COMCEC

Cooperation for Development

CCO BRIEF ON TRADE

COMCEC COORDINATION OFFICE
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TRADE

BRIEF ON TRADE COOPERATION

1. Introduction

National Export Strategies (NES) are comprehensive frameworks aimed at enhancing a country's export performance and supporting its economic foundations. They seek to align national resources, institutional capacities, and private sector dynamics with strategic trade objectives, including the expansion of exports, the increase of foreign exchange revenues, and the generation of employment opportunities. At the same time, they contribute to broader socioeconomic development by promoting policy coherence, fostering firm-level competitiveness, and strengthening institutional capacity. For OIC Member Countries, the role of well-structured NES has become increasingly critical in today's dynamic global trade environment. While trade volumes among the member countries have grown in recent years, intra-OIC trade accounted for only 19.26 percent of total trade in 2022- below the 25 percent target set in the OIC 25 Programme of Action. Structural barriers such as underdeveloped infrastructure, fragmented regulations, and institutional capacity limitations continue to hinder trade performance across many member countries.

In this context, NES serve as essential tools to address such challenges, mobilize resources effectively, and facilitate regional economic integration. In light of the evolving global trade landscape, the development of NES that incorporate current trends—such as the digitalization of customs procedures, the integration of logistics networks, and the expansion of e-commerce—has become increasingly vital. Strengthening institutional capacity and enhancing policy coordination are key prerequisites for the OIC Member Countries to adapt to these transformations and to maintain their competitiveness. As foundational components of export-led growth, NES must be grounded in evidence-based and country-specific analyses. These efforts inform national strategies, guide implementation, and foster mutual learning through the exchange of best practices. By investing in the development or refinement of NES, the OIC Member Countries can overcome trade constraints, unlock export potential, and progress toward a more resilient and interconnected economic structure aligned with shared development goals.

Within this framework, the COMCEC Trade Working Group (TWG) has dedicated its 24th and 25th Meetings to the theme of "*Developing/Improving Export Strategies in OIC Member Countries*".

2. Trade Cooperation under the COMCEC

a) The 24th and 25th Meetings of the Trade Working Group

Given the importance of the issue, the COMCEC Trade Working Group held its two consecutive Meetings in 2025. In this regard, 24th and 25th Meetings of the COMCEC TWG were held on 21 April 2025 and 22-23 September 2025, respectively, with the theme of "*Developing/Improving Export Strategies in the OIC Member Countries*".

The 24th Meeting of the TWG was held on 21 April 2025 and preliminary findings of policy guide have been discussed. As a sequel of the 24th Meeting, the 25th Meeting of the COMCEC TWG was held on 22-23 September 2025 with the same theme. The final draft of the guidance has been discussed during the Meeting. In both Meetings, the experiences and perspectives of the Member Countries, International Institutions and Private Sector concerning developing and improving export strategies were shared with the participants.

The guideline providing a roadmap for the Member Countries to develop or improve their export strategies was also elaborated in detail during the 25th Meeting. After fruitful discussions, 25th Meetings of the TWG has come up with a set of concrete policy recommendations to be submitted to the respective Ministers at the 41st COMCEC Ministerial Session.

All the documents prepared for the Working Group Meetings are available on the COMCEC website (www.comcec.org).

b) Important Projects and Programmes

I. TPS-OIC

Since the establishment of the COMCEC, trade has been one of the most important cooperation areas. In order to enhance trade among the OIC Member Countries, the COMCEC has initiated many programs and projects towards reaching this objective. The Trade Preferential System among the Member States of the OIC (TPS-OIC) is one of the most important projects of the COMCEC for fostering intra-OIC trade.

The TPS-OIC is mainly based on three agreements, namely the Framework Agreement, the Protocol on Preferential Tariff Scheme (PRETAS), and the Rules of Origin. In order to join the System, member states need to fulfil two conditions at the same time, namely the ratification of the three TPS-OIC Agreements and the submission of the list of concessions to the TNC Secretariat. On the other hand, for the effective implementation of the System, the Member Countries are required to undertake some internal measures, such as; printing the TPS-OIC Certificate of Origin documents, conveying specimen impressions of stamps to the Trade Negotiating Committee (TNC) Secretariat and completing the necessary internal legislative and administrative measures.

The legal basis of the TPS-OIC has been completed in 2011 and the required number of the member countries for the operationalization of the System has been reached by the end of 2014. These countries are Bangladesh, Iran, Jordan, Malaysia, Morocco, Pakistan, Türkiye, Bahrain, Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates, Kuwait, Qatar and Oman.

In accordance with the relevant decisions of the 37th Ministerial Session of the COMCEC and the Trade Negotiating Committee (TNC) Meeting held in June 2021, the System has been effectuated as of July 1st 2022. The 37th COMCEC Ministerial Session welcomed the effectuation of the System and requested the Participating States, which have not done so yet, to complete their internal procedures and called upon the Member Countries, which have not yet signed or ratified the TPS-OIC Agreements to do so at their earliest convenience.

Furthermore, after the operationalization of the System, a series of TNC Meetings were convened in 2022 and 2023 for considering the status of implementation of the System in their respective countries. Underlining the significant role of the TNC in considering the issues experienced in the implementation of the TPS-OIC as well as discussing the road-map for the period ahead, the 39th Session of the COMCEC called upon the TPS-OIC Participating States to actively participate in the meetings of the TNC in the upcoming period and report the status of implementation in their respective countries to the TNC Secretariat regularly.

39th COMCEC Ministerial Session also welcomed the convening of Honourable Ministers and Heads of Delegations on 4 December 2023 on the margin of 38th COMCEC Ministerial Session where Honourable Ministers and Heads of Delegations deliberated on issues regarding the OIC trade agenda, particularly TPS-OIC. The said Session also expressed its appreciation to the Republic of Türkiye for volunteering to host the Third Session of TNC on TPS-OIC at Ministerial level in 2024 and requested all Member Countries to actively participate in this important event.

In line with the relevant resolution of 39th COMCEC Ministerial Session, Third Ministerial Meeting of TPS-OIC TNC was held on 9-10 June 2024 in İstanbul, Türkiye for widening the scope of the System under the chairmanship of Ministry of Trade of the Republic of Türkiye. İstanbul Ministerial Declaration adopted at this Meeting took note the initial discussions on a draft “Negotiation Strategy and Work Plan for Potential Expansion of TPS-OIC” and tasked the relevant authorities to continue the engagement under TNC.

On the other hand, the 40th COMCEC Ministerial Session welcomed the decisions of the Third Ministerial Meeting of TPS-OIC TNC and requested the continuation of technical review in 2025 to elaborate on the potential expansion of TPS-OIC with increased product coverage and new disciplines with the participation of the OIC Member Countries, which have signed and ratified the TPS-OIC Framework Agreement and other interested Member Countries, which are not party to the Framework Agreement, as observers, for ensuring a wider membership composition.

The 40th Session of COMCEC also welcomed the convening of the Honorable Ministers and Vice-Ministers on 4 November 2024 on the margin of 40th Session of the COMCEC, where the Honorable Ministers and Vice Ministers deliberated on the issues regarding the OIC trade agenda, particularly TPS-OIC.

Recalling the relevant resolutions of the 40th Session of the COMCEC, the 41st Follow-up Committee Meeting of COMCEC welcomed the offer of the Republic of Türkiye to host a TNC Meeting to elaborate on the potential expansion of TPS-OIC through increased product coverage and new disciplines, and called upon the OIC Member Countries that have signed and ratified the TPS-OIC Framework Agreement to actively participate in this meeting, while inviting the Member States that are not party to the Framework Agreement to participate in the meeting as observers. Furthermore, the Committee also welcomed the offer of the Republic of Türkiye to host an additional TNC Meeting to be attended by the Member States that have submitted their concession lists specifically for the discussion of implementation issues, and called upon the relevant Participating States to actively participate in the meeting.

The above-mentioned TPS-OIC TNC Meetings, was held successfully in Ankara on 1-2 October 2025 to elaborate on the potential expansion of TPS-OIC with the participation of the OIC Member Countries. The Committee decided to initiate preliminary discussions, after taking note of the observations of the States on the study on Opportunities and Challenges, on the following issues with a view to explore the possibilities of the expansion of the TPS-OIC;

- challenges in implementation of PRETAS,
- possible expansion areas and objectives,
- legal considerations,
- institutional matters.

II. OIC Arbitration Centre

Arbitration Centers are the main mechanisms for the settlement of disputes in international trade. Due to their positive impact on enhancing international trade, a number of regional and international arbitration centers have been established, with significant caseloads and a wide reach.

Considering its importance, H.E. Recep Tayyip ERDOĞAN, the President of the Republic of Türkiye and the Chairman of the COMCEC, proposed the establishment of the OIC Arbitration Centre in İstanbul for the benefit of the OIC Member Countries during the 13th Islamic Summit held in 10-15 April 2016 in İstanbul, Türkiye. The Agreement regarding the establishment of the OIC Arbitration Centre was ratified by the Turkish Parliament and signed by the H.E. ERDOĞAN on 18 January 2020. The OIC-Arbitration Centre (OIC-AC) was established with the efforts of OIC's Affiliate the Islamic Chamber of Commerce & Development (ICCD) and The Union of Chambers and Commodity Exchanges of Türkiye (TOBB) in November 2021, in İstanbul.

OIC Arbitration Centre became operational and has started the relevant activities in late 2022. Administrative staff of the Centre were appointed. Arbitration Rules of the Centre have been completed and approved by the Board of Directors. The Centre has engaged in promotional activities and signed Memoranda of Understanding with various stakeholders. The objective of the Centre is facilitating the settlement of commercial and investment disputes involving natural or legal persons among the OIC Member Countries, between the Member Countries of the OIC and non-OIC states or private sector institutions by recognizing traditional arbitration rules, rules of Shariah Law and alternative dispute resolution mechanisms.

The 37th Ministerial Session of the COMCEC welcomed the operationalization of the OIC Arbitration Centre in Istanbul. Furthermore, the 38th and 39th Ministerial Sessions of the COMCEC and 40th Follow-up Committee of the COMCEC called upon the Member Countries to encourage their relevant institutions to actively participate in the activities of the OIC Arbitration Centre with a view to making use of services provided by the Centre.

Moreover, the panel under the theme "*OIC Arbitration Centre: Global Alternative Dispute Resolution*" was organized on June 10th, 2024 in İstanbul by OIC Arbitration Centre on the sidelines of the "the Third Ministerial Meeting of TPS-OIC TNC".

Finally, the 40th Ministerial Session of the COMCEC and 41st COMCEC Follow-up Committee acknowledged the important role of the OIC Arbitration Centre, as an affiliated institution of ICCD for the settlement of disputes and called upon the Member Countries to encourage the active participation in the activities of the OIC Arbitration Centre with a view to making use of services provided by the Centre to those who seek it.

III. COMCEC SME Programme

Considering the vital role of SMEs for the OIC economies in terms of production, investment, employment and growth, COMCEC SME Program was launched during the 39th Ministerial Session of the COMCEC.

Within the scope of the program, based on a comprehensive research with a detailed survey, the thematic areas were identified including SME internationalization, strengthening partnerships among public, private and civil society, utilizing funds for networking among SMEs, exchanging big data between public and private sector, enhancing human resource capacities of SMEs by vocational education and training.

In this context, an online meeting was held on July 31, 2024 with the participation of 15 Member Countries and 5 OIC Institutions on the use of B2B tools for the development of SMEs, enhancing cooperation among them and developing financial support mechanisms for SMEs. The 40th COMCEC Ministerial Session invited Member Countries and relevant OIC Institutions to actively participate in the activities to be conducted under the Program.

Furthermore, in order to support the development of SMEs, thematic areas in the SME Program were added to the sectoral areas supported under the COMCEC Project Funding. In this context, the projects titled “Experience Sharing for Designing a Roadmap on Building an SME Network Platform” and “Business Development with Suriname and Guyana” were implemented in 2025 under the COMCEC Project Funding.

3. COMCEC Financial Support Instruments

A. The COMCEC Project Funding Mechanism

COMCEC Project Funding (CPF) is the other important instrument of the Strategy. Projects financed under the CPF need to serve cooperation among member counties and should be designed in accordance with the objectives and the expected outcomes defined by the Strategy. Projects also play important roles in realization of the policy recommendations formulated by the member countries during the TWG meetings.

In 2024, two following projects have been selected to be supported in trade domain:

Indonesia is implementing the project titled “Enhancing Slaughterhouse Standards for Halal and Food Safety Compliance.” The Project is being implemented by the Ministry of Trade of Indonesia in partnership with Türkiye and SMIIC. The main purpose of this Project is to strengthen slaughterhouse operations by implementing Halal and food safety standards, ensuring compliance with international regulations (ISO, SMIIC), and enhancing the capacity of industry stakeholders. Within the scope of the project, a study visit has been conducted to Türkiye in order to exchange knowledge and experience on Halal and food safety standardization in slaughterhouses. After that, a training activity will be organized in Indonesia.

The Project on “Enhancing the Capacity of Metrology Laboratories for Improved Quality Infrastructure” is being implemented by the SMIIC with three partner countries Türkiye, Sudan and Uganda. The Project aimed at enhancing the technical and operational capabilities of National Quality Infrastructure (NQI) institutions in Sudan and Uganda through targeted theoretical and practical training programs. Under this project, a training has been conducted at Uganda with participants from Sudan and Türkiye and afterwards workshop activity will be organized in Türkiye.

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