

**Statement of DG of SESRIC at the
Workshop on the Role of Women in the Development of OIC Member States**

03 October 2016, Ankara, Republic of Turkey

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

**Distinguished Delegates,
Ladies and Gentlemen,
Assalamu Alaikum wa Rahmatullahi wa Barakatuhu,**

It is a great pleasure for me to address this august gathering on the occasion of the opening session of the Workshop on the “Role of Women in the Development of OIC Member States”. We have the honour, to host and organize this Workshop in cooperation with the OIC General Secretariat. I would like to welcome you all to Ankara and thank you for designating these two days from your valuable time to attend, participate and contribute to this important Workshop.

**Distinguished Delegates,
Ladies and Gentlemen,**

Women’s empowerment is gaining increasing importance in all fields of social and economic life from the perspectives of both policy development and human rights. Strong and healthy societies are comprised of cohesive families in which women and men are treated equally in all aspects of social and economic life. Ensuring gender equality and restoring the status of women are also critically important in order to empower the family institution and build up healthy societies. Moreover, without women’s active role and full participation it is unlikely that we can achieve sustainable development in any part of the world.

However, today there is a widespread painful reality that many societies across the world are facing degraded status of women. Many OIC member countries are suffering from gender inequality at varying degrees and they are far from utilizing the full potential of women. Gender disparity among men and women is manifested in various segments of the life, such as education, science, health, politics, economic, art and culture, which disfavours women to enjoy some rights as seen in developed countries, such as maternity leave and childcare services.

Given this state of affairs, over the last two decades, many governments and several international organizations, including Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), have started to include the gender issues in their priority policy agenda. Some key strategic and policy-oriented documents have been adopted by international organizations such as: The United Nations' Beijing Declaration (1995); The OIC Plan of Action for the Advancement of Women (2008) and OIC Ten-Year Program of Action (2005) and its second edition, which will be adopted in 2016.

A number of events have been organised, such as ministerial level meetings, experts meetings, workshops, and consultative meetings that can help policy-makers in member countries to identify cooperation opportunities within the OIC group and serve as a platform where member countries exchange their views and share best-practices on gender issues. Many OIC countries have established ministries which are dedicated to address the challenges and related issues of women and empowering the family structure more effectively. In this regard, it is fair to claim that there is growing interest of OIC member countries to address gender issues and to restore the status of women in their respective societies in collaboration with regional and international organizations including the OIC.

**Distinguished Delegates,
Ladies and Gentlemen,**

At this point, let me shortly brief you about SESRIC's activities in the domain of gender and empowerment of women in line with its mandate.

In the domain of statistics, SESRIC regularly collects and reports data for 10 selected indicators in the domain of gender for the time-being in its BaseInd Database, which is available online and free to access. In near future, as SESRIC, we plan to expand the number of indicators available in this database in the domain of gender as well as in other socio-economic topics. I invite you all to explore and benefit from our database.

In the domain of research, SESRIC prepares analytical research reports to assess the current state of gender and reveal key challenges faced by women living in OIC member countries. The report also provides concrete policy-recommendations to policy-makers in addressing the problems of women aiming to ensure their full and equal participation into socio-economic life. The 2016 version of this report titled "State of Gender in OIC Countries: Prospects and Challenges" will be launched during "The Sixth Session of the Ministerial Conference on the Role of Women in the Development of OIC Member States", which will be held on 1-3 November 2016 in Istanbul, Republic of Turkey. This report will also become available online in our website (sesric.org) in three languages (English, Arabic and French) in November 2016. Today, you will have a chance to listen the main findings of this report from our colleague.

In the domain of training and capacity building, SESRIC is planning to launch a capacity building programme for Member States' institutions and civil society organizations on the issues of women, family and children during the upcoming year. This capacity building programme aims to emphasize the importance of increasing families and women's skills and capacities to enhance their own strengths. In fact, empowering women through education and skills development is an attractive investment for all society as everyone around them will benefit from it.

Apart from these activities, in the process of updating the OIC Plan of Action for the Advancement of Women (OPAAW) document, SESRIC has also played an active role by participating and providing inputs to the OIC Intergovernmental Group of Experts Meeting on the Review of OPAAW that was held in Jeddah on 3-4 November 2015 at the OIC Headquarters and the OIC Workshop for Reviewing the OPAAW document held in Istanbul on 28-29 January 2016. I am confident that the end product of these two meetings, the updated version of the OPAAW document to be adopted next month in Istanbul, will provide a broad policy-guideline to policy-makers in OIC member countries, and ultimately lead to the advancement of women living in OIC Member States.

Distinguished Delegates,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Given this state of affairs, this Workshop is addressing a very important issue for OIC member countries. I am confident that the deliberations and discussions in this Workshop will help our member countries to better addressing the women and gender equality issues. Moreover, the outcome of this Workshop will be presented as an input during the Senior Official Meetings of the Sixth Session of the Ministerial Conference on the Role of Women in the Development of OIC Member States. As SESRIC, with our partners and sister organizations, we will continue our efforts to improve the well-being of women and increase their contribution to the development of OIC Member States through statistics, research and capacity building. As we all look forward to the successful outcome of this Workshop, I wish you all the success and safe travel to your home countries.

Thank you for your kind attention.

Wassalamu Alaykum we Rahmatullahi we Barakatuhu