

Original: Turkish

**INAUGURAL ADDRESS BY  
H.E ABDULLAH GÜL, THE PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF TURKEY  
AND CHAIRMAN OF COMCEC,  
AT THE OPENING SESSION OF THE 29<sup>TH</sup> SESSION OF COMCEC  
(İstanbul, 20 November 2013)**

Honorable Secretary-General,  
Honorable Ministers,  
Your Excellencies,  
Distinguished Delegates,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I would like to express our pleasure to host the honorable representatives of brotherly Nations in our country on the occasion of the 29<sup>th</sup> Session of the COMCEC. I would like to welcome you all in İstanbul.

Making major contributions to the reinforcement of solidarity, brotherhood and cooperation among member countries since its establishment, the COMCEC continues to fulfil its function in today's world as well. I hold the belief that your deliberations will broaden new horizons to further our cooperation.

Distinguished Guests,

The world undergoes a difficult time of political and economic turmoils. The Islamic world is influenced by such difficulties to a great extent.

On one hand, we encounter challenges such as stagnation, unemployment and poverty caused by the global economic crisis. A crisis gives rise to a larger gap between the poor and the rich. We have to cope with its social impacts.

On the other hand, a part of the Islamic world is in turmoil and we face saddening images each and every day.

As I stated during the OIC Session held in Tehran in 2003, the persistent shortcomings for good governance, justice and freedom put an end to some regimes in the Islamic world and causes some others to break apart. Internal conflicts and disputes continue to take place in a part of our brotherly countries.

This civil war in the neighbouring country of Syria has now turned into the self-destruction of a nation. The civil war which has been ongoing approximately for the past three years, has claimed more than one hundred thousand lives. Millions of people left their homes and relatives, and migrated to neighbouring countries.

We have been observing all these occurrences in sorrow and with our hearts wrenching. Generations which are raised in anger and conflict, have already become a party to potential conflicts in the future and a part of this vicious cycle.

This lays more responsibility on member countries to find a solution for such problems. Unless we seek and find a solution for our own problems, some others will impose their own upon us. It is our responsibility to put our home in order. It is primarily our duty to put out fire whether it occurs in our home or in a neighbour's. Otherwise, the cost will be massive for all of us.

Therefore, I call upon all member countries to increase their efforts with a view to finding 'our own solutions' to 'our own problems'.

Persistence of problems make it difficult for us to properly makes use of our natural and human resources which are of major importance in terms of the development of the Islamic world. The ongoing instability and uncertainty constitute fundamental barriers to our economic and commercial development.

We need to seek a solution for such problems in cooperation and solidarity at a time when globalization has reached further dimensions.

Distinguished Guests,

I hold the belief that the COMCEC which I have been chairing has gained even more importance under such circumstances.

Without doubt the COMCEC is the right platform to develop instruments serving to overcome economic and social challenges which we have encountered in recent years.

We cannot afford to restrict our related endeavours to public institutions alone. We have to incorporate the private sector to solution prescriptions at a time when the capital knows no boundaries. The key sustainable to development and progress is to increase direct investments.

I find it extremely pertinent to entitle the theme of this Session of the COMCEC as "Increasing Foreign Direct Investment Flows to the OIC Member Countries".

The COMCEC member countries which are dispersed over a large geographical region, have varied capital accumulation, savings and investment requirements.

Many rich Islamic countries have recorded a considerable trade surplus. Capital accumulation is substantially high in such countries. In this framework, it is pleasing that the current account surplus of the OIC economies which was 101 billion USD in 2009, increased to 350 billion USD in 2012.

However, not every country is privileged with such figures. On the other side of the picture there are Muslim countries with young and dynamic population which are in search of production and employment.

Primary work to be done is increasing the capital mobility among the COMCEC Countries. In other words, it is imperative to mobilize financier and those in need of the capital for new businesses, production and investments.

I would like dwell upon some statistical data to express why we need to intensify our efforts in this respect.

COMCEC Countries are currently able to attract only 10 % of the Foreign Direct Investments (FDI) around the world. This rate amounts to 42 % in developed countries.

In addition, 71 % of the foreign direct investments in the COMCEC countries are focused in only 10 countries.

In this respect, we have to not only increase capital mobility among member countries but also take steps to accelerate capital flows from other global players.

Countries whose own savings are not sufficient for development are obliged to respond to the need for creating favourable conditions to attract foreign capital to their countries.

The key is comprehensive structural reforms which will ensure political stability and public order. It is essential to establish legal infrastructure in a manner that attracts capital.

The reason is quite simple. No country or investment company would rush into any investment in a country without considering. Trust is a matter which financiers pay utmost attention to before they take a decision for investment. The key to trust is political stability, legal guarantees, predictability and transparency.

We have to steadfastly implement structural reforms no matter what their short-term burdens can be if we are in search of technology transfer, employment, growth, development and welfare for our countries and people.

Distinguished Delegates,

Established with a view to developing economic and commercial cooperation and aiming at further integration of our countries with the global economic system, the COMCEC constantly promotes the exchange of knowledge, experience and best practices among member countries.

In an effort to operationalize this platform further, we adopted the new COMCEC Strategy during the 4th Extraordinary Islamic Summit held last year in Makkah-Al-Mukarramah. I welcome and closely follow up the steps taken to implement the Strategy.

The new Strategy is based on principles which are mainly followed in all successful integrations models.

In this framework, it is envisaged to take steps towards the free movement of goods, opinions, capital and people as well as enhancing solidarity and good governance.

Our such endeavours can be summarized under six main titles: Trade, transport and communications, agriculture, tourism, poverty alleviation and financial cooperation.

I would like to avail myself of this opportunity to thank all member countries for their active participation in the Working Groups and the process of project proposals as well as for their successful efforts.

Distinguished Guests,

In this part of my address, I would like to touch upon some major projects and endeavours on the COMCEC agenda to which I believe you will not spare your valuable contributions.

I would like to particularly draw your attention to the Trade Preferential System which is an impetus for our cooperation. I would like to take this occasion to reiterate our call to take necessary steps to implement the Trade Preferential System as soon as possible.

In addition, I would like to remind you that we expect all member countries to make their valuable contributions to the Standards and Metrology Institute for the Islamic Countries abbreviated as SMIIC in an effort to complete its institutionalization efforts.

Standardization is of major importance in terms of trade liberalization and the removal of non-tariff barriers. SMIIC will continue its endeavours thanks to your valuable contributions and make substantial contributions to the development of trade in the Islamic world.

Some promising steps have been recently taken within the body of the COMCEC in the field of financial cooperation.

OIC Member States' Stock Exchanges Forum, COMCEC Capital Markets' Regulators Forum and OIC Central Banks and Monetary Authorities Meetings play a vital role in this framework.

I hold the belief that S&P OIC/COMCEC-Shariah-50 Index which was developed within the body of the Stock Exchanges Forum, will make major contributions to the enhancement of capital flows among our brotherly countries.

Likewise I believe that the Financial Cooperation Working Group which will hold its first meeting on December 12, will enable us to deepen our cooperation in this domain.

I also attach importance to the endeavours of the COMCEC Private Sector Tourism Forum which makes effort in another field of cooperation.

I would like to take this occasion to dwell upon a matter that shocks the conscience of humanity. COMCEC Countries enjoy a large geographical region and rich natural resources. However, 21 of our member countries are among the Least Developed Countries. Problems such as waste and resource management, lead to a poverty-driven social costs.

Therefore, I expect you to lend your utmost support to the endeavours of the Islamic Solidarity Fund for Development (ISFD), Special Programme for the

Development of Africa (SPDA) and OIC Vocational Education and Training Programme (OIC-VET).

Honorable Ministers,  
Distinguished Delegates,

I find it beneficial to touch upon some issues which are likely to be indirectly influential over the future and the economic performance of the Islamic world.

First of all, the Islamophobia remains as a critical problem which instigates unsubstantial prejudices against our Glorious Religion and Muslims.

Beside intentional defamation propaganda, some ill-disposed persons and circles abusing our sacred Islamic values and conducting acts of violence and terror play a role in the persistence of such problems.

We have to combat any form of deviation playing into the hands of people who equates terrorism with Islam, the religion of love, tolerance and conciliation.

Our holy religion Islam considers murdering one as murdering all. We definitely need to keep this in mind and heart: "Islam leaves no room for terrorism".

We cannot afford to ignore the fact that the lack of education and spirituality, poverty and income injustice feed such movements and we need to steadfastly address such problems.

Another important matter which will enable us to win over hearts and minds for the combat against Islamophobia is to display Islamic morality in our economic activities.

Conducting our business in the best and proper manner while producing, purchasing and selling will definitely contribute to the elimination of negative perceptions about Muslims.

Within this framework, making new inventions and developing new instruments to enhance global welfare in areas such as medicine, industry, service sector and finance, will have a highly positive effect as well.

Another matter which I believe relates to the future of the Islamic world is the exertion of efforts to find a solution for global problems. Playing a more active role in the solution of global problems such as climate change, poverty, fight against

organized crime, immigration, radicalism, narcotics and human trafficking will certainly introduce new economic and commercial opportunities for Islamic countries.

Thirdly, I would like to draw attention to the upbringing of the youth, who are the custodians of our future.

In all corners of the world, youth is the fastest segment of the society that keeps up with head-spinning developments in technology.

We need to be attentive to the consolidation of our own values when we prepare our youth for the competitive climate of today's world. In this context, we are in need of multi-dimensional economic, social and cultural programmes.

We cannot raise the youth as passive followers of global developments and trends. We need to raise generations who are instilled with ideals and values of their homeland; who are in search of innovation and who are not only consumers but also researchers, producers and inventors.

I would like to reiterate the importance of establishing a common understanding and stance in all domains among our Member Countries.

Distinguished Guests,

As I conclude my address, I would like to reiterate our pleasure to host you in Turkey; I hope that your deliberations will yield fruitful results and I wish you success in your endeavours.

-----  
-----