

**Welcoming Statement by Ambassador Musa Kulaklıkaya, Director General of SESRIC,
at the Second Network Meeting of OIC Public Employment Services
Ankara, Turkey, 27-28 September 2016**

**Your Excellency, Minister of Labour and Social Security of the Republic of Turkey,
Distinguished Delegates of OIC Member States,
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 “Second Network Meeting of the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) Public Employment Services”, which we have the pleasure to organize it in collaboration with the Turkish Employment Agency (İŞKUR) of the Ministry of Labour and Social Security of the Republic of Turkey.

At the outset, I would like to welcome and thank you all for accepting our invitation and designating your valuable time to attend and participate in the deliberations of this important gathering. Our thanks and appreciations are also extended to the Ministry of Labour and Social Security of the Republic of Turkey for their hospitality and contribution to the organization of the meeting.

Your Excellencies, distinguished participants, ladies and gentlemen

I am excited about being here and I extend greetings to all of you. As we are all aware, since the global economic and financial crisis that has stalled the world economic growth, governments around the world have been pursuing different policies to boost demand, increase investments and stimulate growth. These policies might have avoided an even significant impact on the economies, but slow-moving growth rates became inevitable over the succeeding years, with significant repercussions on many fronts. Employment and job creation became a serious concern in many countries due to diminishing prospects on demand, investment and growth, and these countries faced major challenges in their labour markets. While countries were struggling to correct these abnormalities by taking various countermeasures, rising unemployment and lowering productivity levels were creating

further troubles for policy-makers. A heavy price has been already paid in terms of lost jobs, reduced hours and associated income losses. In response to these challenges, interventions at labour market mostly concentrated on training, reductions in working hours and job search assistance. However, since the onset of the crisis, global unemployment could not be contained and remain well above the pre-crisis level.

Nevertheless, unemployment remains as one of the most challenging matters across the world. Unemployment occurs due to inadequate number of job creation or skills mismatch in the economy and high unemployment is generally associated with low participation rates mainly due to the same reasons, but also due to low level of qualifications, discrimination in employment and low wages. According to the ILO World Employment and Social Outlook 2015 report, almost 202 million people were unemployed in 2014 around the world, with 1.2 million additional unemployed compared with the previous year and about 31 million more compared with 2007. This reflects the fact that employment is not expanding adequately fast to keep up with the growing labour force. Whereas, around 23 million people estimated to have dropped out of the labour market due to discouragement and rising long-term unemployment. The report also argues that the global unemployment rate remained at 5.9% of the global labour force that is 0.1 percentage point lower than the year before.

Your Excellencies, distinguished participants, ladies and gentlemen

In response to the negative impacts of the aforementioned problems, the public employment authorities of OIC Member Countries convened the First Meeting on Public Employment Services in Ankara in April 2014 in order to develop solutions for common problems and explore collaboration opportunities to overcome shared challenges in labour market. For the continuous and systematic sharing of knowledge and experience the relevant authorities decided to establish a formal Network titled as "OIC Public Employment Services Network (OIC-PESNET) among their respective institutions in order to improve the overall condition of their labour market through various types of activities, initiative, projects and programmes. As you may recall, during the said first meeting, SESRIC was entrusted to undertake the role of the Secretariat to represent, publicize and raise awareness in both OIC and international level, and ease the communication among the members of the Network.

Pursuing the decisions taken at the First Network Meeting of OIC Public Employment Services, SESRIC prepared the OIC Labour Market Report, and launched it during the Third Islamic Conference of Labour Ministers, which was held in Jakarta, Indonesia in October 2015. This report analyses the current state of labour market in OIC countries and addresses some of the key related issues which still constitute major challenges for them in this important area. These include skills development and employability, job creation and youth employment, social protection and safety, and participation and migration. A copy of the report is provided in the meeting materials.

Your Excellencies, distinguished participants, ladies and gentlemen

I would like to briefly inform you about some selected initiatives undertaken by SESRIC with regard to skill development and employment.

Considering that vocational education and training (VET) is one of the powerful responses to unemployment problems in OIC Member Countries and enhances employability and employment opportunities, the Vocational Education and Training Programme for the OIC Member Countries (OIC-VET) being executed by SESRIC, could assist member countries and supplement their activities. Overall, the OIC-VET Programme aims at improving the competencies and skills of the people according to the needs and priorities of labour markets through intra-OIC partnerships at institutional level. The Programme focuses on increasing accessibility and raising the quality of VET, and provides an opportunity for organizations involved in VET to build OIC partnerships, exchange best practices, increase the expertise of their staff and develop the skills and competencies of the participants. Currently, SESRIC collaborates with national excellence centres in selected member countries for improving the VET, through elaboration of curriculum for vocational trainings and organizing training programmes for the trainers in various vocational fields, and promoting the exchange of trainees and trainers among OIC Member Countries.

The OIC Capacity Building Programme for Public Employment Services (OIC-PESCaB), initiated by SESRIC as a long-term training programme and large scale capacity development project, which aims at collecting information from member countries through questionnaires, assessing the needs and capacities accordingly, and matching these needs and capacities through organizing short term training programs, courses or workshops. Besides,

the Centre evaluates the outcomes and impacts of the training and disseminates the activities. Since the inception of the programme two training courses have been organised by SESRIC, namely, a training course on “Job Creation for Youth and Skills Training Services” in Azerbaijan provided by Turkey, and another training course on “Labour Market Statistics” and “Labour Inspection” in Burkina Faso provided by Senegal. SESRIC highly appreciates your valued cooperation and urges all countries to participate in the Capacity Building Programme for Public Employment Services in order to effectively plan and implement training activities which will, no doubt, add to the specialisation efforts of experts i in general and play an important role in the improvement of the public employment services in the member countries.

Furthermore, the Centre under the OIC-VET Programme has involved in some projects and initiatives with respect to employment. Just to name some of them; Islamic University in Uganda (IUIU) Vocational Training Centre Project has been started by Islamic University in Uganda, one of the Universities of OIC, in corporation with SESRIC, Islamic Development Bank (IDB), TIKa, and Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality Life Long Learning Centre (ISMEK). The aim of the Project is to assure training programmes for trainers by organising training modules regarding specific branches which are of high importance to improve Uganda in terms of improving qualified personnel for vocational training.

We do also have common initiatives with the arms of United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). A Tripartite Partnership on Skills Development for Sustainable and Inclusive Growth with UNDP Istanbul International Center for Private Sector in Development and Islamic Development Bank that is a South-South Cooperation in the area of skills development and entrepreneurship while utilizing Turkey’s knowledge and know-how. The goal of the partnership is to enhance private sector ownership and engagement in skills development for sustainable jobs. This is expected to boost economic growth and competitiveness through building a skilled and market-driven human resource base. At the same time, acquisition of the demanded skills in the market will improve the employability of a wide range of disadvantaged social groups. Additionally, working on developing and disseminating a skills project managers training that would address the managerial gap in designing and implementing skill interventions and collaboration on the economic integration of Syrian refugees through skills and employability.

Moreover, The Bina Initiative Program in collaboration with Libyan Government and Islamic Development Banks also aims at creating new job opportunities in Libya through establishing SME Incubators for Libyan Companies. The Program also involves several trainings on different subjects, including public management and governance, for civil servants, experts, journalists, and members of NGOs.

Your Excellencies, distinguished participants

Yet the unemployment in our Member Countries is essentially a national one, however, since economic cooperation is a main pillar of the OIC as an institution, and the ultimate aim of this cooperation is the wellbeing of the people in the member countries, the widespread unemployment in the least-developed and low-income member countries seems to be inconsistent with this objective. The problem of unemployment in the OIC community and the strategies for its reduction should be considered with a new vision at both the individual country and OIC cooperation levels. The objectives for and the efforts to address employment in our member countries should be outlined specifically in the national employment strategies, but through a process of creating a supportive OIC environment.

In this spirit, we came together today in this gathering to deliberate and exchange our views and expertise on important aspects of cooperation in the field of Labour. I am confident that through the deliberations you will hold, and the recommendations and proposals, you will contribute significantly to the efforts of the OIC and its Member Countries towards eradicating or reducing unemployment in their societies and, ultimately, approximate the collective welfare for the Islamic Ummah. As we all look forward to the successful outcome of the Second Network Meeting of the OIC Public Employment Services, I wish you all the success.

Thank you for your kind attention.

Wassalamu Alaykum we Rahmatullahi we Barakatuh