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**INAUGURAL ADDRESS BY
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PRIME MINISTER OF THE REPUBLIC OF TURKEY,
AT THE OPENING CEREMONY OF THE 28TH SESSION OF THE COMCEC**

(İstanbul, Wednesday 10 October 2012)

Honorable Ministers,
Honorable Secretary-General,
Distinguished Guests,

I would like to express my pleasure for gathering with the honorable representatives of the Member Countries this year once again on the occasion of the 28th Session of COMCEC. I would like to extend you my heartfelt greetings.

I would like to thank those who contributed to the organization of this meeting.

I would like to welcome our invaluable guests participating in our meeting to Turkey and Istanbul.

I wish that the resolutions taken here and their outcomes will be beneficial for all COMCEC Member Countries.

I believe that our cooperation under the banner of COMCEC which has been conducting its activities for almost thirty years will make further strides in years to come.

We are facing a fluctuating and fragile global economy in this period when we mark the 28th year of COMCEC.

Such challenges are adversely impacting not only on Europe and the USA, but also on COMCEC Member Countries.

The instability and fragility which are being experienced have been giving rise to a questioning of the current architecture of the global economy.

The search for alternative economic models is constantly pacing up.

As Member Countries of COMCEC, I believe we have contributions to make in order to ensure a sound and stable global economic structure.

To begin with, we need to conduct the required studies in order to find out what the roles of COMCEC and Member Countries are in this process.

Essentially, we can process and reproduce the existing experiences and values of our civilizations and present them to the use of mankind.

I believe that we will make a major contribution to the construction of a more livable, sustainable and peaceful world when we succeed in doing so.

A more livable and fair world may only be possible with a collective endeavor.

As Islamic societies, there are various reasons directing us towards assuming a global role.

“The best of people is the one who benefits people most” is undoubtedly the leading advice among them.

In addition, we need to pay attention to the increasing weight of our countries in the world economy and to the rapid changes experienced in Islamic countries.

The growing demands of Islamic societies for human rights, the rule of law, transparency and accountability can be regarded as factors which have been effective in this process.

It is possible for us to be in a more active position in the world of the future in comparison with the world of the past.

I believe that we have the necessary resources to perform this role successfully.

Honorable Ministers,
Distinguished Guests,

In 2009, a COMCEC Strategy Document was prepared in line with the decisions taken in the COMCEC Economic Summit.

This document was adopted during the 4th Extraordinary Summit of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation held last August.

I believe that the Strategy document will provide COMCEC with a new vision and a more applicable cooperation framework which will increase its effectiveness and visibility.

The new Strategy is based on three main principles which regulate the development, financing and implementation phases of the projects and programs to be proposed.

The first of these principles is to increase free movement among member countries.

Today, the global movement of goods, capital and labour force has accelerated to an unprecedented pace.

However, the movement among our countries is unfortunately far lower than this general level.

The COMCEC Strategy aims at facilitating the movement of goods, capital and labour force among the Member Countries of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation.

The second principle of the Strategy is to strengthen solidarity among our countries.

As it is known, there are significant differences among the political structures and the level of development of our countries.

We can stop this situation from being a hindrance to the deepening of our economic cooperation and, on the contrary, we can turn it into an opportunity which will provide facilitation.

We can maintain unification of our resources, experience and best practices in order to solve the common problems we are facing.

The third principle of the new strategy is improving governance; in other words, realizing a more participatory understanding of administration.

Regardless of the development level of the countries, bad administrations are among the essential causes of political instability and social unrest.

At the same time, we need to form and operate mechanisms which will provide the participation of all parties, including civil society.

Improvement of administrative structure will certainly give momentum to our efforts towards the alleviation of poverty in our region and the provision of political stability and economic development.

These three principles, namely increasing movement, strengthening solidarity and improving governance, form the vision of all the efforts exerted within the frame of COMCEC.

In order to implement the new cooperation structure and vision, which the COMCEC Strategy brings, we need to amend the statute of COMCEC.

In this framework, we initially need to ensure that the role of the Member Countries in the center of our cooperation is further strengthened.

In addition, we need some changes for secretarial services to be conducted in a more effective and professional way.

In the 4th Extraordinary Summit of the OIC, a regulation was adopted within this framework and major steps were taken to put the Strategy into practice.

I would like to note that Turkey will exert each and every kind of effort in solidarity with Member Countries in order for the new strategy to succeed.

I believe that all Member Countries and OIC Institutions will take necessary steps in this regard and set a strong example of solidarity.

Innovations brought by the COMCEC Strategy will be introduced to you in a short while.

Distinguished Ministers,
Distinguished Guests,

The progress achieved towards priority sectors namely agriculture, transportation and tourism which were identified in the COMCEC Economic Summit in 2009 is pleasing.

Adopted and put into practice in the COMCEC Session held last year, the Transportation Framework Document brought our efforts in this area one step closer to the result.

It gives us pleasure to see that a framework document is drawn up in agriculture in a similar vein.

The COMCEC Private Sector Tourism Forum established in last December gives me hope for the future of our cooperation.

I wish all our Member Countries to participate in the first meeting of the Tourism Forum to be held in Izmir in the upcoming December.

I believe that this Forum will cover major distance in a short time with the dynamism and vision of the private sector.

The development of trade among the Members of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation will make a major contribution to the enrichment of our countries.

I attach great importance to the completion of the legal basis of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation Trade Preferential System, which is one of the important projects of the COMCEC, and its coming to the phase of implementation.

Honorable Ministers,
Distinguished Guests,

We observe with appreciation the success demonstrated by the COMCEC in financial cooperation.

The efforts made among the stock exchanges of the member countries have borne fruit.

The Standard & Poors Islamic OIC/COMCEC Index has been launched.

The aforementioned index will be introduced to you in a presentation today.

We hope that the member countries which are not included in the index yet will join this project which will increase the financial movements within the Organization of Islamic Cooperation and will strengthen the capital stock.

Our efforts which are aimed at developing financial cooperation are not limited to this.

The cooperation efforts among Central Banks, which has gained significant momentum in the recent years, continue to gain strength with annual meetings and capacity building activities.

I consider the Capital Markets Regulatory Bodies Forum, which was established last year and recently had its first meeting in Istanbul, as an important initiative.

The realization of the regulations, which will attract the capital stock constituting a large sum in Islamic Countries, is crucial for our economic development.

I would like to remind that the improvement of the economic environment depends on building a robust, transparent and strong economic and legal infrastructure which guarantees human rights.

Honorable Ministers,
Distinguished Guests,

The improvement of the private sector is among the most important dynamics of economic development.

Small and Medium Sized Enterprises within the private sector are the backbone of the national economies.

SMEs play a major role in technological development, improvement of social welfare and poverty alleviation as well as in economic development.

Therefore, SMEs need to be consolidated and supported against global and national risk.

I regard it as a wise decision to choose the theme of the MINISTERIAL EXCHANGE OF VIEWS SESSION, which will be held today, as "Improvement of the Competitiveness of SMEs in OIC Member Countries."

I believe that the exchange of views session will bear effective and beneficial studies in improving the competitiveness of SMEs, which have a major place in the development of our countries.

In a similar vein, I would like to draw your attention to the Business Forum and Fair that gathers many businessmen from Islamic countries.

This activity fortifies the public and private sector cooperation and presents good opportunities in order to strengthen the relations among the private sector representatives.

Honorable Ministers,
Distinguished Guests,

Poverty alleviation is a necessity for the solidarity principle which is one of the major pillars of the cooperation conducted under the roof of COMCEC.

Poverty alleviation is a subject that we definitely need to attach importance to for furthering our cooperation.

We need to consider the principle "He who sleeps on a full stomach whilst his neighbour goes hungry is not one of us" as a guide.

Therefore, the success of the aid and development funds established within the body of the Islamic Development Bank has a crucial importance.

However, I note with sorrow that countries do not act responsibly enough in paying the promised resources for the current funds.

With this occasion, I would like to call upon member countries which made a commitment in financing for the aforementioned funds, to fulfill their commitments as soon as possible.

Distinguished Friends,

The incidents in Syria continue to hurt the hearts of the entire Islamic world and all mankind.

Approximately 30 thousand people have lost their lives since the beginning of these incidents.

Approximately 250 thousand people have taken refuge in neighboring countries. Millions of people have been displaced within the country.

Cities, villages and historical works of art which are among the most beautiful examples of Islamic civilization, have been leveled to the ground.

I would like to touch upon a point once again and with all my sincerity.

The sensitivity of Turkey for Syria entirely results from our neighboring relations, brotherly bounds going back centuries and familial tied between countries.

We have a 910 km long borderline with Syria.

Each incident taking place in Syria naturally affects Turkey and interests all of us.

We never had any intention to intervene in domestic affairs of Syria.

We do not seek any profit off Syria.

Our view of Syria is not based on geopolitical balances.

Our only goal is to robustly ensure peace, welfare and stability in the region.

We believe that the solution to regional problems will make a contribution to the welfare and peace of each Islamic country.

The incidents taking place in Afghanistan, Iraq and Palestine have not remained within the borders of these countries.

Such incidents bear results that have negative effects on the entire region and even the world.

The incidents in Syria will naturally have their reflections in the region and the world.

Turkey was the country that has embraced Syria the most in recent years and established intense relations.

The point we are at now is not the work of Turkey.

On the contrary, what brought Syria to this point today is the current government and its faults.

We had foreseen the course of the developments before the incidents began and had warned Al-Assad.

We reminded him of the necessary reforms he needed to make and promised to help him in all manners.

Unfortunately, Al-Assad government did not pay attention to our warnings and did not keep its promises to the people and the world.

Nobody can and nobody should expect us to turn a deaf ear to the oppression of the legitimate demands of the Syrian people through violence, coercion and tyranny.

The international community might be in an attitude that deeply wounds the conscience and the sense of justice for the incidents taking place in our region.

However, we have not and will not end up in such a position.

We are demonstrating the same principled stance for Syria as we did in Egypt, Tunisia and other Islamic countries.

We will continue to demonstrate the same stance for incidents in Syria as required by ethics, conscience and law.

Honorable Ministers,
Distinguished Guests,

Before I conclude my remarks, I would like to thank all Member Countries and their representatives, all the affiliated and related institutions of the OIC and all the guests for their contributions to the activities of the COMCEC.

I wish that the 28th Session of the COMCEC succeeds.

Thank you

