

Statement of H.E. Mr. Nebil Dabur, Director General of SESRIC

At the Panel Session on “Prospects and Challenges in Halal Tourism in the Islamic World”

Second International Halal Congress

4 April 2019, Antalya, Republic of Turkey

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

**Excellencies,
Distinguished participants, ladies and gentlemen,
Assalamu Alaykum wa Rahmatullahi wa Barakatuhu**

At the outset, I would like to welcome you all to this Panel Session on “Prospects and Challenges in Halal Tourism in the Islamic World”, which we are pleased to organize it during the Second International Halal Congress. I would like here to thank our esteemed panellists from the OIC Member Countries and the distinguished participants for accepting our invitation to participate in this panel session. My thanks are also extended to Kastamonu University, International Halal Tourism Organization (IHATO), Turkish Cooperation and Coordination Agency (TIKA) and Halal Accreditation Agency (HAK) for taking part in the organization of this important Congress in this beautiful city of Antalya.

Distinguished participants, ladies and gentlemen,

Over the last few decades, tourism has become an important component of the global economy and the projections show that it will remain as an engine of growth. Moreover, tourism sector is expected to contribute significantly to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals in many countries and regions around the world. The number of tourists traveling across the world has continued to hit new records for international tourism and positioning it as one of largest sectors of the world’s economy.

Given the importance role of tourism sector in the development of its member states, the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) has since 2000 organized ten sessions of tourism ministers to foster intra-OIC cooperation in this important sector. During these high-level sessions, several important resolutions and initiatives were adopted. Among others, the OIC has recently adopted a “Strategic Plan for Development of Islamic Tourism” in OIC countries.

SESRIC, as a subsidiary organ of the OIC mandated the work in the areas of statistics, socio-economic research and training, has introduced and implemented over the years many programmes and activities in the domain of tourism for the benefit of the OIC Member Countries. In the area of research, we regularly prepare a report titled “International Tourism in the OIC Countries: Prospects and Challenges” as the main technical background document for the sessions of the Islamic Conference of Tourism Ministers. The report offers a comprehensive analysis of the state of international tourism in OIC countries by looking into the latest comparable data and trends on key tourism indicators. In the most two recent editions of the report, we have started to dedicate a section on the topic of Islamic tourism in order to assess the potential and performance of the OIC countries in this important new trend in the tourism sector.

In addition to our International Tourism Report, SESRIC also played a great role in the preparation process of the “Strategic Roadmap for the Development of Islamic Tourism in OIC Member Countries”. This strategic document aimed to develop a framework in order to provide a systematic approach to promote cooperation among the member countries in this area and specifies the needed actions for enhancing this cooperation.

In the domain of statistics, SESRIC collects and disseminates statistics on seven major tourism indicators for OIC countries. These indicators are regularly updated and available in the Centre’s main statistical database “OIC Statistics (OIC-Stat) Database”. The Centre also contributes through its flagship Statistical Capacity Building Programme (StatCab) to enhancing the statistical capacities of SNOs of the member countries in the domain of tourism statistics.

We at SESRIC have also given a special importance to training and capacity building activities in the domain of tourism. In this regard, SESRIC organizes training programmes and activities on various technical aspects related to the tourism sector in order to facilitate the transfer and exchange of knowledge, know-how and experiences among the member countries in the field of tourism.

In particular, over the last few years SESRIC organized training programmes in the domain of Islamic tourism to improve the capacities of public institutions and officials of OIC countries. For instance, in 2017, we organized a training programme on “Development and Promotion of Muslim Friendly Tourism” with the participation of the senior level officials from 15 OIC

countries in Ankara, Turkey. In 2018, we organized two training programmes in Malatya, Turkey and Tashkent, Uzbekistan in this domain.

Distinguished participants, ladies and gentlemen,

Over the last two decades, Islamic tourism has emerged as a new sub-niche market in the international tourism market. An increasing number of Muslims across the world prefer using tourism facilities that are Shariah compliant and provide services in line with the Islamic principles. Islamic tourism goes beyond simply removing alcohol from hotel facilities or providing a prayer rug in a hotel room. It is a broad concept that covers many pillars from organizing tours by observing prayer times to designing family friendly common facilities with some privacy in hotel establishments. Therefore there is a need for all tourism stakeholders, including as public institutions responsible for tourism, tour operators, hotel managements, religious authorities, and academicians, to collaborate to unleash the potentials of Islamic tourism in OIC countries.

Before concluding, I would like to assure you that, as SESRIC, we will continue our efforts to promote Islamic tourism knowledge, capacities and best practices in our member countries through different cooperation modalities.

I wish you all a fruitful discussion and thank you once again.

Wassalamu Alaykum wa Rahmatullahi wa Barakatuhu.