



**Welcoming Speech by Ambassador Musa Kulaklikaya, Director
General of
SESRIC, at the Workshop on “Exploring tourism Potential of Al
Quds Al Sherif City”
24-25 November 2015, Istanbul, Turkey**

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

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Dear.....

Dear

Dear distinguished participants,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Assalamu Alaikum wa Rahmatullahi wa Barakatuhu,



On behalf of The Statistical, Economic and Social Research and Training Centre for Islamic Countries (SESRIC), as a subsidiary organ of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, it gives me a great pleasure to welcome all of you to the Workshop on **Exploring Tourism Potential of Al Quds Al Sherif City**. I also feel the distinct pleasure in welcoming not only the representatives of Member Countries of the OIC, but also the international organizations and academicians among us. At the outset, I would like to thank you all for accepting the invitation and designating time to attend and participate in the deliberations of this important workshop. We hope that every one of you would benefit from coming here.



Al Quds Al Sherif City, Jerusalem or *Baitul-Maqdis* which means "The Noble, Sacred Place" is a city as old as the history and perhaps the only city in the world that is considered historically and spiritually significant to Jews, Christians, and Muslims alike. Al Quds Al Sherif is known as the land of many prophets such as Abraham, Moses, David, Solomon, and [Jesus](#) - peace be upon them all. This city was the first [Qiblah](#) for Muslims - the place toward which Muslims turn in prayer and it is Al Quds Al Sherif that Hazrat Muhammad (peace be upon him) visited during his night journey and ascension (called *Isra'* and *Mi'raj*).



With this rich and great history in Al Quds Al Sharif, culture and heritage there is a high potential in tourism, which is still untapped. Sustainable Tourism development in this City not only helps to preserve its authenticity and heritage but also it is a tool to empower the Palestinian residents, since it will result in many positive economic, social, cultural and environmental impacts.

With reference to SESRIC's "Recommendations and Proposals For supporting The Palestinian People in Al-quds Al-sharif city, which is published last year in the format of a report, tourism contributes more to the economy of the East Jerusalem because of the city's paramount spiritual significance simultaneously for Muslims, Christians and Jews. According to the PCBS' data for 2012, in East



Jerusalem there were 41 hotels and 1633 number of rooms with an average occupancy rate of 35%, representing a significant increase compared to only 19.7% of occupancy rate in 2002. It is estimated that together with internal trade, tourism enterprises such as hotels and restaurants account for 25% of the employed labor force in the city of Jerusalem amounting to around 6674 people, second to the services sector which employed around 32% of the labour force in 2010. However, albeit the contribution of hotels and restaurants to the economy of the East Jerusalem declined in the post-second intifada period, it has been recovering during the last few years.



Distinguished participants,

Ladies and gentlemen,

SESRIC feels honored to organize this two days' workshop on "Exploring Tourism Potential of Al Quds Al Sherif City" in collaboration with Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities of Palestine. We believe, by sharing the views and ideas, a valuable step can be taken forward in exploring the potential of tourism in Al Quds Al Sherif City and a better Sustainable Tourism Development Planning.



In this connection, I would like to make use of this opportunity to brief you on some selected SESRIC activities in the field of tourism, as the current workshop is one example for that. SESRIC undertakes strong and close cooperation and collaboration with the most relevant international and regional organizations with a view to provide high-level training opportunities to people from OIC Member States. In doing so, the Department organizes short-term training courses, workshops and seminars in various fields and areas of interest to the member countries and **OIC Tourism Capacity Building Programme (Tr-CaB)** is the Program where these tourism activities are under that.



SESRIC undertakes research activities on various issues of concern to the OIC member countries with a view to analyzing the prevailing situation at the OIC level and suggesting the appropriate policy actions that need to be taken in order to face the challenges and strengthen the intra-Islamic cooperation in the concerned areas. In so doing, the Centre undertakes extensive assignments to prepare technical background reports and papers on several issues placed on the agenda of various related OIC conferences and meetings. In this regard, **Report on “International Tourism in the OIC Countries: Prospects and Challenges”** is one of them which is prepared as background reports to the Islamic Conference of Ministers of Tourism. A copy of this report is available here for distribution.



SESRIC is also responsible for collecting, processing and disseminating socio-economic statistics and information on and for the utilization of the OIC Member Countries. The SESRIC **BASEIND** (**BA**sic **S**ocial and **E**conomic **I**NDicators) Database provides data on 313 socio-economic variables under 19 categories for the 57 OIC Member Countries dating back to 1970. The content of this database is regularly updated and enriched based on information collected from the national and international statistical sources. In the field of tourism, the data is available on seven different economic indicators.

Distinguished participants,

Ladies and gentlemen,



The current workshop is organized within the framework of the “Strategic Plan for the Development of the City of Al-Quds” in the 12th Session of the Islamic Conference Summit held in Cairo on 6-7 February 2013. This Plan gives special importance to the tourism sector in the Al Quds Al Sherif City by devoting 22% of the total projects fund to tourism. In addition to that Al Quds Al Sherif City was selected as the OIC City of Tourism 2015 by the Coordination Committee on the Implementation of the “Framework for Development and Cooperation in the Domain of Tourism among OIC Member States” according to the Resolution of the 8th Session of the Conference of Ministers of Tourism (ICTM) held on 21-23 December 2013 in Banjul, Gambia.



This workshop has been designed to be practical with exercises to provide skills, encourage participation and exchange information with a view to determining ways and modalities for tapping into the tourism potential in Al Quds Al Sherif City and formulating concrete recommendations for action at the OIC level. As representatives of relevant ministries, institutions and organizations in the member countries, we will share the discussions and deliberations and exchange our views on various related aspects to the theme of this workshop.



The workshop is expected to generate concrete and implementable recommendations and project proposals for enhancing the tourism potential of Al Quds Al Sherif City that can be presented to the 9th Session of the Islamic Conference of Tourism Ministers (ICTM) to be hosted by Niger in December 2015.

In this spirit, I am confident that the deliberations you will hold and the recommendations and proposals you will make will be highly instrumental in developing a framework for tourism development in Al Quds Al Sherif. As we all look forward to a successful outcome of this workshop, I wish you all the success in your deliberations.



With these few remarks, I thank you for listening to me and wish you a productive and successful workshop.

I want to say once more on behalf of SESRIC, welcome. It is a pleasure to see so many of you here.

Thank you for your kind attention.

Wassalamu Alaykum we Rahmatullahi we Barakatuhu

