



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

## Proceedings of the 5<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the COMCEC Tourism Working Group

### “TRAVEL FACILITATION FOR ENHANCING MOBILITY IN THE OIC MEMBER COUNTRIES”

COMCEC COORDINATION OFFICE  
March 2015

A decorative graphic at the bottom of the page features a grid of squares in various shades of green and purple. Overlaid on this grid is a large, stylized illustration of interlocking gears, symbolizing industry and progress.



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PROCEEDINGS OF THE 5<sup>TH</sup> MEETING OF THE  
COMCEC TOURISM WORKING GROUP  
ON

“TRAVEL FACILITATION FOR ENHANCING MOBILITY  
IN THE OIC MEMBER COUNTRIES”

(February 5<sup>th</sup>, 2015, Ankara, Turkey)

COMCEC COORDINATION OFFICE

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## Introduction

The 5th Meeting of the COMCEC Tourism Working Group was held on February 5th, 2015 in Ankara, Turkey with the theme of “Travel Facilitation for Enhancing Mobility in the OIC Member Countries.” The Meeting was attended by the representatives of 10 Member States, which have notified their focal points for the Tourism Working Group namely, the Gambia, Iran, Kyrgyzstan, Malaysia, Mozambique, Oman, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, Sudan and Turkey. Representatives of COMCEC Coordination Office (CCO), SESRIC, Islamic Center for Development of Trade (ICDT), World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC) and International Air Transport Association (IATA) as well as representatives from private sector and some other guests have also attended the Meeting.<sup>1</sup>

At the outset, the representative of the COMCEC Coordination Office informed the participants about the tourism outlook of the Member Countries. It was followed by the presentation made by the WTTC representative on trends in travel facilitation.

The participants considered travel facilitation policies in the Member Countries through focusing on the Analytical Study titled “Travel Facilitation for Enhancing Mobility in the OIC Member Countries” commissioned by the COMCEC Coordination Office specifically for the Meeting with a view to enriching the discussions.

The Representatives of the Member States have shared their experiences, achievements and challenges regarding travel facilitation in their respective countries. The private sector and multilateral efforts for travel facilitation were also reflected to the discussions. The participants had the chance to discuss the policy options for enhancing the cooperation in this important field. The Room Document based on the findings of the Analytical Study submitted to the Tourism Working Group Meeting and the answers of the Member Countries to the policy questions sent to the Member States by the COMCEC Coordination Office were the main input for the discussions during moderation session.

Lastly, the COMCEC Coordination Office presented the COMCEC Project Funding Mechanism, introduced by the COMCEC Strategy, and informed the participants of its details.

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<sup>1</sup> The list of participants is attached as Annex 4.



## 1. Opening Session

In line with the tradition of the Organization of the Islamic Cooperation (OIC), the Meeting started with the recitation from the Holy Quran. At the outset, Mr. M. Metin EKER, Director General of the COMCEC Coordination Office introduced the COMCEC and its activities briefly.

Mr. EKER stated that COMCEC, as a Ministerial-level committee, has been an important platform serving to the member countries for three decades. He expressed that the COMCEC Strategy, adopted in 2012, has introduced a new mission for COMCEC as well as a set of instruments to achieve its goals. The mission of COMCEC is to become a platform for producing and disseminating knowledge as well as sharing experiences and approximating policies among the Member Countries. The Working Group Mechanism is one of the main instruments introduced by the COMCEC Strategy. Mr. EKER stressed that the Working Group Meetings, which are held twice a year in Ankara in each cooperation area, bring the qualified experts of the Member Countries together to produce knowledge, share experience and best practices and develop a common understanding in the respective cooperation areas. Mr. EKER highlighted that COMCEC Project Funding as the second instrument initiated by the COMCEC Strategy is an important mechanism enabling the Member Countries to turn their multilateral cooperation ideas into concrete projects.

Stressing the importance of tourism sector for COMCEC, Mr. EKER stated that mobility has been one of the principles of the COMCEC Strategy and mobility of the people has been the most important and dynamic part of the tourism cooperation efforts. He shared some important findings of the analytical study prepared specifically for the Meeting. He stated that in 2014, OIC Member Countries require, on average, 64% of the world's population to obtain a visa before initiating an international journey while the world average is around 54% in the same year. Concerning the intra-OIC visa policies, in 2014, 65% of the Member Countries' total population is required to obtain a traditional visa when travelling to other OIC Member Countries. He concluded his remarks by stating that these figures underlined the need for finding solutions for facilitating travel among the Member Countries. Lastly, Mr. EKER expressed his wishes for successful deliberations.

H.E. Benjamin ROBERTS, Minister of Tourism and Culture of the Republic of the Gambia was elected as the Chairman of the Meeting. H.E. ROBERTS introduced himself and welcomed the all participants to the 5th Meeting of the Tourism Working Group. H.E. ROBERTS highlighted the importance and relevance of travel facilitation and the movement of people across the OIC Member Countries. His Excellency has urged each participant to engage in the discussions and exchange ideas and challenges with a view to forge progress in travel facilitation cooperation.

## 2. The COMCEC Tourism Outlook

Ms. Aslı TAŞMAZ DADAKOĞLU, Expert from the COMCEC Coordination Office, has presented some of the key developments of tourism sector in the world and in the OIC Member Countries. In her presentation, Ms. DADAKOĞLU provided an overview of tourism sector in the world and in the Member Countries.

With regards to tourism, she stated that tourism has experienced continued expansion and become one of the most rapidly developing industries in the world. She shared some figures with a view to demonstrating that a strong tourism sector could contribute in many ways to development and the economy. She also mentioned the new tourism trends like sustainability, changing consumer behaviors and technology. She added that these trends would lead to increased competition between countries.

Ms. DADAKOĞLU continued her presentation by sharing some figures regarding tourist arrivals and tourism receipts in the world. She stated that international tourist arrivals increased from 678 to 1.138 million in the period of 2000-2014. She expressed that the growth rates of international arrivals in Asia-Pacific, Middle East and America were higher than Europe for the year 2014. She expressed that although international tourism receipts data is not available for 2014, there is a growth expectation over the result of 2013 (1.159 billion \$).

Furthermore, Ms. DADAKOĞLU elaborated on the tourism sector in the Member States. Regarding to tourist arrivals, the Member States performed above the world averages for the period 2005-2012. She expressed that the Member Countries constituted 14-17% of international tourist arrivals and 12-14 % of tourism receipts in the period 2005-2012. It was highlighted that there was a tendency to increase in the share of Member Countries in both tourist arrivals and tourism receipts. It was also stated that Turkey and Malaysia were ranked 6th and 10th, respectively among the top 10 world tourist destinations. Regarding the tourism receipts, she underlined that tourism receipts were concentrated in a few member countries.

Furthermore, Ms. DADAKOĞLU provide some figures on travel balance in some member countries. She stated that some member countries have a tendency to spend more than their tourism receipts like Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates, Iran and Qatar. She also emphasized that some countries have surplus on the travel balances. She continued her presentation with intra-OIC tourism figures. Within the sub-groups of the OIC, with regards to the tourist arrivals, OIC-MENA can be seen as the best performing OIC sub-region. Similarly, tourism receipts of the OIC-MENA exceeded the OIC Asia sub-region.

Ms. DADAKOĞLU also provided a brief account of the recent developments in the Member Countries. She stated that some of the member countries like Turkey (6%), Malaysia (10%), Indonesia (10%), Maldives (9%), Lebanon (4%), Jordon (3%), and UAE of Dubai (9%) enjoyed high growth rates in their tourist arrivals for the first ten months of 2014. Despite some developments in the OIC Member Countries, some other major destinations like Sierra Leone, Guinea and Tunisia faced declines in the first ten months of the year 2014. She also mentioned about Ebola Disease outbreak affecting some OIC Member Countries.



Underlining the great potential in tourism sector among the Member States, Ms. DADAKOĞLU mentioned the following challenges affecting tourism performance in the OIC Member Countries:

- Insufficient Tourism Investments and Infrastructures
- Poor Tourism Planning & Product Development
- Travel Facilitation Problems
- Safety and Security Related Problems
- Low Tourism Service Quality
- Insufficient Marketing and Promotion
- Insufficient Image Building and Branding

She underlined that in some of the OIC Member States complicated, lengthy and overpriced travel and entry formalities still make travel extremely difficult for many tourists. She stated that if Member States could facilitate travel, travel demand of people would increase, they would spend more and this opportunity can be used to increase employment and poverty elimination in the economies.

She concluded her presentation by mentioning some policies widely used to facilitate travel in the world such as visa facilitation, e-visa applications and developing air linkages, etc.

### 3. Travel Facilitation in Tourism Sector: Instruments, Recent Trends and Success Factors

Ms. Helen MARANO, Vice President of Government and Industry Affairs of the World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC) made a presentation titled “Travel Facilitation in Tourism Sector: Instruments, Recent Trends and Success Factors.”

Ms. MARANO started her presentation by introducing the WTTC briefly and then provided some figures regarding the global travel and tourism industry in 2014 and its 2024 forecasts. She stated that in 2024, global travel and tourism industry is expected to contribute USD11 trillion to world economy and constitute 10 per cent of the world total GDP. She highlighted the following measures of travel facilitation with a view to accomplishing the forecasted growth in tourism and travel industry:

- Information required for visas
- Length of time for getting an in person appointment, if required
- Length of time in issuing a visa
- Length of validity of visa
- Cost of visa
- Number of countries waived from visas
- Number of countries for eVisa
- Number of countries for VoA
- Number of regional visa cooperation programmes

Ms. MARANO informed the participants about the instruments and areas of opportunity for travel facilitation. These are:

- Formalise the integration of traveller data for improved security
- Facilitate current processes through technology
- Expand differentiated treatment for frequent and known travellers
- Implement eVisa programmes or reduce visa requirements
- Collaborate with industry to expand bilateral/regional agreements

She continued her presentation with some of the trends in travel facilitation. She divided them into two as: before the trip (visas) and during the trip (travel experience). She provided some figures on the tourism visa openness index. She pointed out that in 2008, 77% of the world population required a visa before entering a country while in 2013, 64% of the world population require visa. She stated that this implied a commendable improvement.

Furthermore, she mentioned some notables changes in facilitating travel “before the trip” such as visa facilitation/removals (visa waiver programs, e-visa, etc); and regional cooperation (Schengen, APEC Business Travel Card, Pacific Alliance), etc. She informed the participants that recently Malaysia implemented visa fee exemption for multiple countries and Tunisia exempted nationals of 20 countries from visas. Moreover, she stressed the following issues as a way forward in facilitating travel “before the trip”:



- Continue removing visas where possible
- Simplify application forms
- Provide translations, standardize
- Expand regional cooperation
- Use technology wherever possible
- Consult/collaborate with private sector

Regarding the travel experience (once the traveler in the country), Ms. MARANO mentioned the regulation (PreCheck System), technology (security scanning improvements, automated border control, etc) and industry contributions as notable changes. She highlighted the importance of smart travel polices such as streamlining visa and border security; investing in technology and integration of information in this regard.

Ms. MARANO concluded her presentation by providing 5 key messages for governments to facilitate travel. These are:

- Travelers are customers, NOT criminals
- Technology is the answer
- Industry can be a facilitator
- Small steps are good
- Transparency and timeliness are key

## Questions and Remarks

Question: What do you mean by “information for visa”? Is it the information from the person applies for visa or from a center or between the two countries?

Answer: Information for visa is mostly from the traveler’s perspective. When they apply for visa, the amount of information that is required. Though the basic information is needed for applying for a visa, the documentation as well as the forms vary across the countries. It becomes confusing. We need to be much more globalized in our efforts to travel and see new places.

Question: You mentioned some trends and instruments such as visa on arrivals, e-visa, differentiated treatment, etc. Which instrument is the best to start with in facilitating travel?

Answer: It is still a conundrum because system requirements to make travel easiest possible are requiring a lot of technology and coordination among different government bodies. I do not think it has an easy answer. Aspiration would eventually have a visa free environment. In the step process, heavier weight is given to Visa on Arrival (VoA) rather than e-visa, etc. In this regard, VoA seems to be easiest and faster way to move into the travel facilitation efforts without the requirement of much technology and coordination.

#### 4. Travel Facilitation in the Member Countries: Current Situation, Main Challenges, Recommendations and Prospects

David GOODGER, Director of Tourism Economics, made a presentation on “Travel Facilitation in the Member Countries: Current Situation, Main Challenges, Recommendations and Prospects”. Mr. GOODGER began his presentation by outlining the economic benefits of travel facilitation, which include promoting ease of travel, improving the attractiveness of destinations, allowing destinations to compete successfully in global travel markets, and increasing tourism visitation and spending.

He stated that there is considerable opportunity for the OIC Member Countries to increase their travel facilitation. He expressed that between 1995 and 2013, the total impact (including indirect and induced effects) of growth in the Travel and Tourism (T&T) sectors of all OIC Member Countries was around 14 million jobs. That is, growth in T&T sectors lead to a cumulative 64% increase in total employment across OIC Member Countries. By 2023, the total impact of forecast growth in T&T among OIC Member Countries is expected to generate 10 million new jobs for a cumulative gain of 41%. The total cumulative impact (including indirect and induced effects) of T&T growth on GDP among OIC Member Countries was 334% between 1995 and 2013. Over the next ten year, gains in output across OIC members from T&T expansion will accelerate. By 2023, T&T growth among OIC Member Countries are expected to experience cumulative growth of 109% in the total impact of tourism on GDP. Mr. GOODGER expressed that these projected impacts were calculated under the assumption that travel conditions among the OIC Member Countries remain relatively unchanged over the forecast horizon. Given the potential benefits of travel facilitation, there is additional economic opportunity for OIC Member Countries to realize more robust gains from T&T growth in coming years.

Mr. GOODGER continued his presentation with the levers of travel facilitation namely, visa policy liberalization, aviation development, and destination marketing. Visa policy has been particularly effective in producing substantial increase in visitor volumes from affected visitor source markets. Destinations have employed a wide range of policy changes to facilitate travel. Aviation development has also been a catalyst for tourism development as increases in connectivity—both in terms of flight frequency and markets served—facilitates travel between markets. Finally, destination marketing has been shown to facilitate travel by raising awareness and building a destination brand. This has produced measurable return on investment as destination marketing drives incremental travel.

Mr. GOODGER explained that the adoption of less restrictive visa policies is a key aspect of facilitating travel to a destination, granting easier access for potential visitors. He then outlined the several types of travel visas with varying degrees of openness. Common visitor visa types, ranked from most to least restrictive, include traditional visas which are applied for before travel in-person at a consulate or embassy or by mail and may include single-entry, multiple-entry, and other variations; electronic visas which are applied for before travel through a government-sponsored website or third-party provider; visas on arrival which are applied for



in-person upon arrival to a destination; joint-visas which allow take the form of multilateral visa agreements or visa validity regions, such as the European Schengen visa; and finally visa waivers or exemptions which grant visa-free travel to certain types of visitors or all nationals of specified origin markets.

He then demonstrated how the OIC Member Countries tend to be more restrictive than the rest of the world. In 2014, OIC Member Countries request, on average, over 60% of the OIC and world population to obtain a traditional visa before initiating an international journey. Over 20% of world travelers are eligible for visas on arrival to visit OIC destinations. Another 3% is allowed to apply for an eVisa. The remaining population (11% for the OIC population, 7% for the world population) is not required to obtain a visa at all when visiting OIC destinations.

Reciprocity was also raised as a key factor in crafting visa policy. A reciprocal policy pair is comprised of two countries, each of which offers the same visa policies to nationals of the other. Reciprocally open pairs, are those where the shared policy is visa-free entry. Compared to other regional and economic blocs around the world, OIC Member Countries have relatively few (10%) reciprocally open visa policies, instead, often opting to unilaterally implement facilitation measures or maintain traditional visa requirements. With only 5% of policy pairs between the OIC and non-OIC Member Countries being reciprocally open, there is still considerable room for this benefit to be realized among OIC Member Countries.

Mr. GOODGER then informed the participants about the potential impacts of travel facilitation among Member Countries. He stated that by enacting visa facilitation policies, the potential gain in international tourism arrivals to be realized by the OIC is estimated at 38 million by 2020. This represents a 14.6% increase in arrivals of international tourists above the baseline forecast under current visa policies in 2015. The resulting increase in tourism expenditures from visa facilitation is the product of the increased international tourist arrivals and the average spending per tourist derived from the Tourism Economics forecast of international arrivals and receipts in each OIC market. By this calculation, the projected 38 million additional tourist arrivals between 2015 and 2020 would generate an estimated \$37 billion in additional international tourism receipts in the OIC Member Countries. International tourism receipts would rise by 14% above the \$265 billion forecast for 2020 under current OIC Member Countries' visa policies.

He pointed out that tourism spending, in turn, fuels job creation in the travel and tourism (T&T) sector. The spending of additional tourists resulting from visa facilitation in the OIC Member Countries directly supports jobs in tourism industries – which include hotels, restaurants, retail stores, transportation, entertainment and recreation. Additional visitor spending stemming from visa facilitation measures by OIC Member Countries would create 1.3 million additional jobs directly in tourism sectors of member economies by 2020.

The impacts on employment are not solely limited to tourism industries. Indirect jobs are created throughout the supply chain of tourism industries, and induced jobs are generated as employees spend their incomes in other sectors of the economy. Total job creation (including

indirect and induced impacts) from additional tourism spending in the OIC Member Countries would approach 2.1 million jobs by 2020.

Mr. GOODGER followed up the findings of the impact analysis with a sample of eight case studies illustrating effective implementation of travel facilitation reforms by Member Countries. The following is a list of cases that were addressed and the lessons to be learned from these case studies:

- Guyana (Visa on arrival scheme -2012): *Visa facilitation can enhance visibility of destinations*
- Oman (Visa fee reduction -2012): *Lowering visa costs entices travellers to visit; Reducing openness hits market share*
- UAE (Multiple-entry visa scheme -2012): *Openness can induce private sector investment*
- Indonesia (Visa on arrival scheme adjustment (2010): *Simpler visa processes make visits easier for travellers*
- Tunisia (Visa waivers for GCC nationals -2012): *Visa facilitation can enhance competitive advantage*
- Turkey (Joint visa exemption with Russia -2011): *Open visa reciprocity encourages bilateral travel*
- Kyrgyzstan (Visa exemption expansion -2012): *Visa facilitation is a recovery tool*
- GCC members (Visa facilitation arrangements): *Economic and regional blocs benefit from visa cooperation*

Furthermore, Mr. GOODGER addressed the importance of air travel development as an increasingly vital aspect of travel facilitation. According to the UNWTO, air travel accounted for 48% of total international arrivals in 2013 – up from just over 36% in 1995. The remainder was distributed amongst travel by rail, road, and sea.

The chief benefit of increasing a destination's airline capacity is the opportunity to expand its potential visitor market. Since the tourism industry is dependent on visitor demand, extending access to air travel to additional visitors in new markets is an effective strategy for raising potential tourism demand. Expanding the capacity for air travel by improving aviation infrastructure and creating new air routes between destinations has played a key role in the development of the global tourism market. Similarly, the establishment of air service agreements (ASAs) creates opportunities for partnerships between airlines and greater connectivity between destinations and key origin markets.

He then outlined three cases where the OIC Member Countries have successfully developed airline capacity in conjunction with infrastructure expansion and partnerships with air carriers. The three examples are listed here:

- Dubai's Open Skies policy and subsequent emergence of Emirates Airlines
- Abu Dhabi's partnership with Etihad Airlines and use of air service agreements (ASAs)



- Turkish Airline's role in expanding service and travel volumes at Istanbul Ataturk airport

Mr. GOODGER also highlighted the role of destination marketing in travel facilitation. He stated that it is an integral part of a holistic travel facilitation strategy. Destination marketing generates awareness and interest among traveler markets, starting the chain of creating and facilitating travel to destinations. He outlined several reasons why destination is so essential to a successful travel facilitation campaign. He emphasized that global competition for international travelers is steep with tourism offices around the world devoting significant resources to destination marketing. Tourism Economics estimates that \$4.3 billion was spent on national level tourism promotion in 2012. The majority was spent by European destinations (\$1.7 billion) and Asia Pacific destinations (\$1.2 billion). Nearly \$1 billion was spent to promote the Middle East and North Africa region. Several examples of successful marketing campaigns by Australia, VisitBritain and Canada were highlighted, each yielding returns on investment of between \$8 and \$64 of visitor spending per \$1 spent on marketing.

Mr. GOODGER addressed a number of the challenges facing OIC Member Countries in facilitating travel for foreign visitors. He stressed that these challenges must be overcome if successful travel facilitation reforms are to be implemented by Member Countries. The following is some of the main challenges discussed: Government inefficiency, Security, concerns, Poor infrastructure, Restrictive visa reciprocity and Lack of available funds for destination marketing.

In conclusion, Mr. GOODGER provided a list of recommended travel facilitation reforms to be implemented by the OIC Member Countries. The following is a list of his recommendations:

- Improve the communication of visa requirements to travelers
- Increase the efficiency of visa application processes
- Facilitate travel for tourists who currently require traditional visas
- Promote reciprocally open visa policies
- Grant visa-free travel between OIC Member Countries
- Foster cooperative global travel facilitation and create a joint-OIC visa
- Facilitate travel through the development of new air routes and increase airline capacity, including more liberal ASAs among OIC Member Countries
- Engage in well-funded and targeted destination marketing

## Questions and Remarks

**Remarks:** Human capital is an important dimension of travel facilitation. We need to pay special attention to this aspect. Because, at the end of the day, even you have the best rules and regulations in facilitating travel, they would be applied by the human beings. Thereby, there is need to invest in human capital.

**Question:** Would it be possible to come up with a profile of each country? How is the level of readiness of the Member Countries to tackle with the travel facilitation issue?

Answer: It is a great suggestion and practical step to be taken. Within the report, there are lots of country-level information, data, table which show for each country different types of visa, openness scores, and addressable markets, etc. In that sense, it gives the big picture where you can stand relatively to the ideal. Ideal is to have a completely visa free travel for all in order to get the maximum benefits.

## 5. Policy Options for Facilitating Travel in the Member Countries

The session was moderated by Mr. Nirwan NOH, Director for Research and Training of the Islamic Tourism Centre of Malaysia. At the outset Mr. NOH stated that “the Room Document on Policy Options for Facilitating Travel in the Member Countries”, prepared by the COMCEC Coordination Office in light of the findings of the analytical study prepared specifically for the Meeting and the answers of the Member Countries to the policy questions which have already been sent by the CCO, would serve as the basis for the discussions in the moderation session.

At the beginning of the session Mr. Mustafa Adil SAYAR, Expert from the COMCEC Coordination Office, made a brief presentation on the responses of the Member Countries to the policy questions on travel facilitation sent to the Tourism Working Group focal points by the COMCEC Coordination Office. In his presentation, Mr. SAYAR gave a brief information on policy questionnaires and presented the questions sent for this meeting. He stated that the purpose behind these policy questions was to strengthen policy dimension in the discussions of the Tourism Working Group.

Questions contained in the questionnaire were as follows:

1. What are the current policies and instruments about travel facilitation in your country?
2. What are the challenges/obstacles faced by your country in facilitating travel?
3. How important are visa policies in your country for the following objectives?
4. What types of visa application methods are used in your country?
5. Does your country use e-visa applications?
6. What kind of travel facilitation policies do you recommend to enhance the mobility in/among the OIC Member Countries?

Mr. SAYAR stated that out of 28 countries registered to the Tourism Working Group, 7 countries (Azerbaijan, Burkina Faso, Malaysia, Mozambique, Oman, Senegal, and Tunisia) have conveyed their answers to the COMCEC Coordination Office. From the replies, a number of issues emerged as follows:

In the Member Countries, travel facilitation policies focus on visa facilitation and air travel development. Some Member Countries are involved in multilateral efforts with international organizations and bilateral efforts with other countries for visa facilitation. For instance, Burkina Faso has visa agreements under the umbrella of ECOWAS. Regarding the air travel development, Member Countries implement policies in order to increase their airport capacity and improve their air linkages for this purpose. Insufficient air linkages, reciprocal actions in response to visa policies of other nations and the cost of leveraging new and existing technologies in travel facilitation are the challenges the Member Countries gave the highest ranking. Regarding the type of visas, visa on arrival (VoA) is the most widely used method in visa applications. It is followed by classic paper visas and tourist visa. Visa waiver schemes are the less common method used among the Member Countries. Maintaining security is the most significant aspect of visa policies in the Member Countries. Regarding the Member Countries' recommendations for enhancing the mobility, importance of visa exemptions, visa on arrival, e-visa applications, enhancing air linkages among the OIC Members as well as experience sharing programmes and joint activities in this regard are underlined.

Mr. SAYAR concluded his presentation with introducing the Room Document prepared in light of the answers to the policy questions and recommendations given in the analytical study. In this respect, the following two issues are highlighted in the Room document. These are: Encouraging visa facilitation among the Member Countries and developing air linkages and increasing the airline capacity.

Then the Moderator gave the floor to all delegations requesting them to kindly center their interventions on the main issues emerged from the replies, i.e. visa facilitation and development of air linkages and airline capacity and any other issue that they deem very important.

Based on intensive deliberations, CCO drafted attached document<sup>2</sup> reflecting the main points of agreement by the delegations. It was agreed that CCO will circulate this draft document to all members of Tourism Working Group for their views and comments to be conveyed to the CCO by March 30th, 2015. The comments received before March 30th, 2015 will be able to be incorporated into the Document. After incorporating the Member States' contributions, this document will be submitted to the 31st Meeting of the Follow-up Committee of the COMCEC as well as 31st Session of the COMCEC to be held on 13-14 May 2015 and 23-26 November 2015 respectively, as an outcome of the 5th TWG Meeting.

The policy recommendations highlighted by the participants are as follows:

#### **1- Encouraging visa facilitation among the Member Countries**

- **Improving the delivery of information:** Information on entry formalities need to be provided timely, user-friendly (i.e. available in multiple languages, have simple instructions), reliable and accessible.
- **Facilitating the processes for obtaining visas:** There is a need to improve the efficiency of the application process through better usage of modern information technologies by service providers rather than using traditional methods like personal interviews, official documents or certificates, and long waiting periods.
- **Lowering or eliminating visa application fees:** Reducing the costs of travel can help to generate additional travel demand. Lowering or eliminating visa and other entry fees is one of the available and effective policy option to facilitate travel.
- **Differentiating treatment to facilitate tourist travel:** Visa processes can be facilitated for certain type of visitors including tourists arriving by cruise ship or chartered planes or easing visa restrictions for business people, etc.
- **Promoting eVisa programs:** An eVisa can be obtained easily anywhere with an internet connection and its saves time that the traveler would otherwise spend on visa applications at the country's missions or at the ports of entry into the country. It is especially beneficial for destinations without a widespread network of embassies or consulates.

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<sup>2</sup> The policy recommendations document is attached as Annex 3.



## 2- Developing air linkages and increasing the airline capacity

- Partnering with airlines to expand access to visitor markets: Working with airlines to add additional routes, through Air Service Agreements or new infrastructure, can be beneficial to both the airline and the destination. Benefits include greater air passenger flows and revenues for airlines and airports, as well as the opportunity for the destination to expand its visitor market.
- Incorporating airlines into the destination's tourism profile: Partnering with airlines for destination promotion can improve available funding, expand reach into key source markets and increase visitation, recognizing the joint benefits of such partnership. Facilitating visa processes for transit passengers, for example, can increase visitation and spending while also creating a clear link between airline and destination for travelers.
- Making better use of Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs) in airport infrastructure: Improving aviation infrastructure is a crucial means of improving visitation, including the physical airport infrastructure, alongside a raised profile and increased routes. Use of PPP is a proven way of raising necessary funding with returns evident for all parties, including higher visitation and spending for the destination as a whole.

## 6. Success Stories of the Member States

### 6.1. Malaysia

On behalf of Malaysia, Mr. Khairolnizam SAAD, Principal Assistant Secretary from the Ministry of Tourism and Culture made a presentation on “Tourism Industry Performance of Malaysia”, while his colleague from the Ministry of Home Affairs, Mr. Mohd Nakhafi HASSAN shared “Malaysia’s Experience on Travel Facilitation.”

During his part, Mr. SAAD made a presentation on “Tourism Industry Performance of Malaysia”. He stated that Malaysia had 21.5 billion USD tourism receipts and 25.7 million tourist arrivals in 2013. Between January to October 2014, the number of tourist arrivals has reached to 22.9 million, which corresponds to 9.6 percent increase compared to the same period in 2013.

After the presentation of Mr. SAAD, Mr. Mohd Nakhafi HASSAN gave information on travel facilitation efforts of Malaysia. First, he informed the participants regarding current visa policy of Malaysia. Out of 57 OIC Member Countries, 44 Member Countries have visa exemption for the entrance to Malaysia and for the rest of the World, 138 Countries have such exemption. Totally, citizens from only 35 countries in the world need visa for entering Malaysia. Moreover, Chinese and Indian citizens have facility to get visa on arrival.

He also informed the participants on the main challenges of visa facilitation in Malaysia. He underlined that visa facilitation has three main aspects: security, economic and social aspects. He added that the countries should establish the right balance among these aspects. Moreover, in visa facilitation policies, Malaysia takes border management and immigration problems into consideration. Global terrorism is also a challenge against visa facilitation. Extremist global terrorist activities are an obstacle on the opening up the borders to the tourists in Malaysia.

Mr. HASSAN also informed the participants regarding the different tools for visa applications. Visitors can get visa by three channels:

- Walk-in
- Submission through appointed agencies
- Submission through outsourced companies.

Finally Mr. HASSAN mentioned futures plans of Malaysia for travel facilitation. He stated that the visa policy is being reviewed from the aspects of type, length of stay and fees. He expressed that Malaysia has also plans for streamlining and standardizing application methods and processing. In terms of enhancing cooperation, he underlined the importance of information exchange and sharing of best practices.

### 6.2. Mozambique

Mr. Jose Faria TRAVASSO, Head of Department of Monitoring and Planning from the Ministry of Tourism, made a presentation on behalf of Mozambique. In his presentation, he briefly touched upon the policies and instruments about travel facilitation in Mozambique, challenges faced in facilitating travel and recent trends in tourist arrivals and tourism receipts.



At the outset, Mr. TRAVASSO, informed the participants that any foreigner who wants to enter the Country with an ordinary passport shall obtain the entry visa from Diplomatic and Consular Missions of the Republic of Mozambique abroad, the Immigration Service. He also stated that the people, who don't have Mozambican Embassy or Consulate in their country, must contact the Embassy or Consulate which is located in neighboring countries to obtain visa. However, citizens from the SADC region (South African Development Community) don't need to get visa, because all the countries have signed the visa exemption agreements except RD Congo.

He also gave information on the transportation infrastructure for international travel in Mozambique. He expressed that the transport and communications sector in Mozambique has been receiving various investments, with the implementation of rehabilitation of ports and airports (domestic and international) for providing ability to rapid movement for people and products. The airports of Maputo, Beira and Nacala are open to international traffic.

Mr. TRAVASSO continued his presentation by giving the challenges faced in travel facilitation in Mozambique. He pointed out that they have to develop tourism infrastructure and air linkage connectivity. Moreover, for travel facilitation, tourism sector need to work together with the Home Affairs Sector for visa facilitation and the reduction of bureaucratic procedures in visa applications.

He concluded that as a result of travel facilitation policies, tourist arrivals to Mozambique have reached 9.7 million tourists between 2010-2014 although only 4.2 million tourist arrivals were expected. Moreover, the revenues of international tourism reached USD 1.4 billion between 2010-2014.

### 6.3. Oman

Mr. Mohammed AL RIYAMI, Tourism Marketing Specialist from the Ministry of Tourism of Sultanate of Oman made a presentation on behalf of his country. In the beginning of his presentation, Mr. AL RIYAMI gave general information on Oman and touristic beauties in Oman. Oman, as the 3<sup>rd</sup> largest country in Arabian Peninsula, has been welcoming visitors for more than 5.000 years. As touristic beauties, Oman has 3.165 kms of pristine beaches, A'Sharqiyah Sands, touristic caves and world-class resorts. The new airport scheduled to be ready in 2016 with capacity of 12 million passengers/ year, followed by 36 million and at the final stage, phase four, the capacity will reach 48 million passengers a year. He also gave information on Convention and Exhibition Centre, Royal Opera House with 1100 seat capacity, boutique hotels and Sultan Qaboos Grand Mosque.

Regarding visa facilitation, Mr. AL RIYAMI informed the participants that citizens from 67 countries can get visa on arrival. For other countries, Oman facilitates their visa application with 21 types of Visa. Moreover, Oman is starting Online Visa Application Service this month.

In conclusion, Mr. AL RIYAMI expressed that GCC country citizens do not need a visa among themselves and Oman has joint visa with two countries from GCC: United Arab Emirates and Qatar.

## 6.4. Senegal

Ms. Fatimata Zahra Rassoul THIAM MBAYE made a presentation on Senegal Travel Facilitation Policies. At the outset, she gave general information on Senegal and its tourism sector. She stated that tourism sector is very important as the second source of income in Senegal after fishing. The income gained from tourism sector represents 4,5 to 5% of total internal revenue of the country. Furthermore, the contribution of tourism to gross national product increased around 6% from 1980 to 1990.

Regarding airline capacity, the main challenge is high airport taxes. Six taxes about 350 US Dollars taken for every single ticket make Senegal a very expensive destination. New airport is under construction to be ready in July 2015. She also expressed that air connectivity is very weak in African region although international connectivity is well organized for Europe region and now for OIC Region through UAE.

Furthermore, Ms. THIAM MBAYE informed the participants on visa policy of Senegal. She expressed that Senegal's visa policy is based on reciprocity. Since July 2013, a biometric visa is obligatory for the countries which implement visa formality to the Senegalese citizens.

She also mention some important challenges on visa facilitation:

- Ineffective destination marketing: not enough marketing for route sales development;
- National airline is facing structural and financial difficulties;
- Intra-regional connectivity is very expensive;
- The access to new technologies is still a problem and this do not have any significant positive impact on travel facilitation
- Infrastructure
- High level taxation

In the conclusion of her presentation, Ms. THIAM MBAYE gave information on Senegal's Tourism Policy. Senegalese government's mission is to promote the Senegalese destination, provide the security of tourist and regulate all the tourism activities. In this regard, government's aim is to position the country among the growing destination for international tourists. Lastly, she pointed out that Senegal is visited by 1 million tourist per year and it aims to welcome 2 million tourists in short term.

## 6.5. Turkey

Mr. Ömer Numan DOĞRUKOL, Head of Division from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Turkey made a presentation on "Electronic Visa Application System (EVAS) of Turkey." In his presentation, Mr. DOĞRUKOL gave brief information on Turkey as a tourism attraction and how EVAS system was devised and how this system works.

At the beginning, Mr. DOĞRUKOL pointed out that Turkey ranks as the world's 6th most popular tourism destination and around 40 million tourists visited Turkey in 2013.

He also informed the participants regarding the visa policy of Turkey. He stated that there are currently three options for obtaining a Turkish Visa: Visa from Consular Offices, Ports of Entry



and Electronic Visa Application System. He stated that 60% of the tourists are exempt from visa and remaining 40% has to obtain visas.

Since the visa applications at the Turkish Missions consume time and energy and visa applications at the ports of entry may require lengthy waiting, Turkey has commenced Electronic Visa Application System on 17 April 2013. Until today, Over 6 million visas were given over the e-Visa Application System and over 120 million USD revenue was collected as visa fees.

After the demonstration of e-Visa Introductory Video, Mr. DOĐRUKOL gave information on the features of the System. He expressed that the e-Visa System provides an easy visa application process in only 3 minutes in three steps. The system also provides multilingual interface for applicants. Moreover, in the airports in Istanbul, applicants can get their visas via e-Visa kiosks at the ports of entry. According to survey for user evaluation, 72,56% of the applicants gave the highest ranking for this system.

In conclusion, Mr. DOĐRUKOL mentioned the benefits of E-visa system. He pointed out that after its commencement, visa lines at ports of entry shortened significantly. Moreover, this system provides outreach to regions without consular offices. The e-Visa System also enables Ministry of Foreign Affairs to produce tourism statistics by nationality, age groups, or visa types.

## 7. Private Sector and Multilateral Efforts for Travel Facilitation

### 7.1. IATA Passenger Experience Overview

Mr. Erkan DURSUN, Aviation Solutions Manager from International Air Transport Association (IATA) made a presentation on “IATA Passenger Experience Overview.” He informed the participants on IATA’s passenger experience activities supported by different programs which are: Fast Travel, Passenger Facilitation and Smart Security. These programs cover the end-to-end passenger journey to deliver a fast, consistent and secure experience to passenger.

At the beginning of his presentation, Mr. DURSUN pointed out that the ultimate goal of fast travel program is to reach the duty free area in 10 minutes from the airport entrance and in the arrival process from disembarkation to the airport taxi area in 30 minutes. This program provides a range of self service options to meet growing customer demands, reduce industry costs and enhance customer services. Moreover, the program allows passengers:

- to perform their check-in transaction and to receive their boarding pass via self-service channels (web, kiosk, mobile phone)
- to print and apply their bag tags themselves and offer a dedicated touch point for baggage acceptance only.
- to self-scan their travel documents and verify automatically that the travel document data are compliant with the destination or transit requirements.
- to report a missing bag utilizing a self-service channel instead of waiting in line at a baggage service counter.

He also gave information on passenger facilitation program. As increased and constantly changing security requirements continue to add costs to the industry, IATA initiated this program for improving the passenger flow at security checkpoint with existing technology and infrastructure. This program supports passenger growth, reduces waiting times and reduces delays caused by security. Moreover, Automated Border Control (ABC) system enables to complete the processes of low-risk passengers quickly and so reduces queuing times.

In conclusion, Mr. DURSUN briefed the participants about the “Smart Security” program of IATA. He underlined that this program was initiated as a joint program by IATA and Airports Council International (ACI) in order to facilitate passenger and cabin baggage security screening. He concluded that Smart Security program is expected to strengthen security, increase operational efficiency, maximize space and staff resources and improve the passenger’s experience.

### 7.2. Developing Air Linkages in the OIC Member Countries: The Case of Turkish Airlines

Dr. Taner ERİM, International Relations and Agreements Manager from Turkish Airlines made a presentation on the efforts of Turkish Airlines for building air linkages in the OIC Member Countries. At the outset, Mr. ERİM informed the participants on the global rankings of Turkish Airlines in terms of network size. Mr. ERİM pointed out that Turkish Airlines has a wide-range of network size which corresponds to 218 international destinations from 108 Countries.



Mr. ERİM also informed the participants about the passenger numbers of Turkish Airlines. While the number of passengers were about 10.3 million in 2002, Turkish Airlines has 59,5 million passenger in 2014. 33 million of this number is international passengers. Mr. ERİM underlined that the geographical location is one of the most important advantage of Turkish Airlines as Istanbul is in the middle of Europe, Middle East and Asia regions with high volume of traffic and growth rate.

In conclusion, Mr. ERİM also gave some important recommendations for the Member Countries in order to increase travel and trade between OIC Member Countries:

- Maximizing the operations, services and limited recourses in member countries.
- Economies of Scale: the more the supplies- the less costs
- Increasing propensity to travel within the member states.
- Remove frequency and capacity restrictions

### 7.3. OIC/COMCEC Private Sector Tourism Forum

Lastly, Ms. Aylin ŞENOL GÜN, Expert form the COMCEC Coordination Office, briefly informed the participants about the activities of the OIC/COMCEC Private Sector Tourism Forum. First, she provided some background information about the Forum and then informed the participants about its aims. She stated that the OIC/COMCEC Private Sector Tourism Forum aims at providing an enabling environment for the private sector representatives of the member countries to discuss potential cooperation areas and identify common issues in the field of tourism. The Forum is an important initiative of the Member Countries enabling the active participation of the Private Sector in COMCEC tourism cooperation.

She informed the participants of the structure and organization issues of the Forum. She stated that Forum meetings are held regularly, at least once a year in Turkey. Each year, the Forum focuses on a specific theme. On the sidelines of the Forum, B2B meetings are organized. In these meetings, private sector representatives of the Member Countries get the chance to come together with their counterparts and develop business contacts and improve the existing ones. Outcomes of the Forum Meetings are reported to the COMCEC Sessions and other relevant fora and the Meeting reports as well as the presentations made during the meetings are available on the COMCEC Website. She stated that OIC/COMCEC Private Sector Tourism Forum has convened three times so far. She underscored the growing interest shown by the Member Countries to the activities of the Forum.

Ms. GÜN concluded her presentation with some of the important outcomes of the 3rd Meeting of the Forum held in on 29-30 January 2015 in İstanbul with the theme of “International Branding of Tourism Destinations in the OIC Member Countries.”

### Questions and Remarks

Question: Does IATA have any technical support programs and projects for the companies in the airline sector?

Answer: IATA does not provide any technical support program or consultancy. However IATA has many offices in the countries and these offices are in contact with all stakeholders in these countries such as airline companies, airports etc. IATA helps the stakeholders through demonstrating best practices.

Question: How does Turkish Airlines decide to add new flights to the new destinations?

Answer: Turkish Airlines has a wide flight network all over the world especially in the African Countries. For example, we have flight to 42 destinations from 27 African Countries. Our decision is made according to competitiveness of the market. Government's support on tourism or good political or educational relations with a country is also one of the determinants of flying to a new destination.



## 8. Utilizing the COMCEC Project Funding

Mr. Deniz GÖLE, Expert at the COMCEC Coordination Office made a presentation on the COMCEC Project Funding introduced by the COMCEC Strategy. First, Mr. GÖLE informed the participants about where the COMCEC Project Funding stands in the COMCEC Strategy.

Mr. GÖLE briefly explained the Project Cycle Management (PCM) concept. After underlining the basic qualifications of the COMCEC PCM as “simple and clearly defined procedures and financial framework”, he highlighted the potential project owners. It was emphasized that relevant ministries and other public institutions of the Member Countries and the OIC Institutions operating in the field of economic and commercial cooperation could submit projects.

Mr. GÖLE continued his presentation with the clarification of “Project Selection Criteria” namely, compliance with Strategy’s Principles, targeting strategic objectives of the Strategy, focusing on output areas and pursuing multilateral cooperation among the OIC Member Countries. In the following sections, nature of the projects (Technical Cooperation and Capacity Building) and several eligible activities were explained. Eligible activities comprised of research, analytical studies, guides, roadmaps, study visits, conferences, workshops etc.

During the presentation, three key actors and their responsibilities under the COMCEC Project Funding were identified; Project Owner (Project Submission and Implementation); the CCO (Program Management) and the Intermediary Bank (Project Monitoring and Financing). Moreover, steps and roles of these key actors throughout the project application process were defined.

Monitoring of projects was another issue explained in the presentation. Mr. GÖLE presented that the Bank would be mainly responsible for financial and technical monitoring of projects while the CCO would oversee the overall implementation of the PCM.

With respect to the financial framework, Mr. GÖLE emphasized that the funds are grant in nature and would be provided by the COMCEC Coordination Office. From the illustration of the indicative grant limits and co-finance rates for the COMCEC projects, it was seen that Member Countries could submit a project with a budget up to USD 250.000 with the condition that they have to cover at least ten percent of project total budget (cash or in kind). This amount would be USD 100.000 for the OIC Institutions and at least twenty five percent should be covered by the project owner.

Mr. GÖLE also gave information on 2014 Projects. After the first project call made in September 2013, 2 successful tourism projects was implemented under the COMCEC Project Funding. These are: Cities of Common Cultural Heritage (Azerbaijan); Improving Statistical Capacities of Tourism Sector in COMCEC Mediterranean and Gulf Region (SESRIC)

In conclusion, Mr. GÖLE informed the participants of the results of the second project call. Mr. GÖLE stated that member countries and the OIC Institutions have shown great interest to the second call. Lastly, Mr. GÖLE informed the participants that the 3rd project call will be made on September 2015.

## 9. Closing Remarks

The Meeting ended with closing remarks of H.E. Benjamin ROBERTS, Minister of Tourism and Culture of the Republic of the Gambia and Chairman of the Meeting and Mr. M. Metin EKER, Director General of the COMCEC Coordination Office.

In his remarks, H.E. ROBERTS thanked the COMCEC Secretariat for giving him the opportunity to chair this session. He also thanked all the participants, presenters for their invaluable contributions to the discussions. H.E. ROBERTS stated that the success stories of some OIC Member Countries could serve as a motivation for other Member Countries for facilitating travel among themselves. Lastly, H.E. ROBERTS highlighted the importance of the policy recommendations of the Meeting to be presented to the COMCEC Ministerial Meeting in November 2015.

Mr. Metin EKER also thanked all the participants for their invaluable contributions. He underlined that the observations, comments and critiques of the participants on the analytical study prepared specifically for the Tourism Working Group Meetings would be mostly welcomed in order to improve its quality. He stated that the policy discussions made during the Moderation Session was important and the outcomes of this Meeting would be presented to the 31<sup>st</sup> Session of the COMCEC. Mr. EKER also highlighted the importance of PCM mechanism and invited the Member Countries as well as the relevant OIC Institutions to submit their projects.

Mr. EKER also informed the participants that the next (6<sup>th</sup>) Meeting of the Tourism Working Group will be held on September 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2015 in Ankara with the theme of "ICT-Based Solutions in Tourism Marketing."

Before concluding, Mr. EKER thanked again all the participants and wished them a safe trip back home.



## Annex 1: Agenda of the Meeting



### 5<sup>th</sup> MEETING OF THE COMCEC TOURISM WORKING GROUP

(February 5<sup>th</sup>, 2015, Ankara, Crowne Plaza Hotel)

“TRAVEL FACILITATION FOR ENHANCING MOBILITY IN  
THE OIC MEMBER COUNTRIES”

#### DRAFT AGENDA

##### Opening Remarks

1. The COMCEC Tourism Outlook
  - a. Overview of International Tourism in the World
  - b. Tourism in the Member Countries
2. Travel Facilitation in Tourism Sector
  - a. Travel Facilitation Measures/Instruments
  - b. Recent Trends and Success Factors in Travel Facilitation
3. Travel Facilitation in the Member Countries: Current Situation, Main Challenges, Recommendations and Prospects
  - a. Visa Openness Analysis of the Member Countries
  - b. Government Policies and Programmes for Travel Facilitation in the Member Countries
4. Policy Options for Facilitating Travel in the Member Countries
5. Success Stories of the Member States
6. Private Sector and Multilateral Efforts for Travel Facilitation
7. Utilizing the COMCEC Project Funding

##### Closing Remarks

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## Annex 2: Program of the Meeting



### 5<sup>th</sup> MEETING OF THE COMCEC TOURISM WORKING GROUP (February 5<sup>th</sup>, 2015, Ankara, Crowne Plaza Hotel)

#### “Travel Facilitation for Enhancing Mobility in the OIC Member Countries”

#### DRAFT PROGRAMME

08.30-09.00 Registration

09.00-09.15 Opening Remarks

09.15-09.45 The COMCEC Tourism Outlook

- *Presentation: Ms. Aslı TAŞMAZ DADAKOĞLU*  
*Expert*  
*COMCEC Coordination Office (CCO)*

09.45-10.45 Travel Facilitation in Tourism Sector: Instruments, Recent Trends and Success Factors

- *Presentation: Ms. Helen MARANO*  
*Vice President of Government & Industry Affairs*  
*World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC)*
- *Discussion*
- *Questions for Discussion*
  - o *How does your country perceive the recent global trends regarding travel facilitation and how does it respond to these trends?*

10.45-11.00 Coffee Break



11.00-12.30 Travel Facilitation in the Member Countries: Current Situation, Main Challenges, Recommendations and Prospects

- *Presentation: Mr. David GOODGER*  
*Director, Europe & Middle East*  
*Tourism Economics*
- *Discussion*
- *Questions for Discussion*
  - o *What are the travel facilitation policies in your country?*
  - o *What are the instruments utilized in your country for facilitating travel?*
  - o *What are the challenges faced by your country regarding travel facilitation?*

12.30-14.00 Lunch

14.00-15.30 Policy Options for Facilitating Travel in the Member Countries  
Presentation: *"The Responses of the Member Countries to the Policy Questionnaire on Travel Facilitation"*

*Mr. Mustafa Adil SAYAR*  
*Expert*  
*COMCEC Coordination Office (CCO)*

There will be a moderation session under this agenda item. The participants are expected to deliberate on the policy options/advices for Facilitating Travel in the Member Countries. *The Room Document on Policy Options for Facilitating Travel in the Member Countries* was prepared by the CCO, in light of the findings of the analytical study prepared specifically for the Meeting and the answers of the Member Countries to the policy questions which have already been sent by the CCO. This Document has been shared with the Tourism Working Group focal points before the Meeting with a view to enriching the discussions during the Session and coming up with concrete policy advices for the policy approximation among the Member Countries in this important field.

- *Questions for Discussion*
  - o *How can the cooperation be furthered among the Member Countries in travel facilitation?*
  - o *What are the cooperation opportunities among the Member States with regards to visa facilitation?*
  - o *What kind of policies does your country implement in aviation sector for developing air linkages with the other Member Countries?*

15.30-15.45 Coffee Break

15.45-17.15 Success Stories of the Member States

- *Presentation(s)*
- *Discussion*

17.15-17.45 Private Sector and Multilateral Efforts for Travel Facilitation

- Presentation: “IATA Passenger Experience Overview”  
*Mr. Erkan DURSUN*  
*Aviation Solutions Manager*  
*International Air Transport Association (IATA)*
- Presentation: “Developing Air Linkages in the OIC Member Countries: The Case of Turkish Airlines”  
*Dr. Taner ERİM*  
*International Relations and Agreements Manager*  
*Turkish Airlines*
- Presentation: “OIC/COMCEC Private Sector Tourism Forum”  
*Ms. Aylin ŞENOL GÜN*  
*Expert*  
*COMCEC Coordination Office (CCO)*
- *Questions for Discussion*
  - o *What are the success factors and challenges for private sector and multilateral initiatives in travel facilitation?*
  - o *What lessons can be learned from private sector and multilateral experiences?*

17.45-18.05 Utilizing the COMCEC Project Funding

- *Presentation: Mr. Deniz GÖLE*  
*Expert*  
*COMCEC Coordination Office*
- *Discussion*

18.05-18.15 Closing Remarks

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## Annex 3: The Policy Recommendations

### THE POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS HIGHLIGHTED BY THE 5<sup>TH</sup> MEETING OF THE TOURISM WORKING GROUP

Distinguished Members of the COMCEC Tourism Working Group,

The COMCEC Tourism Working Group (TWG) has successfully held its 5th Meeting on February 5th, 2015 in Ankara, Turkey with the theme of *“Travel Facilitation for Enhancing Mobility in the OIC Member Countries”* with the active participation of the Member Countries. During the Meeting, Tourism Working Group, made deliberations on facilitating travel among the Member Countries and discussed the policy recommendations for enhancing the cooperation in this important field. The Analytical Study submitted to the TWG Meeting as well as the answers of the Member Countries to the policy questions sent to the Member States by the COMCEC Coordination Office (CCO) were the main inputs for the discussions. This document includes the policy recommendations highlighted during the Meeting.

The Member States of the TWG are kindly invited to share their observations on the document to the COMCEC Coordination Office by March 30<sup>th</sup>, 2015. The comments received before March 30<sup>th</sup>, 2015 will be able to be incorporated into the Document. After incorporating the Member States’ contributions, this document will be submitted to the 31<sup>st</sup> Meeting of the Follow-up Committee of the COMCEC as well as 31<sup>st</sup> Session of the COMCEC to be held on 13-14 May 2015 and 23-26 November 2015 respectively, as an outcome of the 5th TWG Meeting.

The Tourism Working Group underscored the importance of:

#### **3- Encouraging visa facilitation among the Member Countries**

##### **Rationale:**

Visa policies are some of the most important government policies influencing international tourism. Visa facilitation will enhance both tourism and economic growth. In the analytical study, it was pointed out that the establishment of standards and procedures for visas is closely linked to the development of tourism sector. In the OIC Member Countries, existing visa and entry policies limit the potential to build closer economic ties and take advantage of broader business opportunities with important tourism source markets. Visa facilitation was also highlighted in the responses of the Member Countries to the policy questions as one of the important policies that would facilitate travel in the Member Countries.

Some important areas for visa facilitation are given below:

- Improving the delivery of information: Information on entry formalities need to be provided timely, user-friendly (i.e. available in multiple languages, have simple instructions), reliable and accessible.

- Facilitating the processes for obtaining visas: There is a need to improve the efficiency of the application process through better usage of modern information technologies by service providers rather than using traditional methods like personal interviews, official documents or certificates, and long waiting periods.
  - Lowering or eliminating visa application fees: Reducing the costs of travel can help to generate additional travel demand. Lowering or eliminating visa and other entry fees is one of the available and effective policy option to facilitate travel.
  - Differentiating treatment to facilitate tourist travel: Visa processes can be facilitated for certain type of visitors including tourists arriving by cruise ship or chartered planes or easing visa restrictions for business people, etc.
  - Promoting eVisa programs: An eVisa can be obtained easily anywhere with an internet connection and its saves time that the traveler would otherwise spend on visa applications at the country's missions or at the ports of entry into the country. It is especially beneficial for destinations without a widespread network of embassies or consulates.
- 4- Developing air linkages and increasing the airline capacity

Rationale:

Air travel development is an increasingly vital aspect of travel facilitation. Expanding the capacity for air travel by improving aviation infrastructure and creating new air routes between destinations has played a key role in the development of the global tourism market. The Analytical Study highlighted the need to create new air routes and increase airline capacity in the Member Countries to facilitate travel. In the Policy Questions circulated to the Member Countries by the CCO, "Insufficient air linkages" was one of the most frequently mentioned challenges faced by the Member Countries.

Some important areas for developing air linkages among the Member Countries and the rest of the world and increasing the airline capacity in the Member Countries are given below:

- Partnering with airlines to expand access to visitor markets: Working with airlines to add additional routes, through Air Service Agreements or new infrastructure, can be beneficial to both the airline and the destination. Benefits include greater air passenger flows and revenues for airlines and airports, as well as the opportunity for the destination to expand its visitor market.
- Incorporating airlines into the destination's tourism profile: Partnering with airlines for destination promotion can improve available funding, expand reach into key source markets and increase visitation, recognizing the joint benefits of such partnership. Facilitating visa processes for transit passengers, for example, can increase visitation and spending while also creating a clear link between airline and destination for travelers.



- Making better use of Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs) in airport infrastructure: Improving aviation infrastructure is a crucial means of improving visitation, including the physical airport infrastructure, alongside a raised profile and increased routes. Use of PPP is a proven way of raising necessary funding with returns evident for all parties, including higher visitation and spending for the destination as a whole.

**Instruments to Realize the Policy Recommendations:**

- COMCEC Tourism Working Group: In its subsequent meetings, the COMCEC Working Group may elaborate on the above mentioned policy areas and the sub-areas in a more detailed manner.
- COMCEC Project Funding: Under the COMCEC Project Funding, the COMCEC Coordination Office calls for project 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 in this regard. The projects may include seminars, training programs, study visits, exchange of experts, workshops and preparing analytical studies, needs assessments and training materials/documents, etc.
- Capacity Building Activities: With the COMCEC Coordination Office's resources and Member Countries' own resources, some capacity building and technical assistance programs on the aforementioned policy areas and their sub-areas can be organized in the Member Countries. These activities may include seminars, training programs, study visits, exchange of experts, workshops and preparing analytical studies, needs assessments and training materials/documents, etc.
- OIC/COMCEC Private Sector Tourism Forum: In its next 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.

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## Annex 4: List of Participants

### LIST OF PARTICIPANTS OF 5<sup>th</sup> MEETING OF THE COMCEC TOURISM WORKING GROUP (February 5<sup>th</sup>, 2015, Ankara)

#### A. INVITED STATES

##### THE REPUBLIC OF GAMBIA

- H.E. BENJAMIN ROBERTS  
Minister, Ministry of Tourism and Culture
- H.E. MOMODOU JOOF  
Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Tourism
- H.E. MOMODOU BADJIE  
Ambassador, The Gambia Embassy
- Mr. SERING MODOU NJIE  
Diplomatic, The Gambia Embassy

##### ISLAMIC REPUBLIC OF IRAN

- Mr. KAMRAN HASHEMI  
Doctor, First Counsellor, Embassy of Iran in Ankara

##### THE KYRGYZ REPUBLIC

- Mr. AIZHAN TABALDIEVA  
2nd Secretary, Embassy of Kyrgyz Republic to Republic of Turkey

##### MALAYSIA

- Mr. MOHD. NAKHAFI BIN HASSAN  
Principal Assistant Secretary,  
Ministry of Home Affairs
- Mr. NIRWAN NOH  
Director for Research and Training,  
Islamic Tourism Centre, Ministry of Tourism and Culture
- Mr. KHAIROLNIZAM SAAD  
Principal Assistant Secretary,  
Ministry of Tourism and Culture



## REPUBLIC OF MOZAMBIQUE

- Ms. ISABEL DA SILVA  
Head of Department of Cooperation
- Mr. JOSE TRAVASSO FARIA  
Head of Department of Planning and Monitority

## SULTANATE OF OMAN

- Mr. ALI AL- KHABURI  
Adviser, Financial & Managerial Development Affairs,  
Ministry of Tourism
- Mr. MOHAMMED AL RIYAMI  
Tourism Marketing Specialist, Ministry of Tourism

## KINGDOM OF SAUDI ARABIA

- Mr. NAYEF ALMOTIRI  
Manager, Saudi Commission for Tourism & Antiquities
- Mr. FAISAL ALMARHUM  
HR Development Researcher

## REPUBLIC OF SENEGAL

- Mr. NDEYE AWA BA  
Senior Officer of Public Relations Office,  
Ministry of Tourism and Air Transport
- Ms. FATIMATA ZAHRA RASSOUL THIAM /MBAYE  
Technical Advisor, Ministry of Tourism and Air Transport

## REPUBLIC OF SUDAN

- Mr. BADRELDIN ABBAS ELBASHIR ELAMAS  
Director, Ministry of Tourism Antiquities and Wildlife
- Ms. EBTIHAL MOHAMED OSMAN BASHIR  
First Secretary, Embassy of Sudan in Ankara

## REPUBLIC OF TURKEY

- Ms. FİLİZ KÖSE  
Chief Coordinator, Ministry of Culture and Tourism
- Ms. BAŞAK ÖNSAL DEMİR  
Coordinator, Ministry of Culture and Tourism
- Mr. ERKUT ATALAR  
Expert, Ministry of Culture and Tourism
- Ms. KERİM ŞAHİN  
Expert, Ministry of Culture and Tourism
- Ms. BURÇA YALÇIN  
Expert, Ministry of Culture and Tourism
- Ms. SEDA İMAMOĞLU  
Expert, Ministry of Culture and Tourism
- Ms. FERİDE UĞRUN SÖZBİR  
Expert, Ministry of Culture and Tourism
- Mr. MEHMET KAYA  
Chief, Ministry of Culture and Tourism
- Ms. EDA BULUT  
EU Expert  
Ministry of Transportation, Maritime Affairs and Communications
- Mr. BATIN ŞİMŞEK  
Assistant Expert  
Ministry of Transportation, Maritime Affairs and Communications

## B. INVITED INSTITUTIONS

### ISLAMIC CENTRE FOR DEVELOPMENT OF TRADE (ICDT)

- Ms. AMADOU CIRE SALL  
Head of Department at ICDT



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

- Mr. ABDULHAMİT ÖZTÜRK  
Project Coordinator, Training and Technical Cooperation Dept.
- Mr. CEM TİNTİN  
Researcher

**WORLD TRAVEL AND TOURISM COUNCIL (WTTC)**

- Ms. HELEN MARANO  
Vice President of Government & Industry Affairs  
World Travel and Tourism Council

**INTERNATIONAL AIR TRANSPORT ASSOCIATION (IATA)**

- Mr. ERKAN DURSUN  
Aviation Solutions Manager

**TURKISH AIRLINES**

- Mr. TANER ERİM  
Manager, International Relations and Agreements
- Ms. FATMA CANAN SAYAR  
Specialist, International Relations and Agreements

**GUEST**

- Mr. DAVID GOODGER  
Director, Tourism Economics

**C. COMCEC COORDINATION OFFICE**

- Mr. METİN EKER  
Director General, Head of COMCEC Coordination Office
- Mr. MUSTAFA TEKİN  
Head of Department
- Mr. SELÇUK KOÇ  
Head of Department

- Mr. FATİH KAYA  
Head of Department
- Ms. ASLI TAŞMAZ DADAKOĞLU  
Expert, Drafting
- Ms. AYLİN ŞENOL GÜN  
Expert, Drafting
- Mr. MUSTAFA ADİL SAYAR  
Assistant Expert, Drafting
- Mr. MEHMET C. AKTAŞ  
Assistant Expert, Drafting
- Ms. HANDE ÖZDEMİR  
Coordinator of Registration Office
- Ms. HAVVA KÖSEOĞLU  
Assistant of Registration Office
- Ms. GÜL SAYIN  
Coordinator of Documentation Center
- Mr. OZAN LİF  
Assistant of Meeting Rooms
- Mr. KEMAL ARSLAN  
Coordinator of Meeting Rooms
- Mr. ALİ VURAL  
Assistant of Meeting Rooms
- Mr. ERCAN İBİK  
Coordinator of Transportation
- Ms. LEYLA AŞK  
Social Program

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