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**THE CLOSING ADDRESS OF
H.E. DR. CEVDET YILMAZ,
THE MINISTER OF DEVELOPMENT
OF THE REPUBLIC OF TURKEY
OF THE THIRTIETH SESSION
OF THE COMCEC
(İstanbul, 28 November 2014)**

Honourable Ministers,
Distinguished Delegates,

We have successfully reached to the end of the 30th Session of the COMCEC after fruitful deliberations. We have also enjoyed a number of lively events organized on the occasion of the COMCEC's 30th Anniversary. We have observed with appreciation that in the course of these 30 years, COMCEC has contributed a lot to the enhancement of intra OIC economic and commercial cooperation. It is our earnest belief that whatever have been achieved, achieved together. COMCEC is an outcome of your work and outcome of our common efforts. Therefore, I would like to thank all the delegations, relevant OIC institutions, international organizations and the COMCEC Coordination Office for their sincere and untiring efforts and contributions throughout all those years.

Esteemed Ministers,
Distinguished delegates,

Developing countries have become the driven force of the global growth. This tendency will continue in the foreseeable future. OIC Member Countries generally followed similar trends with other developing countries. OIC countries' share in the world total GDP remained stable at around 11 percent in 2013. As a group representing 23 percent of the world population, we are still significantly behind our potential.

Therefore, we should stay focused on our structural problems resulting in low productivity and competitiveness in the international area. We have to improve our production base, transform our economies for high value added, export oriented production from an economic structure based mainly on the export of raw materials and semi processed goods. The share of OIC Member Countries in world total high tech exports accounted only for 3.9 percent and this exportation is concentrated rather in a few

member countries. This is a very low figure as we take into consideration our share in the world production and our huge population.

As being members of the Grand Religion of Islam which always accentuates knowledge, science and sound reasoning and being the followers of Prophet Mohammad (AS) who said “Seek knowledge even as far as China.” Without seeking knowledge, without innovation, without high value addition, without proper education, without quality institutions and quality production, our development ambitions will remain a dream unfulfilled.

Distinguished participants,

As the OIC Member Countries, we also have other economic challenges such as high external debts. 22 OIC countries still continue to be classified as Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) by the World Bank. This burden prevents our brotherly countries’ ability to make constructive reforms in their economies. Apart from the government debts, indebtedness of the private sector also makes us vulnerable to external crisis. Hence, along with structural reforms and international cooperation such as encouraging and facilitating trade, removing impediments to foreign direct investment and making innovative strides will infuse the needed dynamism to potential growth areas and reduce our vulnerabilities.

Honourable Ministers,

I am very pleased that the COMCEC Strategy, which was adopted by the 4th Extraordinary Islamic Summit in 2012, for providing a new and realistic impetus for our cooperation, is being implemented successfully through its two implementation mechanisms namely Working Groups and Project Cycle Management (PCM). We are happy to see that member countries have been involved more and more actively in the Working Groups which are organized twice a year in each cooperation area in order to produce knowledge, exchange the know-how and experiences among the member countries at the technical level. The Working Groups have also served to develop a common language and understanding for our problems and opportunities and to approximate policies through ensuring a member driven COMCEC. In this respect, I welcome the practical policy recommendations made by the Working Groups in their last meetings and call on all relevant Member Countries and OIC institutions to initiate cooperation in these critical areas.

I would also like to invite our brotherly countries, which have not registered to the Working Groups, to register soon to benefit from this unique opportunity for cooperation. I also invite all member countries to make maximum use of the PCM so that our member countries from all corners of the world conduct joint projects and improve their capacity in a spirit of cooperation. In this respect, through mobilization of institutional and human resources, the Member Countries would be directly involved in the cooperation endeavours. I hereby invite our Member countries who have a training capacity to offer within the scope of the Strategy and PCM to be robust and pro-active in proposing projects for capacity building. In fact, by helping the others to enhance their capacities we also enhance our own capacity. As stated in a quote “To teach is to learn twice”. To teach is to reinforce your own knowledge.

H.E. the Ministers,
Distinguished participants,

By completion of the ratification of PRETAS and Rules of Origin by State of Kuwait, all requirements for the operationalization of TPSOIC have been finalized. This is a most welcome development for the COMCEC, especially on the occasion of the COMCEC's 30th Anniversary.

Implementation of TPS-OIC will surely be another significant step towards economic integration among our brotherly member countries. I am convinced that this step would further enhance our cooperation in all its forms. In the 30th Anniversary of the COMCEC, I sincerely hope that we are on the verge of a milestone progress which will boost our cooperation efforts from several aspects.

Distinguished delegates,

As we discussed in the exchange of views session, Public-Private Partnership (PPP) is increasingly used to promote development in tourism sector. In this context, when successfully implemented, PPPs can play an important role in improving attractiveness of a destination, upgrading the infrastructure, reducing risks, ensuring productivity and market efficiency as well as better management of the tourism industry. The OIC countries have an untapped potential to further develop a sustainable tourism sector thanks to their rich natural, geographic and historical beauties and cultural heritages. However, OIC countries have still a modest share in the world tourism receipts with 12.3 percent in 2012 and the existing international tourism activities concentrate in only a few OIC countries. Therefore, I am of the opinion that we should make use of the

unutilized touristic areas in our countries to turn them into a basin of progress, employment, income and finance.

We have also determined next year's theme of Exchange of Views Session of the COMCEC as "Post-2015 Development Agenda and Development Challenges of the Islamic Ummah: Improving Basic Services Delivery". This is very pertinent and timely theme as Islamic world has an important role to play in the formulation and implementation of the Post-2015 Sustainable Development Goals.

Esteemed Ministers,
Distinguished participants,

As I conclude my remarks, I would like to extend my gratitude to all member country delegations, OIC General Secretariat, OIC Institutions and international organizations for their valuable contributions. I would also like to reiterate my sincere thanks to COMCEC Coordination Office, translators and interpreters and all other colleagues who contributed to the organization for their dedicated efforts towards making this Session a success. I wish that our discussions, exchange of views and resolutions will bear fruitful results for the Islamic World and deepen our cooperation as the Islamic Ummah.

Hoping that you will depart from Istanbul with happy memories, I wish you all a safe trip back home.

Thank you. Esselamu alaikum ve Rahmetullah ve Barakatuhu.

