

**OIC Day Celebration
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Palais des Nations, Geneva**

**Keynote Speech
Prof. Dr. Savaş Alpaya, Director General, SESRIC**

Mr. Chairman, Distinguished Participants, Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a great pleasure for me to address this august gathering on the occasion of the celebration of the OIC Day in Geneva. I would like to thank the OIC Geneva Office for inviting me to participate in this important roundtable discussion, and I would like to extend my greeting to you all. I believe our discussion today would provide all of us with another opportunity to exchange views and ideas on the role of regional and intergovernmental organisations and multilateral institutions in promoting and intensifying South-South Cooperation among developing countries.

As we all know, the South-South Cooperation is a multilateral initiative in order to concert individual actions to contribute to their national well-being, fostering the self-reliance of developing countries by enhancing their capacity to find solutions to their development problems in keeping with their own aspirations, values and special needs. Considering the basic elements and guiding principles, any meaningful cooperation leverages intensively on shared experiences and sympathies, based on the common objectives and solidarity of cooperating countries. This, in turn, casts a more important role for the countries of the South, including the South-South development partnerships such as those of OIC and its institutions – than it does for the traditional donor countries.

South-South Cooperation has played a particularly important role in socio-economic development process, through its contribution in areas such as human and productive capacity-building, technical assistance and exchange of best practices, particularly on issues related to health, education, agriculture, environment, science and technology, trade and investment. However, despite certain improvements, developing countries are facing many challenges to benefit in full potential from South-South Cooperation – due to a host of factors including supply-side constraints, difficulties in timely adoption of critical changes and lack of adequate human capital. It is therefore important to design innovative support and cooperation mechanisms which would address these challenges and enable developing countries to reap the full benefits offered by South-South Cooperation.

It should be noted that the greatest prospects for the role of South-South Cooperation in socio-economic development comes from the increasing complementarities among the developing countries. The relative easiness of developing empathy-driven synergies between cooperating countries, smaller technological distance, similarity of economic and

institutional conditions, as well as geographical and cultural proximity all make South-South cooperation a perfect fit for these countries.

Without any doubt, sharing the knowledge and experience that was accumulated over years in developed countries with the emerging and developing countries plays a significant role in facilitating a speedy and hassle-free path towards attaining internationally agreed development goals. The lack of adequate interaction among the emerging and developing countries, both within and across, in this context, should be given special attention. This lack of interaction among these groups of countries in the context of their developmental efforts becomes even more critical in this century of unprecedented changes, where the recipes for development of even the recent past may not be relevant anymore. In this regard, the OIC, as the second largest international organisation in the world, plays a very constructive role in facilitating a new model of collaboration among the emerging and developing countries. Intra-OIC knowledge and experience sharing has become one of the critical agenda items of the OIC, and the functional exchange of useful experiences and expertise among national institutions now strengthens the linkages among the member countries.

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Let me briefly mention how we have started this transformation in South-South Cooperation in the OIC. After a number of trials and errors, in 2009, we decided that there was a strong need for designing and implementing new modalities towards a more effective South-South Cooperation.

Our interpretation for the landscape in the partnership for development domain was, at that time, a very high number of countries with huge demands in many different areas for capacity development. On the other hand, supply-side was far behind this huge demand. Relying on experts from International Organisations or from developed countries could never address this big demand in a timely manner. So partners from developing/emerging countries need to be included in more meaningful manner. South-South Cooperation should be made attractive for both sides. It should not be interpreted as one-sided flow of benefits, and should be designed as a win-win and both sides should have high motivations to participate.

Given the highly busy agenda of each developing/emerging country, there is a need for an effective facilitation of South-South partnerships. A critical component of this facilitation is the belief in the ability of partners to make things happen and to change their conditions in the desired direction together.

In this context, SESRIC initiated an apex programme for human-resource enhancement and for doing business better. This programme is based on identifying the already available knowledge and experience in member countries that have the capacity and willingness to exchange, and sharing this stock of knowledge and experience with others who are in need.

Currently, there are numerous sector-specific programmes including areas such as statistics, agriculture, environment, water resources management, multilateral trade systems, skill development for youth, health, information and communications technology, e-government, poverty alleviation, and tourism. So far, some 200 capacity building activities in over 40 countries have been implemented by SESRIC under its Capacity Building Programme. Around 50 of these programmes were organized in about 20 different LDCs.

In order to effectively implement the Programme, SESRIC conducts regular surveys among member countries and collects information on the needs and capacities of national institutions; then after a careful assessment of the needs and capacities of these institutions, optimum match is facilitated among countries through different modalities, including exchange of experts, training workshops and study visits.

The innovative methodology used in this Programme does not only make it cost-effective but also activates and intensifies the relations and opens new channels of collaboration among counties. Through involving in knowledge sharing activity the provider country gains the advantage of expanding its own capacity by familiarising with different local experiences and new trends in the world. Activities facilitated by SESRIC make the involvement of the beneficiary country more attractive.

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As part of its efforts in facilitating knowledge and experience identification and sharing, SESRIC has been implementing several research and technical cooperation projects in order to document knowledge and experience accumulated by national institutions, and enhance their strategies towards common developmental goals. In this regard, one very recent initiative which SESRIC undertakes is on Mapping OIC's South-South Potential. Being conducted in collaboration with the Islamic Development Bank and United Nations Office for South-South Cooperation (UNOSSC), this project aims to document best practices, successful models and approaches, which have potential to be emulated by other institutions in developing countries. The project will be useful in providing an analysis on the emerging technical role of partner institutions in international development and South-South Cooperation, and will showcase their strong potential as one of the leading actors. It will also provide a comprehensive profiling of Centres of Excellence in OIC member countries, whose expertise can be tapped into for the benefit of other developing countries.

The successful implementation of these new South-South partnerships attracted the attention of policy makers and SESRIC has been called upon to design sectoral cooperation modalities. In this context I may mention several recent initiatives led by SESRIC in critical domains.

The OIC Strategic Health Programme of Action (OIC-SHPA) 2014-2023, prepared by SESRIC, is a recent initiative which aims to increase South-South and triangular cooperation among OIC member countries in a very critical area; health. The OIC-SHPA puts a particular emphasis on

developing countries, where health infrastructure is much more under-developed, and offers significant potential for cooperation in a number of carefully identified thematic areas. With member-driven working groups established to prioritize and materialize the actions recommended under each thematic area, the implementation of OIC-SHPA is already under way. SESRIC through its Ibn Sina Capacity Building Programme will take an active role in the implementation of the OIC-SHPA.

The frequency, scale and long-term impact of natural disasters have increased substantially over the past decades, threatening hard-won development gains of developing countries, including those in OIC membership. It is in the same spirit that the Istanbul Programme of Action for LDCs (2011) includes the reduction of disaster risks as one of its priority areas for action. In cognizance of the multi-dimensionality and cross-cutting structure of this phenomenon, and its requirement for a more integrated approach, in 2013, the SESRIC, together with the IDB, prepared a comprehensive study titled “Managing Disasters and Conflicts in OIC Member Countries,” whereby the Centre identified priority actions for an effective engagement with the most vulnerable people in the crisis-laden and disaster-prone OIC member countries with a view to increasing their resilience to disasters and conflicts.

One very last, but not the least, SESRIC initiative I would like to mention is in the area of statistics. As we all know, without accurate, timely, reliable and comparable statistics, no specific, measurable and realistic targets for development could be set, and without these targets, no achievable strategy could be devised. In 2010, SESRIC, in collaboration with the Islamic Development Bank (IDB), facilitated the establishment of the OIC Statistical Commission (OIC-StatCom) which brings together all the heads of National Statistical Organisations (NSOs) annually. The OIC-StatCom aims to promote statistical data production and dissemination in OIC countries according to the internationally accepted metrics and increase the role of statistics in evidence-based policy making, by leveraging on the knowledge and expertise of the NSOs of the OIC member countries. In addition to this initiative, SESRIC has realised a lot of training programmes on statistics in the NSOs of our member countries through its Statistics Capacity Building Programme.

Before concluding, I would like to express our commitment as SESRIC to continue enhancing knowledge and experience sharing in facilitating and strengthening cooperation among our member countries, and I am confident that with active involvement of the partner organisations and institutions we can extend and enrich our activities for more benefits to developing countries.

Thank you for your kind attention.