZ law should be established, or whether regulations, legislative amendments or contract law or concessions could offer similar benefits.

The creation of a ‘special’ operating environment should not mean compensating for weaknesses in the wider economy, but should involve establishment of an extra-territorial area that provides truly beneficial investment and trading conditions and is fully complementary to the country’s forward strategy for economic growth.

Consideration should also be given as to how investor requirements are best met through the legal and regulatory framework, particularly within the specific target sectors and any regulatory challenges which need to be overcome to attract further inward investment. This could include the creation of a ‘One-Stop-Shop’.

Analysis of the existing legal and regulatory environment should also be carefully considered, to ensure that the proposed SEZ framework does not result in administrative conflict, tension or increased complexity. The purpose of creating a dedicated SEZ framework is to improve the general ‘ease of doing business’ and therefore increased complexity can be a deterrent to inward investment.

Policy Advice 5: Assigning/Establishing a single SEZ authority to regulate all SEZs within the country and supporting SEZ programmes through active involvement of key stakeholders and development of SEZ working groups

Rationale:

There is a need for establishing a single SEZ authority, where countries have multiple SEZs to regulate all SEZs. Therefore, an overarching authority should be established in the member countries for leveraging existing expertise and avoiding the potential pitfalls of multiple authorities competing with one another and creating investor

confusion. Single SEZ authorities help to promote policy continuation and consistency across SEZ programmes, as well as managing the relationship between regulators, operators and developers of SEZ programmes. Careful consideration should be given, however, to the degree of flexibility that must be exercised by the single authority across different zones, this being partly dependent upon the zones' sectoral focus. Regulators must be able to differentiate in terms of treatment for zones focusisng on financial and business services for example, in comparison to those focusing on other activities such as manufacturing or logistics. The possibility of including a legal arbitration function across or within SEZs should also be considered.

Furthermore, it is key for a SEZ programme to be supported by a range of government departments and agencies in order for it to be successful. Executive support for an SEZ programme helps ensure that all those in government understand that the programme is an executive priority and that effective administration of the programme is a priority. Additionally, various government departments and/or agencies may need to contribute or devolve operational responsibilities.

The formulation of SEZ working groups can be a key tool in ensuring that the full range of issues and opportunities that an SEZ programme generates is captured and to ensure lateral support from relevant stakeholders. Effective working groups can be composed of highly experienced government technicians who have a deep knowledge of the country's economic challenges, policies, legislation and economic development projects. Working groups can also provide a useful mechanism for managing the relationship between key public and private stakeholders through the direct involvement of private sector interests.

Instruments to Realize the Policy Advices:

- ***COMCEC Trade Working Group:*** In its subsequent meetings, the Working Group may elaborate on the above mentioned policy areas in a more detailed manner.
- ***COMCEC Project Funding:*** Under the COMCEC Project Funding, the COMCEC Coordination Office calls for project proposals each year. With the COMCEC Project Funding, the Member Countries participating in the Working Groups can submit multilateral cooperation projects to be financed through grants by the COMCEC Coordination Office. For the above-mentioned policy areas and their sub-areas, the Member Countries can utilize the COMCEC Project Funding and the COMCEC Coordination Office may finance the successful projects. The projects may include seminars, training programs, study visits, exchange of experts, workshops and preparing analytical studies, needs assessments and training materials/documents, etc.

2. POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE TRANSPORT AND COMMUNICATIONS WORKING GROUP

2.1. THE POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE 9TH MEETING OF THE TRANSPORT AND COMMUNICATIONS WORKING GROUP

The COMCEC Transport and Communications Working Group (TCWG) successfully held its 9th Meeting on March 16th, 2017 in Ankara, Turkey with the theme of “Increasing Broadband Internet Penetration in OIC Member Countries”. During the Meeting, TCWG made deliberations concerning policy approximation among the Member Countries in the field of broadband penetration. The Room Document, prepared in accordance with the main findings of the research report conducted for the 9th Meeting of TCWG and the answers of the Member Countries to the policy questions, were the main input for the discussions. During the Meeting, the participants discussed the policy recommendations given below.

A. Policy Recommendations for all OIC Member Countries

Policy Recommendation I: Preparing national broadband strategies with the involvement of the all relevant stakeholders

Rationale:

National broadband strategies are important policy documents which basically determine the goals for increasing broadband coverage and penetration for the respective countries (differentiating between consumers, businesses and government services), and define technology, competition, and investment models. Within this perspective, national broadband strategies aim at ensuring fast and high-quality broadband access at affordable prices for all segments of the society as well as strengthening sectoral competition. In addition, national broadband strategies facilitate the development of data collection mechanisms as well as monitoring and evaluation of the achieved progress.

Policy Recommendation II: Enhancing digital literacy by embedding programs in the formal education system and encouraging non-formal initiatives targeting specific segments of the population

Rationale:

Digital literacy¹ is crucially important to reap the full benefits of information and communication technologies. Individuals with sufficient level of digital literacy

¹ Digital literacy is defined as the “ability to use digital technology, communication tools or networks to locate, evaluate, use and create information” (Hauge and Prier, 2010).

demand broadband internet services and can create additional value by utilizing them. Digital literacy can be enhanced by embedding programs in the formal education system, and by encouraging non-formal training initiatives targeting specific segments of the society (elderly, rural poor, etc.). Digital literacy programs embedded in the formal education system should be large scale, centralized and focus on improving skills on using devices and services. On the other hand, non-formal programs can be initiated by offering online training, building local access centers in areas with limited ICT adoption, implementing programs in public schools or cultural centers together with local authorities, and deploying trainers to rural areas.

B. Policy Recommendations for the OIC Member Countries with Different Stage of Broadband Development

1. OIC Member Countries at advanced stage² of broadband development

Policy Recommendation I: Achieving high-speed Internet coverage in rural and isolated areas through regulatory holidays³ and direct subsidies with the purpose of improving the broadband investment business case

Rationale:

High-speed broadband service is already provided in urban and suburban areas of the advanced countries. Achieving high-speed coverage in rural and isolated areas remains an important challenge before the advanced countries. By alleviating some business case constraints, approaches combining regulatory holidays and direct subsidies aim at addressing this issue. In order to enhance deployment of next generation networks in rural areas, the member countries can encourage the operators through regulatory holidays, which exempt them from the obligation of sharing their network with competitors in rural areas. Furthermore, subsidies, as co-financing mechanisms, can also be utilized in deploying broadband infrastructure in areas with limited return on investment.

Policy Recommendation II: Enactment of financial incentives to operators for deploying 4G

Rationale:

Concerning broadband penetration, full deployment of 3G has been fulfilled in most of advanced and intermediate OIC Member Countries. At this point, 4G technology has been deployed in 41 OIC countries although coverage rates remain significantly low, benefitting primarily urban populations. Many operators are reluctant to proceed

² OIC Member Countries at advanced stage refers to the countries which have high coverage and adoption of broadband internet.

³ Regulatory holiday refers to the absence of some regulatory obligation to provide access, at least for a predefined period of time.

towards fully deploying 4G before achieving a reasonable rate of return on the prior generation. Therefore, in order to accelerate 4G deployment, governments can consider enacting financial incentives for operators. In this respect, tax exemption for the provision of network equipment can be utilized. Furthermore, governments can reduce spectrum licensing costs.

2. OIC Member Countries at an intermediate stage⁴ of broadband development

Policy Recommendation I: Reducing cost of broadband services through targeted public policy initiatives

Rationale:

Increasing demand is one of the biggest challenges faced by the OIC Member States with intermediate broadband deployment. In order to reduce access prices for end-users, governments can either reduce taxes on service and devices or provide subsidies. These could be done in the form of a plain voucher or a tax refund for qualifying segments of the population (e.g. students). The second option is to negotiate an agreement between the government and private sector broadband providers to offer reduced prices for certain groups. The third option comprises offering free internet access through Wi-Fi services located in public areas, such as squares, libraries, and transportation hubs.

Policy Recommendation II: Lowering the cultural and linguistic barriers through development of user-friendly local platforms, content, and applications.

Rationale:

Cultural and linguistic barriers have a negative impact on the demand for broadband Internet services. Also, the lack of content in local languages and cultural irrelevance represent a major barrier for adoption of Internet. It is apparent that cultural and linguistic relevance encourages people to make more use of internet. In response to this challenge, governments together with the private sector should promote the development of local digital content, user-friendly platforms and applications and thus increase the internet penetration.

⁴ OIC Member Countries at intermediate stage generally have advanced coverage but limited broadband penetration.

3. OIC Member Countries at an initial stage⁵ of broadband development

Policy Recommendation I: Offering a low-priced broadband service for consumers by state-owned and government subsidized telecommunications operators

Rationale:

Generally, the countries at initial phase of broadband development are the ones which have not completely privatized their telecommunications industry. The lack of competition directly affects the affordability of broadband services. Within this framework, since affordability remains one of the biggest problems faced by the OIC Member Countries at initial stage of broadband development, state-owned broadband providers can assume responsibility, as a public service entity, for providing affordable broadband access services for end users. This may also encourage private operators to decrease their prices.

Policy Recommendation II: Offering a low-priced or free broadband service targeted for disadvantaged segments of the population

Rationale:

Disadvantaged socio-demographic groups have limited capacity to afford the acquisition of broadband services. Governments can develop sound policies for creating an appropriate environment where disadvantaged groups could afford broadband services. Governments can also offer free internet access in the public institutions such as schools, libraries or health clinics. For this purpose, governments can encourage private operators to offer a low-priced broadband service for disadvantaged segments of the population. This can be achieved in the context of the formulation of a national broadband plan. Alternatively, it could be achieved as part of an agreement between the government regulator and a private incumbent operator as a condition for allowing the latter to pursue a particular initiative (e.g. a merger or an acquisition).

⁵ OIC Member Countries at initial stage refers to the countries which need to increase both supply and demand for broadband services. For those countries, a combination of infrastructure deployment incentives and demand stimulation policies are required to increase broadband penetration.

2.2. POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE 10th MEETING OF THE TRANSPORT AND COMMUNICATIONS WORKING GROUP - THE EXCHANGE OF VIEWS SESSION OF 33RD COMCEC SESSION

The 32nd COMCEC Session agreed on “Improving Transnational Transport Corridors in the OIC Member Countries” as the theme of the Exchange of Views of 33rd Session of the COMCEC and requested the COMCEC Transport and Communications Working Group (TCWG) to come up with policy recommendations on the aforementioned topic and report it to the 33rd COMCEC Ministerial Session. In this framework, the Working Group, come up with the following challenges and problems as well as the possible policy options with regards to improving transnational transport corridors in the member countries.

Challenges and Problems:

The TCWG, in line with the discussions during the 10th Meeting of the COMCEC TCWG, highlighted the following possible challenges and problems:

- Limited awareness of relevant stakeholders, especially at the decision maker level, about the economic benefits of smooth functioning of international transport corridors,
- Weak political will among the enroute countries,
- Inadequate cooperation and coordination among the enroute countries including lack of a common framework and management system. This leads to ineffective coordination in terms of allocation of tasks and responsibilities, including planning and financial aspects, among the enroute countries as well as participating donor agencies,
- Lack of diversified Transnational Transport Strategies/Policies targeting the various needs of private sector,
- Inadequate, inaccurate, or outdated information about the operations concerning transnational transport corridors and effective data collection system,
- Low interoperability and lack of interconnections. In this respect, the main challenges are;
 - Inadequate interoperability among the road, rail and maritime modes of transport,
 - Insufficient harmonized business procedures among the enroute countries throughout the transport corridors,
 - Lack of ICT interconnectivity for travel planning, information and management

- Mismatch between international conventions, national laws and regulations, and operational issues,
- The problems in addressing environmental challenges and providing seamless as well as reliable transport,
- Sub-optimal balance of traffic between road and rail,
- Political issues between the countries that result in trade restrictions and bottlenecks at border crossing points,
- Ensuring the sustainability of transport corridor infrastructure in terms of road maintenance and crucially averting significant losses in asset value,
- The high cost of insuring cargo in transit.

Policy Recommendations:

In light of the above-mentioned challenges and problems, TCWG came up with a set of policy recommendations, which are critical for ensuring the smooth functioning of the existing transnational transport corridors in the OIC Member Countries.

1. Political and institutional factors

- Transforming transport routes to transport corridors with a permanent secretariat or strengthening the capacity of the established Secretariats,
- Developing a Corridor Treaty template as a benchmark for the utilization of enroute countries,
- Increasing awareness of the decision makers regarding the need for enhanced cooperation and coordination as well as shared responsibilities to improve the overall performance of the transnational transport corridors,
- Establishing national committees for trade and transport facilitation, comprising different ministries and stakeholders.

2. Economic, financial and social factors:

- Promoting simplification and streamlining of business processes/procedures among the enroute member countries including payments at the border crossing points or pre-payments in advance of reaching the borders,
- Increasing awareness of public and private stakeholders about the potential economic benefits of transnational transport corridors,
- Utilizing international resources including COMCEC Project Funding Mechanism to promote establishing corridor secretariats,
- Promoting “through railway tariff” among the countries along the corridor,
- Preparation of a master plan for the development of transport corridors including short, medium, and long term financing requirements,
- Engaging the private sector to develop, finance and manage transport corridor infrastructure in partnership with the public sector,

- Encouraging intra-trade and investments with a view to enhancing movement of people and work opportunities as well as reducing poverty along transport corridors.

3. Trade Facilitation:

- Reviewing the existing trade agreements to identify relevant factors to remove non-physical barriers to trade,
- Stimulating intra-trade to increase demand towards the transnational transport corridors in the OIC region,
- Increasing the efficiency of customs inspection by creating One Stop Border Posts, utilizing risk management techniques (such as ASYCUDA system), green channeling and new technologies in customs,
- Developing an efficient trade statistic collection system,
- Promoting Single Window Systems,
- Facilitating visa issuance for business people and visa stickers for drivers.

4. Safety, security and legal liability:

- Implementing the security-building measures/programs throughout transport corridors,
- Enhancing sharing experiences in road safety,
- Building road side service stations including rest areas to improve drivers' welfare and minimize fatigue,
- Promoting multimodal legal liability.

5. Technical and operational factors:

- Improving the design standards of road and rail infrastructure including road/rail transfer nodes, gauge changing system, and border crossings,
- Ensuring the sustainability of transport corridor infrastructure including the maintenance of roads through the application of appropriate user charges,
- Harmonization of vehicle/operational standards, e.g. vehicle weights and dimension, and gross vehicle mass,
- Improving rail interoperability including a common driver licensing/certification and common conditions of carriage,
- Improving communications along the corridor including fibre optic cable and cargo tracking,
- Improving logistics infrastructure, such as multiple-user warehouses through enhanced coordination and cooperation among the relevant stakeholders,
- Increasing the number and quality of logistics centres along the corridors.

6. Environmental and energy factors

- Promoting intermodal transport particularly encouraging the use of rail and maritime transport through investments in efficient mode transfer facilities,

- Stimulating the use of more environmentally friendly vehicles and vessels through incentives and regulation, for reducing carbon emissions and air pollutions along the corridor.

7. Corridor Performance Monitoring

- Developing a data collection system along the corridors including but not limited to:
 - trade volumes and composition, including the movement of hazardous cargos
 - traffic flow and composition
 - journey time and vehicle speed
 - border crossing processing times
 - transit costs and fees
 - road accidents,
- Analyzing and disseminating the above-mentioned data for reporting on the performance of transport corridors and the implementation of the above policies.

3. POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE TOURISM WORKING GROUP

3.1. POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE 9TH MEETING OF THE TOURISM WORKING GROUP

COMCEC MUSLIM FRIENDLY TOURISM (MFT) GUIDELINE FOR REGULATING ACCOMMODATION ESTABLISHMENTS

With the rising numbers of Muslim travelers, who have unique faith-based needs, tourism businesses around the world have started to pay attention to the needs of this growing and lucrative market segment. Muslim Friendly Tourism (MFT) is defined as “the activities of Muslim travelers who do not wish to compromise their faith-based needs while travelling for a purpose, which is permissible.”¹

Given the growing importance of the MFT market, COMCEC commissioned the following three studies on MFT:

1. *Muslim Friendly Tourism: Understanding the Demand and Supply Sides in the OIC Member Countries*
2. *Muslim Friendly Tourism: Developing and Marketing MFT Products and Services in the OIC Member Countries*
3. *Muslim Friendly Tourism (MFT): Regulating Accommodation Establishments in the OIC Member Countries*

The findings of the third MFT study - *Muslim Friendly Tourism (MFT) Regulating Accommodation Establishments in the OIC Member Countries* were presented to the 9th Meeting of the Tourism Working Group held on February 16th, 2017 in Ankara.

In recent years, the tourism industry has started to grasp and address the distinct needs of Muslim travelers. Muslim-friendly travel is seen as a promising niche market by many accommodation providers. There is no current consensus on which MFT elements to incorporate, however, accommodation establishments

¹ “Muslim-Friendly Tourism: Understanding the Demand and Supply Sides in the OIC Member Countries.” COMCEC, Feb. 2016. Web.

make their decision based on the ease of implementation, the cost, and the impact on non-Muslim guests. Previous research studies show that needs of Muslim and non-Muslim travelers do overlap in some areas, such as a hotel's location and price, which are critical for travelers, regardless of faith. Furthermore, Muslim and non-Muslim travelers alike value many of the characteristics captured by conventional quality standards, including cleanliness, spaciousness and convenience. However, research has indicated that Muslim travelers have specific faith-related needs; some of which may even clash with the needs of non-Muslim travelers, including, for instance the absence of alcohol from hotel premises. Given the varying levels of MFT services and facilities offered in the tourism industry, there is a need for regulation, especially in the accommodation sector.

Based on the COMCEC *Muslim Friendly Tourism (MFT) Regulating Accommodation Establishments in the OIC Member Countries* study which includes insights from case studies, surveys, expert interviews as well as an analysis of existing standards, this document presents basic MFT Regulation guidelines for OIC and Non-OIC countries. It presents key considerations in evaluating and setting up of MFT guidelines, and general MFT services & facilities guidelines for different levels of MFT readiness across the OIC Member Countries. Finally, market positioning options for MFT travel are also summarized in this document.

Evaluating & Setting-Up for MFT Guidelines

The aforementioned study strongly recommends the regulation of MFT elements within the accommodation sector (albeit at varying level depending on individual country environment and maturity), given the strong feedback provided by surveys and a clear articulation of the types of services required.

In the consumer survey that was conducted for the purpose of this study, respondents attached great importance to Halal food being regulated by a Muslim-friendly accommodation standard; 99 percent of respondents rated it as important (83 percent rated it as extremely important). This was followed by offering Ramadan services, such as breakfast buffets, which 95 percent of

respondents rated as important, followed by having Qibla direction in the hotel room, which 94 percent of respondents rated as important.

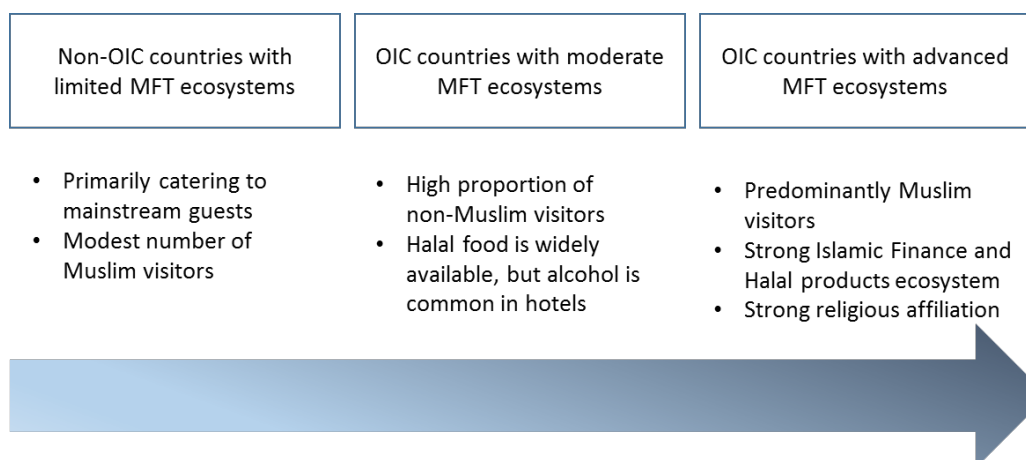
MFT regulation provides guests with an assurance of authenticity, especially in case of Halal food, provides consistent expectations, and supports a family-friendly ecosystem, which is beneficial to both Muslim guests as well as to mainstream guests traveling with their families.

The analysis and main findings of the research report titled “*Muslim Friendly Tourism: Understanding the Demand and Supply Sides in the OIC Member Countries*” and “*Muslim Friendly Tourism: Developing and Marketing MFT Products and Services in the OIC Member Countries*” which have already prepared for the COMCEC TWG, can also be utilized by member countries in their efforts towards regulating MFT accommodation establishments.

MFT Services & Facilities – General Guidelines

The relevance of MFT services and facilities will differ by nature of country. The chart below illustrates country segmentation based on whether or not it is an OIC Member Country, and based on the level of MFT ecosystems available.

Country Segmentation - MFT Ecosystem



Based on the review of various existing MFT guidelines, below are a summary listing of MFT services and facilities guidelines per segment category of country described above.

1. MFT Services and Facilities for non-OIC Countries with Limited MFT Ecosystems

In non-OIC countries, establishments can attract Muslim consumers in a practical way by offering low cost basic services that are easy to implement and have a low impact on mainstream guests.

The recommended services and facilities can be summarized as follows:

1. Provide some Halal food options
2. Remove alcohol from the mini-bar for Muslim guests
3. Provide *qibla* (prayer) direction in rooms.
4. Provide list of local Halal restaurants and directions to local mosque
5. Provide a prayer rug and prayer schedule upon request
6. Train staff on awareness of MFT principles

While very important to Muslim guests, most of these services and features have little effect on mainstream guests and are low cost.

2. MFT Services and Facilities for OIC Countries with Modest MFT Ecosystem

There are three practical MFT services that are important to Muslim guests, are easy to implement and have low impact on mainstream guests, which accommodation facilities in OIC countries with modest MFT ecosystems should incorporate. These three services, as illustrated in the following chart, include the following²:

1. Offering exclusively Halal certified food (with a consideration to have the hotel kitchens Halal certified)
2. Providing prayer mats in rooms
3. Accommodating for Ramadan meal timings and menu items.

MFT services and facilities that may be offered by accommodation providers can be segmented based on whether they are low cost or costly to implement as well as on their effect on non-Muslim guests (whether implementing the new service will have a low or high impact on Muslim guests). MFT services that are low cost and have a low impact on mainstream guests are easy to implement, while services that are low cost but have a high impact on mainstream guests are sensitive to implement, etc. (Please refer to Figure 15: MFT Services for Modest Ecosystems in the study).

Additional services, which were rated important and are of medium to high cost to implement are as follows:

1. Installing a bidet or hand shower in bathrooms, both in guest rooms as well as in bathrooms in public areas
2. Providing family-friendly entertainment
3. Being alcohol free and having no casinos or nightclubs on site.
4. Removing adult channels and placing internet content filters
5. Requiring staff to dress modestly

² An additional service that was rated as important by survey respondents and is not costly to provide is having a “musalla” or prayer area within the hotel.

3. MFT Services and Facilities for Countries with Advanced MFT Ecosystems

For OIC countries with advanced MFT ecosystems, the following higher level of MFT services and facilities are recommended in addition to the basic services:

General:

1. Hotel kitchens should be Halal certified
2. No alcohol should be available or allowed inside the hotel
3. Wudu-friendly facilities should be available in public bathrooms and room bathrooms
4. Holy Qurans should be placed in each room
5. Congregational prayers should be held at the musalla/masjid including Friday prayers, and the call to prayer should be broadcast on the speaker system.
6. In Ramadan, in addition to providing iftar and suhoor meals, shuttle transportation should be provided to local mosques
7. Halal certified products should be extended to wellness products such as shampoos and lotions.

Leisure Activities:

8. Gender-separated wellness facilities including gyms, pools, spas, and beaches should be provided, either by having separate facilities, or by allocating certain hours for women.

Managing the business

9. All financing should adhere to Shariah-compliant principles
10. The accommodation's employees should be treated fairly and receive a living wage that is high enough to maintain a normal standard of living
11. Businesses should have eco-friendly processes in place and have an environmental certification.

Family-Friendly and Ethical Positioning

The level of practicality in introducing MFT features varies by country. One of the key consideration is positioning and promoting Muslim-friendly services without alienating non-Muslim customers. Some of the features relating to MFT may be of higher cost and more difficult to implement; however, several MFT features also accentuate the accommodation facility's family-friendly and ethical positioning. For example, the absence of a nightclub or a bar, not only accommodates the needs of Muslim guests, but also strengthens a hotel's family-friendly positioning, since many mainstream families with children would consider such an environment a safer place for their family.

The table below lists MFT services and facilities that strengthen an accommodation facility's family-friendly and ethical positioning across the different MFT ecosystem levels. Having no alcohol, casinos, or nightclubs, in addition to banning adult channels, obscene artwork and placing internet filters, all accentuate an accommodation facility's family-friendly positioning, in addition to being ethical.

Family-Friendly and Ethical MFT Services and Facilities

Minimum requirements	
Halal Food	Halal food options
Alcohol Policy	Alcohol-free minibar for Muslim guests
Good to have	
Alcohol Policy	No alcohol: no bar or alcohol served at hotel restaurants
Entertainment	No nightclubs on site No casinos on site No adult channels available Internet content filters in place (for obscenity) Family-friendly programming and entertainment on site
Staff	Staff to wear modest clothes
Premium	
Alcohol Policy	No alcohol on site (e.g., at restaurant or on demand)
Entertainment	No obscene, music or artwork that may contradict Islamic values, displayed
Environmental	Environmental certification and eco-friendly processes in place

3.2. THE POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE 10TH MEETING OF THE TOURISM WORKING GROUP

The COMCEC Tourism Working Group (TWG) has successfully held its 10th Meeting on September 21st, 2017 in Ankara, Turkey with the theme of “Risk and Crisis Management in Tourism Sector: Recovery from Crisis in the OIC Member Countries.” During the Meeting, Tourism Working Group, made deliberations on risk and crisis management in tourism sector and the recovery strategies. Accordingly, the participants has come up with some policy recommendations.

The Member States of the TWG are kindly invited to communicate their final observations on the said policy recommendations, if there is any, to the COMCEC Coordination Office by October 13th, 2017. The comments received before October 13th, 2017 will be able to be incorporated into the Document. After incorporating the Member States’ contributions, this document will be submitted to the 33rd Ministerial Meeting of the COMCEC to be held on 20-23 November 2017 in İstanbul, as an outcome of the 10th TWG Meeting.

Policy Advice 1. Establishing a national committee/task force with the responsibility for tourism risk and crisis management, which will be formed by the national tourism authority of each country and include representation from the stakeholders.

Rationale:

Resilience is the ability of a system to reduce the chances of a crisis occurring, to mitigate the impacts of a crisis should it occur, and to recover quickly. The public sector needs to have the long-term view and balanced approach towards all stakeholders to provide the strong leadership essential for ensuring resilience, to deploy the planning resources needed to prepare for crisis, and to bring the different stakeholders together.

The tourism risk and crisis management unit must be aware of the different categories of disaster and crisis (environmental, societal-political, health-related, technological, economic) which can affect the tourism industry.

The unit should also maintain close links with national-level disaster risk reduction bodies, which make necessary preparations for risks affecting the country generally but do not always take account of the specific needs of the tourism industry.

Furthermore, a Crisis Headquarters needs to be designated which would be activated in the event of a crisis.

Policy Advice 2. Increasing awareness of resilience and crisis, including the identified stages of a crisis and how to prepare for and respond to each stage.

Rationale:

The preparedness and ability of a tourism system to respond to, cope with and adapt to crises or other significant changes will ensure its resilience and ability to maintain its essential functions.

The key elements of a resilient tourism system are: strong institutional leadership (generally provided by the government); the ability to understand and harness market forces, including awareness of market trends and how to adapt to them; and strong networks, i.e. collaboration between different elements of the industry in partnerships or associations.

Destinations and individual businesses should ensure resilience, prepare for crises, and - in the event of a crisis occurring - address recovery in line with the six recognised phases of the Crisis Management Framework. These are: Pre-crisis, Prodromal (warning signs), Emergency, Mid-term Recovery, Long-term Recovery, and Resolution.

Training at all levels should be led by the public sector and implemented through workshops (including action planning sessions), and online discussion and advisory forums. Academic institutions should be involved in order to ensure the robust preparation of future employees.

Policy Advice 3. Analyse and understand the risks and plan for crisis, both in terms of external crises and risks affecting the tourism industry generally and individual businesses.

Rationale:

The most important phase of the six-stage Crisis Management Framework is the first, i.e. pre-crisis contingency planning, since carefully devised plans involving relevant stakeholders will flow into effective responses should a crisis occur. Furthermore, individual businesses are the primary interface with the customer and must have contingency plans for dealing with emergencies.

During this phase, key actions are to recognise potential threats and prioritise those most likely to occur, according to the five categories of crisis noted in Policy Advice 1. This can be done by understanding crises affecting tourism and via scenario planning. A contingency plan for each potential risk should be prepared.

In addition to the categories in Policy Advice 1, tourism can be negatively affected by incidents in the public realm (e.g. death or injury due to drowning, traffic accidents, or crime), or events on business premises (e.g. food poisoning, accidents, fire, or

malfunctioning of IT systems). Risk assessments should be carried out by individual businesses to understand the likelihood of these occurring and establish a plan of action to mitigate the risks.

Good channels of communication must exist between the national crisis management unit and individual businesses, especially via trade associations. It is the responsibility of business owners and managers, association leaders and the government unit to maintain these communications.

In the event of a crisis, consistent messages should be disseminated by both public and private sector. Draft press releases should be prepared in advance.

Policy Advice 4. Ensuring market awareness and positive destination perceptions, and developing new markets and products.

Rationale:

The Analytical Study prepared for the 10 TWG Meeting has shown that destinations withstand and recover from crises more effectively if there is strong awareness by stakeholders of market trends and of the characteristics of different market segments, and when there is an existing loyal customer-base.

In this respect, destinations should maintain awareness of how different market segments react to various crises and in the event of a crisis should highlight new products and target more robust markets, such as regional, domestic or diaspora tourists.

Destinations and individual businesses should foster positive relations with the travel trade and media in order to make it more likely that news stories will be sympathetic and that tour operators and airlines will quickly resume packages and flights after a crisis. Similarly, maintaining warm relations with past and intending customers, particularly through social media, will hasten their return, or – in the case of a long-running crisis - that the trade and travelling public will continue to support the destination.

Instruments to Realize the Policy Advices:

- **COMCEC Tourism Working Group:** In its subsequent meetings, the Working Group may elaborate on the above-mentioned policy areas in a more detailed manner.
- **COMCEC Project Funding:** Under the COMCEC Project Funding, the COMCEC Coordination Office calls for projects each year. With the COMCEC Project Funding, the Member Countries participating in the Working Groups can

submit multilateral cooperation projects to be financed through grants by the COMCEC Coordination Office. For the above-mentioned policy areas, the Member Countries can utilize the COMCEC Project Funding and the COMCEC Coordination Office may finance the successful projects in this regard. These projects may include organizing seminars, training programs, study visits, exchange of experts, workshops and preparing analytical studies, needs assessments and training materials/documents.

- **OIC/COMCEC Private Sector Tourism Forum:** In its meetings, the OIC/COMCEC Private Sector Tourism Forum may elaborate on the above-mentioned policy areas and the sub-areas from the private sector perspective.

4. POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE AGRICULTURE WORKING GROUP

4.1. POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE 9TH MEETING OF THE AGRICULTURE WORKING GROUP

The Agriculture Working Group (AWG) held its 9th Meeting on February 23rd, 2017 with the theme of “*Reducing Food Waste in the OIC Member Countries*”. During the Meeting, the participants deliberated on important policy issues about reducing food waste in the OIC Member Countries and approximating policies among the Member Countries on this important subject. The policy advices presented below have been identified in light of the main findings of the research report prepared specifically for the Meeting and the responses of the Member Countries to the policy questions which were sent by the COMCEC Coordination Office ahead of the Meeting.

Policy Advice I: Developing a specific legislative framework and road map for reducing food waste in a holistic context including supply chain

Rationale:

Development of a legislative framework is considered to be a key issue for reduction of food waste. Many countries have regulations to prevent waste in entire food supply chain. Thus, they aim to ensure that all food is adequately separated from the waste stream and is made available for human consumption. Nonetheless, researches indicate that few OIC Member Countries have legislative framework related to food waste, such as Qatar, Turkey, Egypt, Pakistan and Indonesia.

In this respect, the OIC Member Countries, which do not have any legal framework on food waste, can develop a legal framework and food waste road map. Prior to this, the Member Countries should evaluate the level of waste in general as well as for specific product groups and sectors so that they may focus their efforts to the areas where significant amount of the waste occurs. Doing so, the Member Countries would also contribute to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) target 12.3 which is “By 2030, halve per capita global food waste at the retail and consumer levels and reduce food losses along production and supply chains, including post-harvest losses”.

Policy Advice II: Promotion of food banks and food distribution networks

Rationale:

Creation of food banks and food distributions networks are considered to be among the leading ways of reducing food waste both globally and within OIC Member Countries. These initiatives could play an important role in the distribution of food surplus to the needy people. An important successful initiative, in this regard, is the Egyptian-based food bank model. The program was initiated in 2005 and donates more than 17 million meals each month. This program facilitated the participation of more than 400 hotels and restaurants, ranging from five star hotels to local coffee shops in the Egyptian food bank system.

In this framework, development of food banks and distribution networks will help member countries in reducing food waste. Furthermore, the distribution of food that is being unnecessarily wasted can also increase access of poor to food, and thereby can help Member Countries achieve food security. Therefore, the Member Countries are encouraged to establish food banks or to improve the efficiency of the existing ones.

Policy Advice III: Conducting cohesive initiatives and campaigns to increase awareness on food waste in supply chain and consumption

Rationale:

The research report conducted for this Meeting reveals that significant proportion of the people living in the OIC Member Countries have little concern for food waste. It is also indicated that if they had access to further information on the environmental impacts associated with food waste and the provision of solutions on how to reduce food waste, this would encourage them to reduce food waste. Lack of concern for food waste is applicable to both households and the food service sector. Taking this into consideration, conducting food waste initiatives and creating food waste campaigns should be a priority for OIC Member Countries.

There are various crucial campaigns and initiatives conducted internationally and by member countries to reduce food waste such as Save Food Initiative of UN, Pakistan's 'one-dish law', Indonesia's 'Law on Food' and Turkey's 'Do not waste your bread'. For instance, Turkey has conducted a 'Do not waste your bread' campaign, which resulted in 18 percent reduction in bread waste amounting to US\$ 131 million per day. The OIC Member Countries may examine the experiences of these initiatives, in terms of

implementation, evaluation and monitoring taking their unique cultural and social settings into consideration. Furthermore, the active involvement of relevant stakeholders along the food supply is of particular importance for the success of the campaigns/initiatives. In this respect, the campaigns/initiatives should be designed in a way to ensure the active involvement of relevant stakeholders including businesses, local authorities and consumers.

Instruments that can contribute to realizing the Policy Advices:

COMCEC Agriculture Working Group: In its subsequent meetings, the Working Group may elaborate on the above-mentioned policy areas in a more detailed manner.

COMCEC Project Funding: Under the COMCEC Project Funding, the COMCEC Coordination Office calls for projects each year. With the COMCEC Project Funding, the member countries participating in the Working Groups can submit multilateral cooperation projects to be financed through grants by the COMCEC Coordination Office. For the above- mentioned policy areas, the member countries can utilize the COMCEC Project Funding where the COMCEC Coordination Office may finance successful projects in this regard. These projects may include organization of seminars, training programs, study visits, exchange of experts, workshops and preparing of analytical studies, needs assessments and training materials/documents, etc.

4.2. POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE 10TH MEETING OF THE AGRICULTURE WORKING GROUP

The COMCEC Agriculture Working Group (AWG) has successfully held its 10th Meeting on September 28th, 2017 in Ankara, Turkey with the theme of “Improving Agricultural Market Performance: Creation and Development of Market Institutions”. During the Meeting, Agriculture Working Group, made deliberations on improving agricultural market performance. Accordingly, the participants have come up with some policy recommendations.

The Member States of the AWG are kindly invited to communicate their final observations on the said policy recommendations, if there is any, to the COMCEC Coordination Office by October 13th, 2017. The comments received before October 13th, 2017 will be able to be incorporated into the Document. After incorporating the Member States’ contributions, this document will be submitted to the 33rd Ministerial Meeting of the COMCEC to be held on 20-23 November 2017 in İstanbul, as an outcome of the 10th AWG Meeting.

Policy Advice I: Establishing/improving a Farmer Registry System for farmers/farmer organizations to provide customized supports and assistance as well as extension and market information for farmers.

Rationale:

Lacking institutions/authorities where farmers are registered hinders collection of market information. Registration of farmers enables governments to develop customized policies and to collect, analyze, and disseminate statistics, data, as well as information related to agricultural sector. The registry system could also be utilized for granting and monitoring incentives as well as developing customized support and assistance to upgrade farmers’ production capacity and enhance their access to information about the indicative prices. It may also increase the efficiency and performance of the overall agricultural market system as the available market information would indicate opportunities for connecting agricultural production with processing, value-addition, and other post-harvest activities, and, eventually, consumption.

Policy Advice II: Developing policies/programs/mechanisms to improve farmers' timely access to quality inputs (e.g. seeds, pesticides, fertilizers, and other key ingredients) with a view to increasing quality, quantity and marketability of end products.

Rationale:

Many smallholders/small-scale farmers have a limited access to high-quality, certified inputs and often only have access to low-quality or even imitated inputs. Governments may develop and supervise authorities (or re-mandate one of the current ones) which would be responsible for the quality assurance, distribution of inputs (e.g. feeds, seeds, fertilizers, pesticides, and equipment) and certification of the domestic and imported inputs. This would also help to increase the overall productivity and performance of the entire agricultural market system.

Policy Advice III: Providing need based capacity development support and training to farmers and farmer associations for increasing their access to warehousing and storage capacity.

Rationale:

Lack of storage, warehouse, and post-harvest facilities compel farmers to sell their products immediately after harvest. This causes surplus of products during the post-harvest period and results in lower prices. Warehousing and storage systems facilitate smallholders' access to storage facilities, which would enable them to store and sell their products when supply is low(er) and, hence, market prices are better. In addition, storage facilities also increase smallholders' access to credit (storage of products as form of collateral).

Agriculture cooperatives can set up warehouses of their own. A key to success for cooperatives is the direct involvement of primary producers through ownership or contractual arrangements backed by the producers' common market power of the downstream processing, marketing, and distribution elements of the agricultural market system. Without this, the producers can only be price-takers and can get very limited benefit/profit from the market system.

Policy Advice IV: Establishing/improving the ingredient and input traceability as well as marketing oriented product standardization and certification to enhance safety and marketability of agricultural products in both domestic and international markets

Rationale:

The traceability of food in the market system is critical for food safety and for broader strategic as well as market monitoring purposes. The functioning of the broader food market system is considerably hampered without traceability in the supply chain.

A traceability system could enable agricultural market institutions to trace farmers or areas which do not meet export requirements in terms of standardization, food safety, and sanitary and phytosanitary measures. As a critical complementary to traceability, qualified standardization of products (e.g. size, volume, and ingredients) is required to improve the market access for smallholders' products. Traceability systems based upon sanitary, phytosanitary, feed and food safety regulatory framework, (like animal identification system) feed monitoring and food establishment registry would be an important step to develop the capacity for the surveillance of the supply chain.

Instruments to Realize the Policy Advices:

COMCEC Agriculture Working Group: In its subsequent meetings, the Working Group may elaborate on the above-mentioned policy areas in a more detailed manner.

COMCEC Project Funding: Under the COMCEC Project Funding, the COMCEC Coordination Office calls for projects each year. With the COMCEC Project Funding, the member countries participating in the Working Groups can submit multilateral cooperation projects to be financed through grants by the COMCEC Coordination Office. For the above- mentioned policy areas, the member countries can utilize the COMCEC Project Funding and the COMCEC Coordination Office may finance the successful projects in this regard. These projects may include organization of seminars, training programs, study visits, exchange of experts, workshops and preparing of analytical studies, needs assessments and training materials/documents, etc.

5. POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE POVERTY ALLEVIATION WORKING GROUP

5.1. POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE 9TH MEETING POVERTY ALLEVIATION WORKING GROUP

The Poverty Alleviation Working Group (PAWG) held its 9th Meeting on April 6th, 2017 in Ankara with the theme of “*Malnutrition in the OIC Member Countries: A Trap for Poverty*”. During the Meeting, the participants discussed some crucial policy issues about reducing malnutrition in the OIC Member Countries. The policy advices presented below have been identified in light of the main findings of the research report prepared specifically for the Meeting and the responses of the Member Countries to the policy questions which were sent by the COMCEC Coordination Office in advance of the Meeting.

Policy Advice 1: Developing and implementing nutrition-specific and nutrition-sensitive interventions, especially towards women of reproductive age from vulnerable groups

Rationale:

Nutritional status of women at the time of conception and during pregnancy is of particular importance both for the health of the mother and for ensuring healthy fetal growth and development. Neonates with fetal growth restriction are also at substantially increased risk of being stunted at 24 months and of development of some types of non-communicable diseases in adulthood. Furthermore, good nutrition early in life is essential for children to attain their developmental potential. Yet, 27% of all births in low and middle income countries are of low weight. Individual counselling and group-wise education for mothers have been demonstrated to have positive impacts on improving nutritional status of women at the time of conception and during pregnancy. Moreover, providing maternity conveniences at the workplace for pregnant women is an important nutrition-sensitive intervention that help improve the future prospects of the baby.

Proven nutrition-specific interventions aimed at improving mothers’ nutrition status include iron and folic acid supplementation, calcium supplementation, and iodine supplementation and fortification (iodised salt). Multiple micronutrient deficiencies often exist in low and middle income countries and need to be addressed through multiple micronutrient supplementations. Furthermore, maternal wasting and food insecurity need

to be addressed through balanced energy and protein supplementation. Such nutrition-specific interventions would reduce malnutrition up to 15%.

Policy Advice 2: Improving infant and young child feeding (IYCF) practices

Rationale:

Poor IYCF practices, including inadequate breastfeeding contribute to the high levels of malnutrition. WHO guidelines state that children should be breastfed within 1 hour of birth and exclusively breastfed for 6 months. Mother milk shall be provided up to 2 years in conjunction with complementary feeding. Labor laws shall be implemented in such a way that encourages these requirements.

Beyond this period, complimentary foods should be introduced in line with the guidelines on minimum acceptable diet, which accounts for both meal frequency and dietary diversity. Preventive zinc supplementation, vitamin A supplementation and iron supplementation for infants and young children should also be encouraged. On the other hand, regulation of mother-milk substitutes effectively and preventing false-marketing of unhealthy food are also important implementation issues.

Interventions to increase knowledge of and positive attitudes towards recommended feeding practices and dispelling harmful beliefs are needed to ensure optimum nutrition of infants and young children. In this respect, behavioral change communication – in the form of individual counselling for primary caregivers/mothers – can have a considerable positive effect on nutrition, if properly implemented. Moreover, developing IYCF integrated curriculum for health provider education programmes and establishing IYCF counselling and other support services in primary health care facilities can enable the poor segments of the societies to reach necessary knowledge on appropriate feeding practices.

Malnutrition in the form of child obesity could be a problem as much as undernutrition. These together forms the double burden of malnutrition. It is crucial to put in place an action plan to fight the scourge of childhood obesity that affects several Islamic countries.

Policy Advice 3: Ensuring universal access to healthcare, safe water and sanitation, and launching educational campaigns on infectious diseases to eliminate all forms of undernutrition

Rationale:

Infections lead to loss of appetite and reduced food intake, as well as a malabsorption of nutrients and metabolic losses, and are a direct cause of malnutrition. Moreover, there is a clear link between a range of micronutrient deficiencies and risks of infection: vitamin A deficiency, for instance, increases risks of severe diarrhea, malaria and measles severity and child mortality. Hence these two mutual effects form a vicious cycle. This calls for wide micronutrient supplementation of children as well as widespread fortification of staple food (such as wheat flour) with iron, zinc, vitamin and water-soluble vitamins.

Poor access to safe sanitation, drinking water and healthcare are also significantly associated with heightened vulnerability to infectious and water-borne diseases, eventually leading to acute and chronic malnutrition. For instance, 90% of all deaths from diarrhea are attributable to lack of access to safe drinking, water and sanitation, and poor hygiene practices. Protecting children from infectious diseases requires increasing access to safe drinking water, sanitation and health through investment in infrastructures and planning (thereby eradicate open defecation), effective and wide-spread vaccination programs and behavioral interventions aimed at improving hygiene practices (such as systematic hand-washing with soap after toilet use).

Policy Advice 4: Providing access to safe and nutritious food for all with community-based initiatives and by forming resilient capacities for food-security

Rationale:

Consistent access to safe, nutritious and culturally appropriate food is a fundamental human right, and is necessary to eradicate malnutrition. In situations of acute or chronic food insecurity, scaling up the coverage of food aid interventions to reach the poor – especially in remote, rural areas - is crucial to avoid under-nutrition, hunger, and starvation. Community-based programs that leverage local food production (for example by expanding house-gardening practices) and expand the capacities of local food storage facilities are important for increasing access to food and reducing food prices.

Due to natural and man-made disasters, some countries need emergency relief on a wide scale to prevent millions of children suffering from acute malnutrition. Despite actions taken by the international community, the level of emergency assistance that reach

vulnerable countries often fall short of the requirements. It is also more cost-effective to support resilience and early responses to crises than to rely on emergency interventions once large-scale crises have unfolded. All the stakeholders including governments, international organizations and other donors should take steps for funding and allocating resources.

It is also important to ensure availability and access to safe and nutritious food outside of emergency contexts. Cash transfer programs can have the potential to improve food security for poor households, whereas raising awareness of what nutritious foods are, and ensuring affordability of these foods are critical to avoid both under- and over-nutrition.

Instruments to Realize the Policy Advices:

COMCEC Poverty Alleviation Working Group: In its subsequent meetings, the Working Group may elaborate on the above-mentioned policy areas in a more detailed manner.

COMCEC Project Funding: Under the COMCEC Project Funding, the COMCEC Coordination Office issues calls for project proposals each year. With the COMCEC Project Funding, the member countries participating in the Working Groups can submit multilateral cooperation projects to be financed through grants by the COMCEC Coordination Office. For realizing above-mentioned policy recommendations, the member countries can utilize the COMCEC Project Funding facility. These projects may include organization of seminars, training programs, study visits, exchange of experts, workshops and preparation of analytical studies, needs assessments and training materials/documents, etc.

5.2. POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE 10TH MEETING OF POVERTY ALLEVIATION WORKING GROUP

A policy debate session was held during the 10th Meeting of the Poverty Alleviation Working Group (PAWG) and the Working Group came up with some concrete policy recommendations for improving education of disadvantaged children in the OIC and approximating policies among the member countries in this important issue. The policy advices presented below have been identified in light of the main findings of the research report titled “Education of Disadvantaged Children in the OIC: The Key to Escape from Poverty” and the responses of the Member Countries to the policy questionnaire which was sent by the COMCEC Coordination Office.

Policy Advice 1: Improving access of poor and disadvantaged children to education through eliminating/reducing school fees and by developing conditional cash transfer and school feeding programmes

Rationale:

Children living in poorer households are more likely to be out of school compared to children living in richer households. Lack of proper education is strongly associated with a higher likelihood of remaining poor in the later periods of life. Making education more affordable thus is an ample opportunity to save these children out of this vicious cycle. As a good example, school fee abolition has been adopted in a number of countries in recent decades and this has led to increases in enrolment rates.

Conditional cash transfer programmes also prove to be an effective policy tool to increase enrolment rates. They provide financial support directly to households, mothers or children in order to achieve this certain goal. In cases where families do not have the necessary financial means and motivation, providing a financial transfer on condition that the children keep going to school creates a strong incentive for school attendance.

School feeding programmes on the other hand fulfil two important purposes. First, they encourage families to send their children to school. Even the parents might not put a great emphasis on education per se and hence are not well-motivated to send their children to school, they would care for their nourishment. Second, better nourishment leads to better concentration of students in classes, which improves the educational achievement.

Therefore, making schools free, providing conditional cash transfers and school feeding programs for disadvantaged children can enhance school enrolment and continuity of education.

Policy Advice 2: Enabling access of children in rural and remote areas by establishing new schools or providing free transportation for the children living in these regions

Rationale:

Rural areas and urban slums have a greater likelihood to lack sufficient number of schools. Moreover, the dispersed locations of schools in rural areas necessitate much greater amount of travel. Schools in rural areas or disadvantaged regions also lack necessary number of trained teachers and sufficient amounts of education materials.

Hence, building new schools or modifying existing buildings as schools as well as providing free transportation and pocket money to children to allow them to reach the schools that are closest and to motivate their parents to send them to school are important. Also making rural and remote areas attractive for teachers by incentives stands as another policy option. Moreover, improving the quality of education by recruiting sufficient number of well-trained and motivated teachers, and upgrading the school resources are necessary.

Policy Advice 3: Increasing access to inclusive education for children including those having disabilities by formulation of necessary political and legal framework as well as by providing them better assistance in the school environment

Rationale:

Children with disabilities are more likely to be marginalised and discriminated in almost every aspect of life, specifically in education and employment. The likelihood of a disabled child being out-of-school is substantial.

For this reason, inclusive education with clear steps to be followed should be promoted in national plans and legislation. Afterwards, it should be ensured that these goals work in practice by means of infrastructure development to accommodate disabled children. Teachers also need to be trained to increase awareness surrounding disabilities. Innovative policies previously employed in some OIC countries such as sending teachers to disabled students or initiating vocational programs suited for students with disabilities shall be increased.

Policy Advice 4: Prioritizing gender equality and equity in access to education

Rationale:

While gender disparities in educational attendance have narrowed globally, girls are still more likely to be out of school. Around the world 8.1 percent of boys are out of school as opposed to 9.7 percent of girls at the primary school age.

Improving women's education has positive impact on economic growth and employment outcomes, as well as incurring positive effects for the society in general. Female education contributes to a better home environment for child development. More educated women tend to follow a better diet which also ensures children are well-nourished. Children of better educated mothers are also more likely to attain higher levels of education.

Therefore, gender equality in education should be given place as a priority in national strategies and plans, and girls should be targeted specifically in the education programmes.

Policy Advice 5: Mobilizing and optimizing more financial resources and human capital towards improving the quality of education

Rationale:

Receiving a good quality education is important in achieving later life outcomes and reaching one's full potential. Spending on education is positively correlated with learning outcomes. An adequate financing of the education system is important for providing children with necessary learning environment and materials. Inability of schools to provide a good environment for children could also affect household demand negatively.

Education is not a priority in the budgets of many member countries. Teacher shortages, teachers' levels of education and their absence from the classrooms are some of the challenges observed in the OIC particularly in rural and remote areas. More than half of the OIC countries spend less than 15 percent of their budget on education. On the other hand, allocating more financial resource solely does not guarantee rapid development in quality, which requires serious investments in human capital through specific programs. Therefore, the share of education spending in GDP can be increased gradually to the extent possible to address the challenges in terms of both education quality and physical conditions especially in rural and remote areas. Resources of the IDB can be utilized by the member countries in this regard.

Provision of life-skills training as well as technical and vocational education is also important for students with disadvantages since these students are generally more inclined to pursue vocational education and training instead of a purely academic path. Therefore, more financial resources for the programs in skills training and vocational education can be allocated by the member countries.

Instruments to Realize the Policy Advices:

COMCEC Poverty Alleviation Working Group: In its subsequent meetings, the Working Group may elaborate on the above-mentioned policy areas in a more detailed manner.

COMCEC Project Funding: Under the COMCEC Project Funding, the COMCEC Coordination Office issues calls for project proposals each year. With the COMCEC Project Funding, the member countries participating in the Working Groups can submit multilateral cooperation projects to be financed through grants by the COMCEC Coordination Office. For realizing above-mentioned policy recommendations, the member countries can utilize the COMCEC Project Funding facility. These projects may include organization of seminars, training programs, study visits, exchange of experts, workshops and preparation of analytical studies, needs assessments and training materials/documents, etc.

IDB Funds: The resources within the framework of the ISFD (Islamic Solidarity Fund for Development) can be utilized by the interested member countries.

6. POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE FINANCIAL COOPERATION WORKING GROUP

6.1. POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE 8TH MEETING OF THE FINANCIAL COOPERATION WORKING GROUP

The COMCEC Financial Cooperation Working Group (FCWG) held its 8th Meeting on March 30th, 2017 in Ankara / Turkey with the theme of “Improving Public Debt Management in the OIC Member Countries”. During the Meeting, the participants discussed some crucial policy issues in light of the main findings of the research report prepared specifically for the Meeting and the responses of the Member Countries to the policy questions that were sent by the CCO in advance of the Meeting. Accordingly, the working group has come up with the policy advices below.

Policy Advice 1: Strengthening/Setting up an independent Public Debt Management Unit with well-defined functions and a dedicated debt management strategy

Rationale: In several OIC member countries the delineation of competences between different institutions involved in public debt management remains vague. Especially the partial lack of centralization at a dedicated Public Debt Management Unit (DMU) might prove to be challenging for further management improvements. Therefore, all OIC member countries are encouraged to either set up a new independent DMU or institutionally strengthen an existing one, possibly located at the Ministry of Finance or the Central Bank. Moreover, the development of a formal debt management strategy, including quantitative strategic targets, is recommended. The DeMPA Performance Indicators of the World Bank can serve as an initial reference point. In order to support the transition process, OIC member countries that have already professionalized public debt management practices may advise partner countries in establishing such institutional frameworks. This could include policy recommendations with regards to specific areas of debt management, including but not limited to a long-term strategy development, risk management, debt monitoring or institutional coordination. Besides exemplary institutional settings and public debt management documents, the exchange about challenging experiences and the respective ‘lessons learned’ might prove to be especially helpful during the process.

Policy Advice 2: Developing/improving domestic debt market.

Rationale: Domestic debt markets are important sources of funding for public budgets. A well-functioning, liquid domestic market encourages the investments from domestic creditors due to lower transaction costs and hence provides additional diversification

opportunities for the government. As domestic investors tend to react less to the global macroeconomic and financial shocks, refinancing risks may be lowered in addition to a decreased currency risk. However, a number of domestic public debt markets in the OIC member countries still show potential for improvements. Most importantly, strengthening the legal accountability and regulatory frameworks while maintaining political stability is a key aspect for the member countries faced with some political changes in the past few years. Moreover, low and stable inflation rates as well as an independent central bank may help to keep savings in the domestic financial market, which might be especially relevant for the Sub-Saharan countries group. Additionally, governments should reduce their reliance on the domestic banking sector by encouraging institutional investors such as insurance companies or pension funds to participate in the market. Finally, the introduction or further development of Islamic finance instruments, especially Islamic sukuk bonds, can deepen domestic financial markets and mobilize additional financial resources from both, private and institutional investors. Overall, a high share of marketable securities in total domestic debt, a broad participation of different financial agents and a high ratio of fixed versus floating bonds usually describe a sound domestic bond market.

Policy Advice 3: Broadening and diversifying the creditor base.

Rationale: In many OIC member countries, the limited investor base is perceived to be one of the most relevant challenges for realizing efficient public debt operations. Along with an improvement of domestic debt markets, a further opening towards global markets as well as offering new investment vehicles may address this problem. Generally, the issuance of Islamic sukuk bonds may broaden the credit base as new (international) investors, who are specializing in Sharia-compliant financial instruments, may be attracted. While even non-OIC member countries experience greater popularity of such Islamic sovereign bonds, this development is especially relevant for cross-border investments between OIC countries, particularly through sovereign wealth funds of OIC member states. Moreover, recent innovation efforts such as state contingent debt instruments or Master Collateralized Murabahah Agreements (which are bundled assets based on rent-to-own agreements) might be evaluated in order to broaden the investor base and better management of risks. It should be also noted that to attract international investors, it is crucial to increase the transparency and information availability regarding public debt data, procedures and (predictable) management strategies. It is generally recommended that OIC countries with a yet developing domestic market avoid a large dependence on either domestic or foreign borrowings, but strive for a balanced exposure to both markets to mitigate global macroeconomic as well as country-specific shocks.

Policy Advice 4: Lengthening the average maturity of the public debt.

Rationale: Governments have a tendency to issue short-term rather than long-term bonds. Currently, the average maturity of new external debt commitments of private creditors (excluding official creditors such as the IMF) in the OIC member countries hovers at only 4-5 years, and has even shown a declining trend since 2013. Although interest rates on short-term obligations are usually lower than long-term ones due to an additional maturity premium investors demand for a long tie-up of their capital, a tradeoff arises as short-term debt is subject to a higher refinancing risk. Moreover, the concentration of short-term bonds may prevent the establishment or further development of a domestic debt market which is supposed to satisfy both the investors' preferences and the government's needs for medium- to long-term financing. Hence, OIC member countries which are negatively affected by those factors are encouraged to expand the maturity mix of their public debt portfolio. Especially governments in the high- and median-income group with access to global debt markets may consider increasing bond issuances with longer time horizons relative to short-term bills if the domestic market conditions permit such operations, given the current period of low interest rates in many developed economies. Overall, it is advisable to exploit the benefits of all maturity categories, from short- over medium to long-term, and achieve a sustainable maturity balance without an exclusive dependence on either one category.

Policy Advice 5: Applying macroeconomic risk management methods.

Rationale: Macroeconomic developments pose a significant risk for public debt management as the respective shocks are often difficult to mitigate in the short-run. Thus, OIC member countries are encouraged to implement quantitative information and analysis systems based on adequate frequency data which provide early warning indications. A basic set of macroeconomic indicators include the ratio of the net present value of debt relative to GDP and government revenues, external debt servicing costs relative to exports or the consolidated general government net lending relative to GDP. Best practices include the OECD System of Composite Leading Indicators which is designed to provide early signals of turning points in business cycles. OIC countries with a high degree of integration into the global financial system might find the signal approach methods (such as ifo Signal Approach) helpful, which assesses the probability of a currency and banking crisis. Nations which have a high natural disaster risk may consider negotiating standing backup credit lines for immediate release of additional funding. Finally, the public budgets in many OIC the member countries strongly depend on commodities which are prone to global macroeconomic shocks. Especially the recent decline in oil prices has led to a strong increase in newly issued public debt in some member countries. Concerned

countries should aim to diversify their economic activities into less volatile sectors, which admittedly differ from case to case. Overall, synergies from macroeconomic risk management may be achieved if the responsible authorities built strong communication and coordination channels with the DMU.

Instruments to Realize the Policy Advices:

COMCEC Financial Cooperation Working Group: In its subsequent meetings, the Working Group may elaborate on the above-mentioned policy areas in a more detailed manner.

COMCEC Project Funding: Under the COMCEC Project Funding, the COMCEC Coordination Office issues calls for project proposals each year. With the COMCEC Project Funding, the member countries participating in the Working Groups can submit multilateral cooperation projects to be financed through grants by the COMCEC Coordination Office. For realizing above-mentioned policy recommendations, the member countries can utilize the COMCEC Project Funding facility. These projects may include organization of seminars, training programs, study visits, exchange of experts, workshops and preparation of analytical studies, needs assessments and training materials/documents, etc.

6.2. POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE 9TH MEETING OF THE COMCEC FINANCIAL COOPERATION WORKING GROUP

The COMCEC Financial Cooperation Working Group (FCWG) has successfully held its 9th Meeting on October 26th, 2017 in Ankara, Turkey with the theme of “Diversification of Islamic Financial Instruments”. During the Meeting, FCWG made deliberations on diversification of Islamic financial instruments. The Room Document, prepared in accordance with the main findings of the analytical study conducted for the 9th Meeting of FCWG and the answers of the Member Countries to the policy questions, was the main input for the discussions. Accordingly, the participants have come up with some policy recommendations.

Policy Advice 1: Improving the Islamic Finance Infrastructure through Developing Necessary Legal/Regulatory Frameworks for its each Component namely, Islamic Banking, Islamic Capital Markets and Takaful towards Creating an Enabling Environment for Islamic Finance.

Rationale: Islamic finance is still at the early stages of its development in many OIC member countries compared to its conventional counterparts. Considering its potential, Islamic finance needs a conducive and enabling environment to realize its potential. It is a known fact that the countries having a strong legal environment during the early stages of the development of an industry tend to show significant progress compared to countries with insufficient legal infrastructure. In this regard, legal infrastructure constitutes an important condition for the development of the sector in any jurisdiction. The legal infrastructure should include, not only a general law but specific legal frameworks for each component of the Islamic financial sector namely; banking, capital markets, and takaful. The following specific items are of particular importance under the development of a legal system for any jurisdiction: (i) Separate Islamic Banking, Islamic Capital Markets and Takaful Law to allow for registry and operations of the companies. (ii) Taxation law to allow for a level playing field, or preferential treatment to Islamic financial products to encourage the market players to move towards Islamic finance. (iii) The legal framework for dispute resolution and arbitration. In almost all Islamic finance jurisdictions there is a need for dispute resolution centers which are governed by the Islamic law. (iv) Develop a general Islamic bankruptcy framework for the corporate sector.

Policy Advice 2: Developing a Sound and Effective Governance Framework for National and Strengthening Coordination of Shariah Governance Standards and Policies across Different Jurisdiction.

Rationale: Developing a sound governance framework at the national is of particular importance for developing Islamic Finance Industry. The following specific points can be taken into consideration while creating such a framework: (i) Shariah governance standards and framework should be incorporated in the Islamic financial law. (ii) There is a need for the further development of the Shariah governance standards especially for the takaful industry and the Islamic capital markets. Some of the global standard-setting organizations at global level such as the AAOIFI and IFSB have already issued standards which can be utilized by the OIC member countries. (iii) The existence of an independent national level advisory board can help coordinating the rules and regulations related to the Shariah governance and minimize diversity of different practices among the member countries. Since Shariah compliance is the unique differentiating factor for Islamic finance, there is also an immediate need for coordinating different Shariah Governance Frameworks among the OIC member countries to ensure that the products and operations of Islamic financial institutions do not contradict with the principles of the Islamic Law. Policymakers of the OIC countries need to ensure a sound governance framework by making it a legal/regulatory requirement.

Policy Advice 3: Establishing/Developing Islamic Finance Rating Standards

Rationale: With the evolution of Islamic financial instruments and more focus on risk-sharing, Islamic financial transactions require a newer set of rules of book-keeping and financial reporting. A global adoption of Islamic finance accounting and reporting standards like AAOIFI is crucial for further development of the sector while ensuring transparency and disclosure in the financial reporting. A set of harmonized standards is a pre-condition for providing innovative Islamic financial instruments. While there have been efforts in this regard by AAOIFI and IFSB, there is an urgent requirement for developing detailed standards for greater Shariah compliance disclosure and a wider acceptance of these standards by the OIC member countries. In this regard, the focus can be given to develop rating standards which would help investors. While conventional rating agencies have been interested in rating for Islamic financial products, there is a need to increase and spread the rating efforts of the specialized Islamic finance rating agencies across the OIC Region.

Policy Advice 4: Strengthening Human Capital in Islamic Finance in the OIC Member Countries through Enhanced Financial Literacy and Awareness Programs/Projects by Governments, Universities and Private Sector

Rationale: Provision of adequate and trained human capital is critical to the sustainable growth of all Islamic finance sub-sectors. At the public level, governments and regulators can take initiatives to establish educational, training and research centers. Private institutions such as research and training institutions, advisory firms and trade associations can contribute to for the development of human capital. Universities and academic institutions can also play an important role not only in providing education and training in Islamic finance but also in conducting research that can support the industry.

Policy Advice 5: Facilitating Experience Sharing among the OIC Member Countries in sub-sectors of the Islamic Finance Industry for a Sustainable and Harmonized Growth of the Industry

Rationale: Some OIC member countries have taken the lead in developing the Islamic financial infrastructure and regulations. In this respect, experience sharing in the following areas among the Islamic finance destinations in the OIC Region among others:

- (i) Experiences related to policy development and regulatory framework enhancements
- (ii) Practices related to innovative sovereign sukuk issuance attracting retail investors for infrastructure development.
- (iii) The best practices and implementations of some member countries in the area of liquidity management.

Instruments to Realize the Policy Advices:

COMCEC Financial Cooperation Working Group: In its subsequent meetings, the Working Group may elaborate on the above-mentioned policy areas in a more detailed manner.

COMCEC Project Funding: Under the COMCEC Project Funding, the COMCEC Coordination Office issues calls for project proposals each year. With the COMCEC Project Funding, the member countries participating in the Working Groups can submit multilateral cooperation projects to be financed through grants by the COMCEC Coordination Office. For realizing above-mentioned policy recommendations, the member countries can utilize the COMCEC Project Funding facility. These projects may include organization of seminars, training programs, study visits, exchange of experts, workshops and preparation of analytical studies, needs assessments and training materials/documents, etc.

ANNEX

10

Original: English

**LIST OF BASIC DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED
AND/OR PRESENTED AT THE THIRTY THIRD SESSION
OF THE COMCEC**

(İstanbul, 20-23 November 2017)

1.	COMCEC Annual Progress Report 2017.....	<i>OIC/COMCEC/33-17/D(1)-CCO</i>
2.	Making Cooperation Work: COMCEC Strategy for Building an Interdependent Islamic World.....	<i>OIC/COMCEC/33-17/D(2) -CCO</i>
3.	Report of the OIC General Secretariat	<i>OIC/COMCEC/33-17/D(3) -OIC</i>
4.	OIC Economic Outlook 2017-Annual Economic Report.....	<i>OIC/COMCEC/33-17/D(4) -SESRIC</i>
5.	Brief on Trade Cooperation/TPS-OIC.....	<i>OIC/COMCEC/33-17/D(5) -CCO</i>
6.	List of TPS-OIC Signatory and Ratifying Countries.....	<i>OIC/COMCEC/33-17/D(6) -CCO</i>
7.	Proceedings of the 9 th Meeting of the COMCEC Trade Working Group	<i>OIC/COMCEC/33-17/D(7) -CCO</i>
8.	Proceedings of the 10 th Meeting of the COMCEC Trade Working Group	<i>OIC/COMCEC/33-17/D(8) -CCO</i>
9.	Policy Recommendations of the 9 th Meeting of the Trade Working Group.....	<i>OIC/COMCEC/33-17/D(9) -CCO</i>
10.	Policy Recommendations of the 10 th Meeting of the Trade Working Group.....	<i>OIC/COMCEC/33-17/D(10) -CCO</i>
11.	Executive Summary-Annual Report on intra-OIC Trade.....	<i>OIC/COMCEC/33-17/D(11) -ICDT</i>
12.	Report on OIC Trade Fairs and Exhibitions.....	<i>OIC/COMCEC/33-17/D(12) -ICDT</i>
13.	Report on the Issues Relating to the Activities of the World Trade Organization(WTO).....	<i>OIC/COMCEC/33-17/D(13)-ICDT</i>
14.	Report on the IDB's WTO-Related Technical Assistance and Capacity Building Program	<i>OIC/COMCEC/33-17/D(14)-IDB</i>
15.	ITFC Progress Report on Enhancing Intra-OIC Trade	<i>OIC/COMCEC/33-17/D(15)-ITFC/IDB</i>
16.	Report of the SMIIC	<i>OIC/COMCEC/33-17/D(16)- SMIIC</i>
17.	Report on the Activities of the ICCIA	<i>OIC/COMCEC/33-17/D(17)- ICCIA</i>

18.	Report on the Establishment of OIC Arbitration Center.....	<i>OIC/COMCEC/33-17/D(18)–ICCIA-TOBB</i>
19.	Brief on Transportation and Communications	<i>OIC/COMCEC/33-17/D(19) -CCO</i>
20.	Proceedings of the 9 th Meeting of the COMCEC Transportation and Communications Working Group ...	<i>OIC/COMCEC/33-17/D(20)-CCO</i>
21.	Proceedings of the 10 th Meeting of the COMCEC Transportation and Communications Working Group	<i>OIC/COMCEC/33-17/D(21) -CCO</i>
22.	Policy Recommendations of the 9 th COMCEC Transportation and Communications Working Group Meeting	<i>OIC/COMCEC/33-17/D(22) -CCO</i>
23.	Policy Recommendations of the 10 th COMCEC Transportation and Communications Working Group Meeting –Exchange of Views Session.....	<i>OIC/COMCEC/33-17/D(23) -CCO</i>
24.	Ministerial Declaration on Improving Transnational Transport Corridors.....	<i>OIC/COMCEC/33-17/D(24) -CCO</i>
25.	Brief on Tourism	<i>OIC/COMCEC/33-17/D(25)-CCO</i>
26.	Proceedings of the 9 th Meeting of the COMCEC Tourism Working Group.....	<i>OIC/COMCEC/33-17/D(26) -CCO</i>
27.	Proceedings of the 10 th Meeting of the COMCEC Tourism Working Group.....	<i>OIC/COMCEC/33-17/D(27)- CCO</i>
28.	COMCEC Muslim Friendly Tourism Guideline..	<i>OIC/COMCEC/33-17/D(28)- CCO</i>
29.	The Policy Recommendations Highlighted by the 10 th Meeting of the Tourism Working Group	<i>OIC/COMCEC/33-17/D(29)- CCO</i>
30.	Report of the 5 th Meeting of the OIC/COMCEC Private Sector Tourism Forum.....	<i>OIC/COMCEC/33-17/D(30)- Ministry of Culture and Tourism of Turkey</i>
31.	Brief on Agricultural Cooperation.....	<i>OIC/COMCEC/33-17/D(31)-CCO</i>
32.	Proceedings of the 9 th Meeting of the COMCEC Agriculture Working Group	<i>OIC/COMCEC/33-17/D(32)- CCO</i>
33.	Proceedings of the 10 th Meeting of the COMCEC Agriculture Working Group	<i>OIC/COMCEC/33-17/D(33)- CCO</i>
34.	Policy Recommendations of the 9 th COMCEC Agriculture Working Group Meeting.....	<i>OIC/COMCEC/33-17/D(34)- CCO</i>

35.	Policy Recommendations of the 10 th COMCEC Agriculture Working Group Meeting	<i>OIC/COMCEC/33-17/D(35)-CCO</i>
36.	Brief on Poverty Alleviation	<i>OIC/COMCEC/33-17/D(36)- CCO</i>
37.	Proceedings of the 9 th Meeting of the COMCEC Poverty Alleviation Working Group	<i>OIC/COMCEC/33-17/16/D(37)- CCO</i>
38.	Proceedings of the 10 th Meeting of the COMCEC Poverty Alleviation Working Group	<i>OIC/COMCEC/33-17/D(38)- CCO</i>
39.	Policy Recommendations of the 9 th COMCEC Poverty Alleviation Working Group Meeting.....	<i>OIC/COMCEC/33-17/D(39)- CCO</i>
40.	Policy Recommendations of the 10 th COMCEC Poverty Alleviation Working Group Meeting.....	<i>OIC/COMCEC/33-17/D(40)- CCO</i>
41.	Progress Report on the Activities of the ISFD....	<i>OIC/COMCEC/33-17/D(41)IDB-ISFD</i>
42.	Report on the Special Programme for the Development of Africa (SPDA).....	<i>OIC/COMCEC/33-17/D(42)-IDB-SPDA</i>
43.	Report on the Results of Tendency Survey on SDG Priorities of OIC Member Countries.....	<i>OIC/COMCEC/33-17/D(43)-SESRIC</i>
44.	Report on the OIC Institutions' Activities on the Implementation of SDG's.....	<i>OIC/COMCEC/33-17/D(44)-CCO</i>
45.	Brief on Financial Cooperation.....	<i>OIC/COMCEC/33-17/D(45)-CCO</i>
46.	Proceedings of the 8 th Meeting of the COMCEC Financial Cooperation Working Group	<i>OIC/COMCEC/33-17/D(46)-CCO</i>
47.	Proceedings of the 9 th Meeting of the COMCEC Financial Cooperation Working Group	<i>OIC/COMCEC/33-17/D(47)-CCO</i>
48.	Policy Recommendations of the 8 th COMCEC Financial Cooperation Working Group Meeting .	<i>OIC/COMCEC/33-17/D(48)- CCO</i>
49.	Policy Recommendations of the 9 th COMCEC Financial Cooperation Working Group Meeting .	<i>OIC/COMCEC/33-17/D(49)- CCO</i>
50.	Final Report of the 11 th Meeting of the OIC Member States' Stock Exchanges Forum.....	<i>OIC/COMCEC/33-17/D(50)-BORSA İSTANBUL</i>
51.	Report of the COMCEC 6 th Capital Market Regulators Forum	<i>OIC/COMCEC/33-17/D(51)-SPK</i>
52.	Final Communiqué of the 15 th Meeting of the OIC Central Banks and Monetary Authorities....	<i>OIC/COMCEC/33-17/D(52)-TCMB</i>
53.	SESRIC Activity Report towards the Implementation of the COMCEC Strategy	<i>OIC/COMCEC/33-17/D(53)-SESRIC</i>

Reports are available on the COMCEC website. (www.comcec.org)



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