

Opening Statement

*Regional Workshop on
“Tourism Statistics & Tourism Satellite Accounts”
2-4 December 2014, Ankara, Republic of Turkey*

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم

Distinguished Participants,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Assalamu Alaikum wa Rahmatullahi wa Barakatuhu,

It is a great pleasure to welcome you all at SESRIC Headquarters on the occasion of the Regional Workshop on “Tourism Statistics and Tourism Satellite Accounts”. We are very pleased to organize this important workshop in collaboration with the Standing Committee for Economic and Commercial Cooperation (COMCEC) Coordination Office and United Nations World Tourism Organisation (UNWTO).

At the outset, I would like to thank you all for accepting our invitation to attend and participate in the workshop. Our thanks and appreciations are also extended to COMCEC Coordination Office and UNWTO for their efforts in supporting and contributing to the organization of the Workshop.

Distinguished Participants,

The definition by the UNWTO for international tourism comprises the activities of individuals travelling to and staying at places outside their usual permanent places of residence for a period not exceeding 12 months for leisure, business and other purposes. In fact, international tourism is a remarkable socio-economic phenomenon and one of the world’s largest industries and categories of international services trade. All the activities that are

directly/indirectly involved in providing goods and services include transportation and communication, hotels and lodging, food and beverages, cultural activities and entertainment, banking and finance, promotion and publicity services. Given the magnitude of sectors it either directly or indirectly deals with, international tourism is one of the vital contributors in the economic development of developing countries.

From a statistical standpoint, international tourism activities have been growing worldwide at substantial and sustainable rates in terms of both tourist arrivals and tourism receipts over the last five decades. The number of international tourist arrivals worldwide enlarged from 69.3 million in 1960 to 1.1 billion in 2013, corresponding to an average annual growth rate of 5.3%. The international tourism receipts in terms of current US dollar prices made a jump from \$7 billion to \$1.2 trillion in the same period, corresponding to an average annual growth rate of 10.2%; a rate which was significantly higher than that of the world economy as a whole.

International tourism activity is also characterised by a continuing geographical spread and diversification of tourist destinations. In this context, although tourism activity is still observed to concentrate in the developed regions of Europe and the Americas, a substantial growth of new tourist-receiving markets is also observed in many developing countries, including a significant number of OIC member countries. According to the UNWTO data, the two traditional tourist-receiving regions of Europe and the Americas attracted, together, 71 per cent of the world's total tourist arrivals in 2006. Yet, by 2012, this share declined to 67.3 per cent in favour of the developing regions of Asia & Pacific, the Middle East and Africa. As an important source of foreign exchange earnings and employment in many of these countries, tourism has been given more attention in the national development strategies of many

developing countries and placed on the agenda of many recent international conferences on sustainable development.

Distinguished Participants,

As a substantial part of the developing countries, international tourism activity in the OIC member countries has been also growing substantially in terms of both tourist arrivals and tourism receipts. The number of international tourist arrivals into the OIC countries increased from 72.2 million in 2000 to 166 million in 2011, corresponding to an average annual growth rate of 7.2%. Similarly, tourism receipts in OIC member countries increased from \$38 billion in 2000 to \$126.6 billion in 2011, corresponding to an average annual growth rate of 10.6%.

In fact, as a group, OIC countries have a high potential for the development of a sustainable international tourism sector. This is particularly true not only due to their rich and diverse natural, geographical, historical and cultural heritage assets, but also due to the fact that their citizens travel in large numbers around the world for business, leisure, and other purposes. However, given the relatively modest share of the OIC region in the world tourism market and the concentration of international tourism activity in only a few OIC countries, it seems that a large part of the tourism potential of the OIC region remains unutilised.

In fact, the problems and challenges facing tourism and the development of a sustainable tourism sector in the OIC countries are diverse and range from the lack of technical know-how and weak promotional and public awareness to insufficient tourism-related infrastructures, investments and the lack of tourism diversification and safety. Evidence based decision making as a facilitator in solving the aforementioned shortcomings and better inform the relevant

tourism policies necessitates good quality, comparable, timely, reliable, and accessible data.

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Given its relevance for cooperation among the OIC Member Countries, tourism has been identified as one of the six priority areas for cooperation in the recently adopted COMCEC Strategy with the strategic objective of developing a sustainable and competitive tourism sector in the OIC region. To achieve strategic objectives defined in the COMCEC Strategy, COMCEC Coordination Office launched the COMCEC Project Cycle Management (PCM) Programme in 2013.

As is the case in other fields and areas of cooperation among OIC member countries, our Centre developed the project titled “Improving Statistical Capacities of Tourism Sector” which aims at building statistical capacity in tourism statistics and overall contributing to the National Statistical Systems (NSS) of the OIC member countries through capacity building programmes including short-term trainings and a regional workshop. Our project was among the fifteen projects that were approved by COMCEC Coordination Office for funding.

During the last 2 months, six short-term short term trainings have been conducted in Albania, Jordan, Oman, Qatar, Tunisia and United Arab Emirates. 82 participants attended these trainings and tourism statistics experience between provider and beneficiary countries was exchanged during the sessions. We thank the National Statistics Offices and Tourism Authorities of Egypt, Jordan and Turkey for providing their experts to contribute in the efforts of beneficiary countries in developing their tourism statistics infrastructure.

Within the framework of the same project and through the valuable support of the COMCEC Coordination Office, a Regional Workshop on Tourism Statistics and Tourism Satellite Accounts is being organized by our Centre in collaboration with the UNWTO with the participation of more than 60 experts from 33 OIC Member Countries spanning from Suriname in the West to Indonesia in the East. As you all know, the three-day Workshop will cover mainly the issues of System of Tourism Statistics, Inbound, Outbound and Domestic Tourism Statistics, Tourism Expenditure Statistics, Tourism Industries Statistics, Employment in the Tourism Industries, and Tourism Satellite Accounts and give the opportunity to exchange your best practices concerning the aforementioned activities.

Besides the aforementioned efforts of SESRIC, our Centre has been implementing the Statistical Capacity Building (StatCaB) Programme for the OIC Member Countries since 2007. Aiming at both being cost-effective and bringing the experts of both beneficiary and provider countries together to facilitate exchange of experiences based on a twinning approach, the StatCaB Programme, since its initiation, has contributed to the efforts of our Member Countries in leveraging their statistical capacities by organizing around 80 short-term trainings for which 15 OIC Member Countries provided their experts for the benefit of 33 OIC Member Countries.

Distinguished Participants,

Before concluding, I would like to mention that we will continue to organize statistical capacity building programmes in collaboration with the relevant international and regional agencies to contribute to the efforts in bringing about a sound infrastructure for tourism statistics.

At the end, I wish you all the success. Thank you for your kind attention.

Wassalamu Alaykum we Rahmatullahi we Barakatuhu