

Enhancing Statistical Capacity Building Programmes in the OIC Member Countries

Excellencies, Honourable Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Assalamu Alaikum wa Rahmatullahi wa Barakatuhu,

At the outset I would like to extend my thanks and appreciation to H.E. Hamad bin Jaber B.J. AL Thani, President of the Qatar Statistics Authority for organizing and hosting this important conference. Also, I would like to express my sincere thanks and appreciation to the International Statistics Institute for establishing this Committee under the name of the great scholar and mathematician Al-Khawarezmi who invented algorithms in mathematics.

Distinguished Delegates,

I believe that the slogan of the conference which is "Statistics for Evidence-based Policy and Decision Making" is reflecting a very important point since the accurate, timely, reliable and consistent statistical data and information is of an utmost importance for policymaking and strategy development in any country. The role of the National Statistical Organisations (NSOs) in preparing and making such statistical data available is highly instrumental in helping the decision-makers develop and design prudent socio-economic development policies and strategies.

In this context, the NSOs of the member countries of the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC) have widely different capacities; some of the member countries have very high quality and cutting-edge operational capacities, but some others, particularly the least-developed members, are lacking the necessary technical and human capacities for producing statistical data in accordance with the relevant internationally-accepted statistical standards. The development of concrete and coherent National Strategies for the Development of Statistics (NSDS) should, therefore, be given special attention. The NSDS should be designed based on an adequate framework for building and sustaining the national statistical capacities of the NSOs to enable them to produce and analyse national statistics for better development policies and strategies in the country.

For this reason, the Statistical, Economic and Social Research and Training Centre for Islamic Countries (SESRIC), a subsidiary organ of the OIC, gives special importance to the development of NSDS in OIC member countries. In this respect, the Centre reviewed the current situation in the OIC member countries regarding the NSDS. Based on this review, there is an attempt to shed light on the major needs and capacities of the NSOs of the OIC member countries.

Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen,

The "*National Strategies for the Development of Statistics Progress Report*" of PARIS21 presents the status of National Strategies for the Development of Statistics (NSDS) in 79 countries in different regions around the world. Among these countries, 45 are member countries of the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC). In addition, the *World Bank Bulletin Board on Statistical Capacity* provides the similar information for Kazakhstan and Turkey, and, finally, Qatar presents the status of its NSDS at the web site of *Statistics Authority*.

Accordingly, we can say that, currently, we have relevant information on the status of the NSDS in 48 OIC member countries. As shown in the slide, 30 of these countries (i.e. 62.5% of the total) are currently implementing a strategy; 4 countries (8.3% of the total) are currently designing a strategy or awaiting adoption; 13 countries (27.1% of the total) have expired strategies or without strategy but currently planning strategies, and only one country (2.1% of the total) is found to be without a strategy and nor planning one.

On the other hand, it is possible to find information on the partner countries and/or institutions that supported statistics either financially or non-financially in the countries in years 2009 and 2010. These information are available at the “country activities” page in the web site of Paris21. As shown in the slide, These information are available on 45 OIC member countries.

As can be noticed, except Turkey, the list of the partner countries does not include other OIC member countries. This does not mean that the other OIC member countries do not support each other but rather it means that they do not report their activities to PARIS21. For this reason, I believe that in order to show the intra-OIC cooperation to the world, OIC member countries should also report on their supports to each other to PARIS21.

In another related issue, the World Bank has been preparing and publishing a statistical capacity index since 2004. This index is available for 46 OIC member countries. If the value of the index of a country increases throughout the years, this means that this country is doing quite well. The opposite case means there are things to be done. Based on this index, the 46 OIC member countries, for which the index is available, are classified accordingly.

In this context, I believe that there is a possibility of two initiatives that should be emphasized. The first one is producing an alternative statistical capacity index specific to OIC member countries. World Bank is the only institution producing a statistical capacity index. However, it is possible that rather than depending on the index of the World Bank to analyse the statistical capacities of the OIC member countries, an alternative index specific to OIC member countries can be produced.

To do that, initially, an experts group meeting can be organized where details of a questionnaire to get the relevant information from the member countries can be discussed. Moreover, the group can discuss on the calculation methodology of the best index. As the second step, the questionnaire can be sent to the member countries and depending on the responses the index can be calculated. Finally, depending on the outcomes policies to improve statistical capacities of the member countries can be developed.

Second possible initiative related to this issue is designing Coaching Programmes. As I stated before, OIC member countries are already classified as either doing quite well or there are things to be done depending on the statistical capacity index of the World Bank. Instead of depending on the statistical capacity index specific to OIC member countries, NSOs which have a NSDS and which are under the category doing quite well can coach the NSOs which either do not have a NSDS or have a NSDS but under the category there are things to be done.

Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen,

In addition to these possible initiatives, I would like to inform you about an existing very important initiative of SESRIC which is Statistical Capacity Building (StatCaB) Programme for the NSOs of the member countries. It is a long-term training programme and large scale capacity development project designed, steered, and fully funded by SESRIC. This program is essentially a twinning program whereby the countries are matched according to their needs and capacities. It involves collecting

information from the NSOs of the OIC member countries, assessing the needs and capacities of the member countries, matching these needs and capacities through organising short-term training programs, courses or workshops, evaluating the outcomes and impacts of the training, and disseminating the activities.

The StatCaB programme was initiated in early 2007. The first round training courses of 2007 and 2008 were designed based on the responses to the surveys that were sent to the OIC member countries in 2006. In 2008, SESRIC implemented a new round of surveys on statistical capacity, and the responses to this set of surveys shaped the 2009 and 2010 StatCaB programmes. Training courses were given to hundreds of NSO staff from 17 OIC member countries in 2007 through 2010. The subjects of these courses and the matchings can be seen in the two slides. In this context, I encourage the NSOs of the member countries to respond the surveys sent to them in order to determine their capacities and needs for the Centre to increase the number of activities within StatCaB programme. This can easily be done by downloading the questionnaire from the web site of SESRIC.

In addition to capacity building, SESRIC also facilitates building of platforms to enhance cooperation among the NSOs of the OIC member countries. In this regard, SESRIC organizes two important series of meetings annually. The first one is a side event of the sessions of the United Nations Statistical Commission, which are held in New York annually. Secondly, SESRIC organizes the sessions of OIC Statistical Commission (OIC-SC) annually in collaboration with the Islamic Development Bank (IDB). In these meetings, the NSOs of the OIC member countries find an opportunity to exchange views and to seek mechanisms to enhance their cooperation on statistical activities. In this context, I encourage and call upon the NSOs of the all OIC member countries to actively participate in these two important annual meetings.

Another important platform initiated by SESRIC and IDB is the OIC Statistical Working Group (OIC-SWG), where relevant OIC Institutions and NSOs of some member countries meet regularly to harmonize statistical activities, exchange experiences and best practices, and develop common methodologies for collecting and processing data. SESRIC reports on the activities of this working group to the Ministerial Session of the Standing Committee for Economic and Commercial Cooperation of the Organization of the Islamic Conference (COMCEC), thereby facilitating a higher awareness for enhancing national statistical systems in the OIC member countries.

Last but not least, SESRIC is also in charge of the online OIC-SWG Newsletter, which is published twice a year, with the aim of reaching out to a broader audience and communicating the developments and initiatives that take place at different OIC institutions in the area of statistical capacity building. The OIC-SWG Newsletter covers the news about the statistical activities of OIC-SWG, OIC institutions, the NSOs of the OIC member countries, and other relevant international organisations. In this context, I encourage the NSOs of the member countries to provide information about the developments at their institutions to the OIC-SWG Newsletter.

Distinguished Delegates,

I would like, once again, to express my deep gratitude to the organizing committee for organizing and being host to this memorable conference. I wish you all the success in your deliberations and thank you for your attention.