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**REPORT  
OF THE THIRTY-NINTH SESSION  
OF THE STANDING COMMITTEE FOR ECONOMIC  
AND COMMERCIAL COOPERATION OF THE OIC  
(2-5 December 2023, İstanbul)**

1. The Thirty-Ninth Ministerial Session of the Standing Committee for Economic and Commercial Cooperation of the Organization of the Islamic Cooperation (COMCEC) was held on 2-5 December 2023, in İstanbul.
2. The Session was attended by representatives of the following Member States of the Organization of the Islamic Cooperation (OIC):
  1. Republic of Albania
  2. People's Democratic Republic of Algeria
  3. Republic of Azerbaijan
  4. Kingdom of Bahrain
  5. People's Republic of Bangladesh
  6. Republic of Benin
  7. Brunei Darussalam
  8. Burkina Faso
  9. Republic of Cameroon
  10. Republic of Chad
  11. Republic of Cote d'Ivoire
  12. Republic of Djibouti
  13. Arab Republic of Egypt
  14. Gabonese Republic
  15. The Republic of The Gambia
  16. Republic of Guinea-Bissau
  17. Republic of Indonesia
  18. Islamic Republic of Iran
  19. Republic of Iraq
  20. Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan
  21. Kazakhstan
  22. The State of Kuwait
  23. Kyrgyz Republic
  24. Republic of Lebanon
  25. State of Libya
  26. Malaysia
  27. Republic of Maldives
  28. Republic of Mali
  29. Islamic Republic of Mauritania
  30. Kingdom of Morocco
  31. Republic of Mozambique
  32. Federal Republic of Nigeria
  33. Sultanate of Oman
  34. Islamic Republic of Pakistan
  35. The State of Palestine
  36. State of Qatar

37. Kingdom of Saudi Arabia
  38. Republic of Senegal
  39. Federal Republic of Somalia
  40. Sudan
  41. United Arab Emirates
  42. Republic of Tunisia
  43. Republic of Türkiye
  44. Turkmenistan
  45. Republic of Uzbekistan
  46. Republic of Yemen
3. The Russian Federation, Kingdom of Thailand, Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus, Central African Republic and Bosnia Herzegovina participated in the Session as observers.
4. In addition to the OIC General Secretariat and the COMCEC Coordination Office, the following OIC Organs/ Institutions attended the Session:
- 1- Standing Committee on Scientific and Technological Cooperation of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (COMSTECH)
  - 2- Statistical, Economic and Social Research and Training Center for Islamic Countries (SESRIC)
  - 3- Islamic Center for the Development of Trade (ICDT)
  - 4- Research Centre For Islamic History, Art and Culture (IRCICA)
  - 5- Islamic University of Technology (IUT)
  - 6- Islamic Development Bank (IsDB) Group
  - 7- International Islamic Trade Finance Corporation (ITFC)
  - 8- Islamic Corporation for the Insurance of Investment and Export Credit (ICIEC)
  - 9- Islamic Corporation for the Development of the Private Sector (ICD)
  - 10- The Islamic Solidarity Fund for Development (ISFD)
  - 11- Islamic Organization of Food Security (IOFS)
  - 12- Standards and Metrology Institute of Islamic Countries (SMIIC)
  - 13- Islamic Chamber of Commerce, Industry and Agriculture (ICCIA)
  - 14- Islamic Conference Youth Forum for Dialogue and Cooperation (ICYF-DC)
  - 15- Association of National Development Finance Institutions in Member Countries of the Islamic Development Bank Countries of the Islamic Development (ADFIMI)
5. Representatives of the following International Organizations and Universities attended the Session:
- 1- Developing Eight (D-8)
  - 2- Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO)
  - 3- Organization of the Black Sea Economic (BSEC)
  - 4- United Nation World Food Program (UNWFP)

5- International Labour Organization (ILO)

6- International Trade Centre (ITC)

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

6. The Meeting of Senior Officials of the 39<sup>th</sup> COMCEC Session that preceded the Ministerial Session was held on 2-3 December 2023 in İstanbul under the Chairmanship of H.E. Abdullah Rıdvan AĞAOĞLU, Vice President of the Strategy and Budget of the Presidency of the Republic of Türkiye. The Senior Officials deliberated on the agenda items and prepared the Draft Resolutions for consideration by the Ministerial Session.
7. The 43<sup>rd</sup> Meeting of the Sessional Committee of the COMCEC was held virtually on 16 November 2023 with the participation of the relevant OIC Institutions.

*(A copy of the report of the 43<sup>rd</sup> Meeting of the Sessional Committee is attached as Annex II)*

### **Opening Session**

8. The Opening Ceremony of the Thirty-Ninth Session of the COMCEC, held on December 4<sup>th</sup>, 2023, began with the inaugural speech of H.E. Recep Tayyip ERDOĞAN, President of the Republic of Türkiye and the Chairman of the COMCEC.
9. At the outset, His Excellency ERDOĞAN condemned the brutal attacks on Palestinian people in Gaza. Noting that two out of every three people martyred in Gaza are children, babies, and women, H.E. ERDOĞAN extended his heartfelt condolences for the loss of lives in Gaza.
10. H.E. ERDOĞAN expressed that many Western countries have been silent, blind and deaf to the massacres that Israel brutally carries out. H.E. ERDOĞAN also underlined that the victims of Israeli persecution include 73 journalists and over 100 officials of the United Nations. H.E. ERDOĞAN stated that the United Nations, which was established to protect global security and peace, couldn't even protect its own employees from Israel's barbarity.
11. Furthermore, H.E. ERDOĞAN highlighted that although the resolution calling for a humanitarian ceasefire was accepted by 121 states in the UN General Assembly, it was not effective in stopping the bloodshed. Recalling his expression "The world is bigger than five", H.E. ERDOĞAN stressed that this distorted structure of the UN Security Council is unfair and dysfunctional in resolving crises and thus should be changed as soon as possible.

12. H.E ERDOĞAN underlined that Gaza is a Palestinian land, and will remain so eternally. Moreover, calling the Islamic World to stand with Palestine as one, H.E. ERDOĞAN indicated that the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, whose founding purpose was to defend the Palestinian cause, offers a pertinent basis for carrying out the struggle with one voice and body.
13. H.E. ERDOĞAN also highlighted that the programs/projects such as TPS-OIC, OIC Arbitration Centre, and Islamic Index Fund implemented within the scope of the COMCEC would make significant contributions to the economic and commercial cooperation among the Islamic Countries.
14. H.E. ERDOĞAN emphasized the contribution of SMEs to the economies of the member countries and the importance of initiation the COMCEC SME Program. Additionally, highlighting the facilitative role of the mutual recognition of halal certificates in increasing the intra-OIC trade, H.E. ERDOĞAN expressed his appreciation for the establishment of the Islamic Forum for Halal Accreditation Bodies (IFHAB).
15. Moreover, expressing the importance of increasing investments in the fields of digital transformation and e-commerce in terms of economic growth by incentivizing innovation and offering new opportunities in the Member Countries, H.E. ERDOĞAN stated that determination of e-commerce as the theme of the Ministerial Exchange of Views Session is timely and pertinent.

*(A copy of the text of the Inaugural Statement of H.E. Recep Tayyip ERDOĞAN is attached as Annex III)*

16. Following the opening statement of H.E. Recep Tayyip ERDOĞAN, His Excellency Dr. Hussein Ibrahim TAHA, the Secretary General of the OIC, made his statement. At the outset, H.E. TAHA conveyed his special thanks to H.E. ERDOĞAN, President of the Republic of Türkiye and Chairman of the COMCEC and the Government of the Republic of Türkiye for the excellent preparations made for this meeting.
17. H.E. TAHA expressed that the OIC strongly condemns the continuation of genocidal war crimes committed by the Israeli occupation and calls on the international community to urgently intervene to put an end to brutal attacks and criminals of Israel that indiscriminately target all inhabitants of the Gaza Strip. H.E. TAHA stressed that the OIC holds Israel and all those who had the ability to prevent it from committing these crimes against the Palestinian people, but who instead sided with it, fully responsible for the massacres and crimes against humanity that are currently taking place in Gaza and throughout Palestine.

18. Referring to the latest estimates of the ICDT, H.E. TAHA indicated that the share of intra-OIC trade in the overall foreign trade of Member States increased slightly from 19.03% in 2021 to 19.26% in 2022. Highlighting the importance of increasing the trade volume among the Member Countries and realizing objectives set by the OIC-2025 Program of Action, H.E. TAHA stressed that there is a need for combining the collective efforts to enhance intra-OIC trade and the investments in developing tourism and combatting food insecurity.
19. With reference to the 9<sup>th</sup> Ministerial Conference on Food Security and Agricultural Development held in Doha, Qatar on 1-2 October 2023, H.E. TAHA underlined the importance of strengthening intra-OIC cooperation in the food and agriculture sector for having more resilient food systems through, among others, sharing knowledge and best practices with a view to further developing the national production capacities of the member countries.
20. Expressing that more than 70 per cent of the population of the least developed member countries live in rural areas and lack basic facilities, H.E. TAHA invited all OIC institutions to design programs aimed at addressing the socio-economic needs of the rural population in the OIC Member Countries.
21. Welcoming the convening of the 5<sup>th</sup> Islamic Conference of Labor Ministers and launch of the OIC Labor Center in Baku, Azerbaijan, H.E. TAHA emphasized the importance of boosting cooperation among the Member Countries in the field labor, employment and social protection. In this context, H.E. TAHA stated that the new specialized institution of the Organization, OIC Labor Center, responsible for cooperation in the field of labor and employment would play a crucial role in identifying key areas for strengthening institutional capacities and improving the quality of human resources.  
  
*(A Copy of the text of the Statement of the Secretary General of the OIC is attached as Annex IV)*
22. The Heads of Delegations of the State of Qatar, Republic of Senegal and Republic of Kazakhstan made statements on behalf of Arab, African and Asian geographical groups of the OIC, respectively, during the Opening Ceremony.
23. At the outset, H.E. Sultan Bin Rashid AL KHATER, Special Representative of the Emirate Council of State of Qatar, conveyed his sincere gratitude and appreciation to the Republic of Türkiye, for the convening of the 39<sup>th</sup> COMCEC Ministerial Session successfully and expressed that the discussions would contribute to outcomes for enhancing cooperation in various fields and realize expectations of the people of the Member Countries for development and prosperity.
24. H.E. AL KHATER underlined the importance of achieving a humanitarian ceasefire, which will lay the foundation for a comprehensive and sustainable agreement, which will halt the war and lead to serious well-rounded peace talks in accordance with international resolutions.

25. Highlighting that the geo-strategic transformations facing the world today, H.E. ALKHATER emphasized the necessity that OIC Member Countries to join efforts and consolidate the endeavours for enhancing of economic and trade cooperation. H.E. ALKHATER also mentioned the efforts in the Arab Group to monitor and implement the decisions and recommendations of the COMCEC to ensure stronger cooperation and the development of intra-trade with other member countries.
26. H.E. Abdou Karim FOFANA, Minister of Trade, Consumption and SMEs, as the Head of Delegation of the Senegal expressed his deep gratitude to H.E. Recep Tayyip ERDOĞAN, President of the Republic of Türkiye and President of COMCEC and also thanked to the Government and people of Türkiye for the excellent arrangements.
27. Mentioning the global challenges, such as climate change, inflation induced by rising prices of energy and raw materials, and the disruption of supply chains due to the international political context, H.E. FOFANA expressed that Africa, which brings together 54 countries, presents great economic potential with one of the highest growth rates in the world.
28. H.E. FOFANA pointed out that the development of trade among the OIC Member Countries, specifically of agricultural and food products, particularly for the least developed countries, should be paid more attention by supporting the elimination export restrictions within the framework of the multilateral trading system. Additionally, H.E. FOFANA emphasized the important role played by President ERDOĞAN in establishing the grain corridor, which is very important for African countries
29. H.E. FOFANA also underlined the importance of the internationalization of micro, small, and medium-sized enterprises in Africa to create wealth and jobs by ensuring better reciprocal access to OIC Member Countries and the development of common standards.
30. The Head of Delegation of the Republic of Kazakhstan H.E. Arman SHAKKALIYEV, Minister of Trade and Integration, expressed his sincere thanks and appreciation to the Republic of Türkiye, for the convening of the 39<sup>th</sup> COMCEC Ministerial Session successfully. H.E. SHAKKALIYEV highlighted that the OIC Member Countries accounted for 12% of world trade in 2022, although they constitute more than a quarter of the world's population.
31. H.E. SHAKKALIYEV continued his speech by noting that one of the promising areas of cooperation between Member Countries is the services sector. Furthermore, H.E. SHAKKALIYEV underlined that the agriculture sector is one of the key areas of mutual interest of member countries. Expressing the active role of Kazakhstan in the field of the agriculture sector, H.E. SHAKKALIYEV stressed the importance of the Islamic Organization for Food Security (IOFS) under the OIC, which aims at consolidating the efforts of the Member Countries in addressing the challenges faced in the field of food security.

32. Before concluding, H.E. SHAKKALIYEV stated that Kazakhstan is planning to hold an “Agrarian Forum with the OIC countries”, as well as an exhibition of food products of the OIC countries within the framework of the said Forum.
33. Afterwards, H.E. Dr. Muhammad Sulaiman AL JASSER, President of the IsDB Group, delivered a statement. H.E. AL JASSER expressed his appreciation to the Republic of Türkiye and Chairman of the COMCEC, for the efforts to convene this meeting.
34. H.E. AL JASSER extended his heartfelt condolences for the loss of lives in Gaza and expressed his deep sadness in the face of widespread devastation in the city. H.E. AL JASSER also expressed his solidarity with the affected families, sympathy, and support during this tragic time.
35. Moreover, H.E. AL JASSER extended his heartfelt condolences to Türkiye, Morocco, Libya, and Afghanistan for the natural disasters occurred this year. H.E. AL JASSER stated that the IsDB Group is committed to providing steadfast support for reconstruction and relief efforts in these regions.
36. Concerning the theme of the Ministerial Exchange of Views Session, H.E. AL JASSER enumerated the main challenges faced by the Member Countries such as underdeveloped network infrastructure, limited adoption of digital services, and ranking lowest in internet speed.
37. Moreover, H.E. AL JASSER indicated that the IsDB is currently conducting a technical study on e-commerce within the framework of the African Continental Free Trade Area, which is to be piloted in Côte d'Ivoire, Egypt, Morocco, Tunisia, and Uganda, thus assisting these countries in enacting reforms to boost MSME engagement in e-commerce and to minimise disparities in e-readiness levels across the continent.
38. Before concluding, H.E. AL JASSER expressed that the IsDB's 50th anniversary would be celebrated in Riyadh at the Bank's Annual Meeting on April 27-30, 2024.
39. *(A Copy of the text of the Statement of the IDB Group President is attached as Annex V)*

### **Ministerial Working Session**

40. The Ministerial Working Session of the Thirty-Ninth Session of the COMCEC was held on December 4<sup>th</sup>, 2023, under the Chairmanship of H.E. Cevdet YILMAZ Vice President of the Republic of Türkiye.
41. The Session adopted the Agenda of the 39<sup>th</sup> Session of the COMCEC.  
*(The Agenda of the Meeting is attached as Annex VI)*

42. Following the adoption of the agenda, H.E. Abdullah Rıdvan AĞAOĞLU, Vice President of the Strategy and Budget of Republic of Türkiye, as the Chairman of the Senior Officials Meeting (SOM), informed the Session of the outcomes of the Senior Officials Meeting as well as the policy recommendations on “Improving E-commerce Capacities of the OIC Member Countries” deliberated by the SOM and submitted to the consideration of the Ministerial Session.
43. Following the presentation of H.E. AĞAOĞLU, Mr. Abdelhamid MAMDOUH, former Director of the Trade in Services and Investment Division of the WTO, delivered a keynote speech on recent trends in e-commerce, the rise of digital services trade and the role of trade agreements in non-trade issues.
44. At the outset, Mr. MAMDOUH highlighted that the transformative influence of digital technologies, coupled with increased access to faster and more reliable internet, has changed traditional business practices and global trade norms and technological advances have diversified business models, reshaping competition globally.
45. Mr. MAMDOUH stressed that e-commerce offers substantial opportunities for global businesses and countries to enhance their integration into the global economy and leverage the advantages of international trade. Mr. MAMDOUH also shared the estimates of World Trade Organization (WTO) that embracing digital technologies could elevate trade growth by 2 per cent annually from 2021 to 2030.
46. Afterwards, Mr. MAMDOUH touched upon the challenges in e-commerce such as navigating complex regulatory standards across jurisdictions, and the absence of internationally agreed standards for non-trade issues. He also enumerated some benefits of e-commerce including expanded export opportunities, improved performance for SMEs as well as improved access to global and regional markets, economic empowerment of women, and enhanced consumer welfare.
47. At the end of his speech, Mr. MAMDOUH highlighted important action areas such as the requirement of a holistic approach, usage of innovative business models, bridging the digital divide and ensuring e-commerce preparedness by all countries, including least developed countries, and providing financial resources as well as technical support for countries to develop infrastructure and regulation.
48. Following the speech of Mr. Abdelhamid MAMDOUH, the Exchange of Views Session of the 39<sup>th</sup> Session of the COMCEC was held with the theme of “Improving E-commerce Capacities of the OIC Member Countries.”



49. Within this framework, the Ministers and Heads of Delegations of the Member Countries made statements and interventions on their country experiences with respect to the theme of the Ministerial Exchange of Views Session. In this respect, the Honorable Ministers and Heads of Delegations emphasized the actions taken to address the main challenges faced by the Member Countries in e-commerce and digitalization as well as their efforts to strengthen the necessary infrastructure in this domain. They also stressed that cooperation in the field of information technologies would make a great contribution to achieving considerable progress in this crucial field.

### **Side Events/Special Sessions**

50. The Panel on Global Alternative Dispute Resolution Mechanisms was organized on December 5th, 2023. During the Panel, trends and developments in arbitration and other alternative dispute resolutions were presented. Participants were also informed about the efforts within the framework of the OIC Arbitration Centre. In addition to the delegates participating to the 39th Session of the COMCEC, academics, lawyers, businesspeople, civil society representatives, and other pertinent stakeholders also attended the Panel.

51. The Panel titled "Global Recognition of Halal Certificates" for the construction of a reliable international system in the context of mutual recognition of halal-certified products was held on December 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2023, on the margins of the 39th COMCEC Ministerial Meeting. Representatives of civil society, businessmen, academicians, lawyers and other stakeholders attended the event. Participants highlighted the importance of the establishment of the Islamic Forum for Halal Accreditation Bodies (IFHAB) with regard to harmonising halal standards as well as reducing non-tariff barriers for halal products and flourishing the halal industry.

52. Furthermore, A High-Level Meeting on the COMCEC SME Program was held with the participation of Heads of SME Organizations of the Member Countries and the relevant OIC Institutions to finalize and launch the COMCEC SME Program on December 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2023. Representatives of the OIC Member Countries shared their experiences and best practices on the internationalization of SMEs and strengthening their competitiveness. A set of recommendations related to the implementation of the Program have been formulated and the Program has been finalized.

53. The side event titled "COMCEC Project Support Programs: Member Country Experiences" was organized on December 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2023. Within the context of COMCEC Project Funding and COMCEC Al-Quds Program, the representatives of the project owners from the Member Countries shared their experiences concerning the implementation of their projects throughout the event.

54. "Manuscript Quran Exhibition" was organized in cooperation with with the Presidency of the Turkish Manuscripts Association on the margins of the COMCEC 39<sup>th</sup> Ministerial Meeting on December 4<sup>th</sup>, 2023. Unique Quran Mushafs written on parchment and paper were presented in the exhibition.

55. A Ministerial Working Breakfast was hosted by H.E. Dr. Ömer BOLAT, Minister of Trade of the Republic of Türkiye, on December 4th, 2023, with the participation of the Honorable Ministers and Heads of Delegations of the OIC Member Countries. Trade-related issues of the COMCEC were elaborated during the event.

### **Closing Session**

56. The Closing Session of the 39th Session of the COMCEC was held on December 5<sup>th</sup>, 2023 under the Chairmanship of H.E. Cevdet YILMAZ Vice President of the Republic of Türkiye.

57. Mr. Yousaf Junaid, Ambassador of Pakistan to Türkiye, as the Rapporteur, summarized the salient points in the Resolutions.

58. Afterwards, the Session adopted the Resolutions OIC/COMCEC/39-232/RES.

59. Afterwards, Dr. Ahmad Kawesa SENGENDO, Assistant Secretary-General of OIC for Economic Affairs, in his closing statement, extended his special gratitude and appreciation to H.E. Recep Tayyip ERDOĞAN, the President of the Republic of Türkiye and the Chairman of COMCEC.

60. H.E. SENGENDO called upon the Member Countries to sign and ratify the Statute of the recently established OIC Labour Centre and to give all the necessary support to enable it fulfil its mandate. H.E. SENGENDO also invited all Member Countries to implement the decisions of the 9th OIC Ministerial Conference on Food Security and Agricultural Development (MCFCAD), held in Doha, State of Qatar, on 1st-2nd October 2023 and the 5th Islamic Conference of Labour Ministers (ICLM), held in Baku, Republic of Azerbaijan, on 21-23 November 2023.

61. H.E. SENGENDO concluded his remarks by congratulating H.E. Mr. Cevdet YILMAZ, Vice President of the Republic of Türkiye, for the dynamic proceeding of the discussions during the working sessions, and expressed his appreciation to all heads of delegations and other participants and all the staff who contributed to the success of this meeting.

62. The Head of Delegation of State of Palestine, His Excellency KHALID AL-ESSEILY, Minister of National Economy, made a statement on behalf of all the Member Countries participating in the Meeting and thanked all of the participants for their contributions to the successful conduct of the Meeting and also thanked to the Republic of Türkiye for the generous hospitality extended during this Meeting.

63. Expressing the cruelty inflicted by the occupying Israel in its recent attacks and the extent of the disaster, H.E. AL-ESSEILY emphasized that the Western world remained silent in the face of this genocide and called on the Islamic countries to give more support to Palestine.

64. H.E. AL-ESSEILY extended his appreciation to the Member Countries for their efforts to implement the emergency Arab and Islamic Summit resolution in order to immediately end the Israeli aggression, break the siege, secure the arrival of humanitarian aid to Palestanians, and ensure their protection and security, lead to end the occupation and achieve a just and comprehensive peace that leads to the Palestinian people gaining their freedom and independence.
65. Finally, H.E. Cevdet YILMAZ, Vice President of the Republic of Türkiye, delivered a closing statement. H.E. YILMAZ expressed his wishes for the mercy of Allah the almighty to the brothers and sisters murdered by the occupying forces in Palestine and conveyed his condolences to their grieving relatives. H.E. YILMAZ emphasized that Türkiye stands by the just cause of the brotherly Palestinians and condemned all forms of terrorism.
66. H.E. YILMAZ underlined the importance of the Member Countries' contribution and participation in TPS-OIC, which is one of the most important project developed in the trade domain under COMCEC. H.E. YILMAZ also expressed that the endeavors should be further enhanced for the inclusion of new members into the System and expanding the scope of the System with additional areas such as services trade and investment.
67. H.E. YILMAZ pointed out that the OIC Arbitration Centre would become one of the most distinguished arbitration centers in the world, with the endeavors to promote the Centre in front of the business world as a sound mechanism for the settlement of disputes. In this context, H.E. YILMAZ stressed the importance of the panel held by the OIC Arbitration Center within the scope of the 39<sup>th</sup> COMCEC Ministerial Session in terms of promoting the activities of the Center.
68. H.E. YILMAZ also expressed his appreciation for the recently developed programs and initiatives namely, COMCEC High-Level Digital Transformation Forum, COMCEC SME Program and the Islamic Forum for Halal Accreditation Bodies (IFHAB).
69. H.E. YILMAZ concluded his statement by expressing his thanks to all member country delegations, OIC General Secretariat, COMCEC Coordination Office, the Institutions of the Organization for Islamic Cooperation and other international organizations for their active and valuable contributions.

*(The text of the Closing Statement of H.E. Cevdet YILMAZ is attached as Annex VII)*

70. All documents submitted to the 39<sup>th</sup> Session of COMCEC will be available on the COMCEC Web Site ([www.comcec.org](http://www.comcec.org)).

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