Second Expert Group Meeting on

Enhancing National Capacities of OIC Member Countries in Poverty Statistics

19-20 November 2014 ; Ankara – Turkey

Opening Remarks

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم

Distinguished participants,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Assalamu Alaikum wa Rahmatullahi wa Barakatuhu,

At the outset, I would like to welcome and thank you all for accepting our invitation to attend and participate in the deliberations of the Second Expert Group Meeting on Enhancing National Capacities of OIC Member Countries in Poverty Statistics. I also want to extend our sincere thanks and appreciations to the COMCEC for supporting our project on "Enhancing National Capacities of OIC Member Countries in Poverty Statistics" which was listed among the 15 projects entitled to receive financial grants within the framework of COMCEC PCM mechanism.

As we are all aware, poverty is still considered as one of the most serious challenges facing humanity today. It is a complicated multi-dimensional phenomenon as a result of a complex socio-economic and political structure of a particular country. Poverty is more than poor people; it is associated with poor economies, poor human resources, poor social services provision, and poor policies to tackle the challenges facing human and socio-economic development. Therefore, the status, the determinants, and the policy measures required to eradicate poverty would, by definition, vary from one country to another.

Distinguished participants,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Over the past two decades, many initiatives have been taken at national, regional and international levels to eradicate poverty and hunger at global level. The most important of which is the unanimous commitment of 191 UN member states to reducing poverty by signing the Millennium Development Declaration in 2000. Accordingly, the world has witnessed significant decrease in poverty. The number of people living below the international poverty line of $1.25 per day has decreased from 1.83 billion in 1990 to 964 million in 2011, corresponding to a decline of 47%. During the same period, the OIC member countries also made significant gains in their fight against poverty and number of people earning $1.25 per day decreased from 396 million in 1990 to 322 million in 2011. As a result, the share of the poor in OIC total population was recorded at 22.3% in 2011 compared to 41.1% in 1990.

Currently, over 1.6 billion people in the world are living in multidimensional poverty, corresponding to 30% of world's total population. The incidence of multidimensional poverty remained comparatively high in OIC member countries with 35% of their total population

living in multidimensional poverty in 2014 compared to 30% in the world and 28% in other developing countries. A total of 465 million people in OIC member countries are considered as multidimensional poor, accounting for 29% of the world total multidimensional poor in 2014. The bulk of those people (83%) are living in member countries located in Sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia. More than half of total population is multi-dimensionally poor in 19 OIC member countries, 16 of them from Sub-Saharan Africa.

As a result, currently, 21 out of the world 48 LDCs are OIC members. Also, out of the world's 39 Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (HIPCs), 21 are OIC member countries. Moreover, according to FAO, out of the world current 55 low income food deficit countries (LIFDCs), 27 are OIC member countries, and according to the latest (2013) UNDP HDI, 24 OIC member countries are placed in the category of Low Human Development countries.

Distinguished participants,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

In fact, these figures indicate that the impacts of poverty have still been spreading far and wide in many OIC member countries, particularly in the Least-developed and low-income countries. In most of these countries, poverty has been on such a large scale that it has become a structural phenomenon of human deprivation in terms of hunger, malnutrition, diseases, illiteracy, and low level and quality of consumption of hundreds of millions of people. The mass poverty in the majority of these countries is a product of complex structural processes embedded in their political economy. Within this complexity, identifying the key causes of poverty should be considered as a crucial precondition for formulating effective anti-poverty strategies.

Progress in eradicating monetary poverty has remained highly uneven across the OIC member countries. And incidence of poverty, both in terms of monetary and multidimensional poverty, remained very high especially in low and lower middle income countries located in Sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia regions. If these countries are to reduce poverty or to judge how their national socio-economic policies affect it, they need to know a lot about their poor. It is important to know who the poor are; where they live; what assets they command; what their education, health and housing conditions are; and what economic opportunities are available to them. It is not possible to imagine sustainable socio-economic development in these countries without a significant rise in the standard of living of the neediest segments of the population in terms of consumption, health, housing, and education. Investing in people must, therefore, be the highest priority for these countries as long as human capital limitations restrain growth or keep people in the state of poverty.

A major concern, however, is availability and quality of good quality statistics which has a crucial role in the fight against poverty as policy based decision making and target monitoring depends on the provision of benchmark data. Data on poverty are severely limited both in terms of frequency and coverage. Enhancing national capacities in poverty statistics must, therefore, be the highest priority for these countries. Without such data, policies and programmes with effective engagement strategies for the poor cannot be undertaken. There is also increasing interest towards multidimensional measures of poverty, but again this requires

substantial amount of data. In this context, there is a need for both an in-depth analysis on the state, causes and consequences of poverty as well as assessment of statistical capacities for proper measurement of poverty in the member countries. However, being a multifaceted concept which is not easy to define or measure, measuring poverty is a complex task conceptually and empirically.

The provision of timely, accurate, reliable and consistent data needed for monitoring poverty targets rests on National Statistical Offices (NSO). In this regard, strengthening the capacities within the NSOs of the OIC member countries will not only improve collection and dissemination of poverty statistics but also ease the decision-making process of all stakeholders in the area of poverty alleviation both at the public and private level.

In this regard, the project titled "2013-SESRIC-028 Enhancing National Capacities of OIC Member Countries in Poverty Statistics" aims at building statistical capacity in poverty statistics and overall contributing to the National Statistical Systems (NSS) of the member countries of the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC). Under the framework of the project, SESRIC designed a questionnaire to identify current capacities, priorities and needs of the OIC countries in terms of poverty statistics and circulated this to the National Statistical Offices (NSOs) of 57 OIC Member Countries very recently. Taking this opportunity, I also would like to thank 39 OIC member countries who replied the questionnaire. Based on their answers, this draft report that we will discuss today not only tries to address the major causes of poverty in OIC member countries alongside its socio-economic impacts, but also focusses on the current practices, needs, strengths and challenges of OIC member countries in measuring poverty.

Distinguished participants,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I also would like to mention briefly some of the activities of SESRIC in the area of statistics. Maintaining the main socio-economic information bank (BASEIND) on and for the OIC Member Countries, the Centre gives special attention to providing the necessary statistical data and background information that would make the member countries better informed of each other's potentials and needs and, thus, facilitate their elaboration of cooperation projects and integration schemes.

The Centre also continued its training activities within the framework of its Statistical Capacity Building Programme (StatCaB) through organising training courses on various statistical aspects in the National Statistical Offices (NSOs) of the member countries. In this context, the Centre regularly sends questionnaires to the NSOs of the member countries in order to determine their needs and capacities on various statistical subjects. The Centre, then, arranges training programmes to contribute to the statistical capacity building in the member countries based on the responses of the member countries to these questionnaires.

Additionally, in its capacity as the Secretariat of the OIC Statistical Commission (OIC-StatCom), the Centre organizes annual sessions of this Commission in collaboration with the Islamic Development Bank (IDB) since 2011. Drawing increasing attention of statistical community, OIC-StatCom has become a dynamic and instrumental platform for the National

Statistical Offices (NSOs) of the OIC Member Countries to share and exchange knowledge, experiences and best practices on initiatives that can help them become more effective in managing their national statistical systems and develop better policies.

Distinguished participants,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

We came together today in this meeting to receive your comments and feedback about the draft report on "Enhancing National Capacities of OIC Member Countries in Poverty Statistics". I am confident that your recommendations and proposals will contribute significantly to the improvement of the content of this report, which will ultimately help and support the efforts of the OIC and its member countries towards improving national statistical systems of OIC member countries in the area of poverty statistics and eradicating poverty in their societies. We all know that alleviating poverty necessitates more commitment and efforts by the governments at a higher level on their national development agendas. In this regard, there is also an urgent need for strengthening and enhancing cooperation and collaboration in various poverty related issues at both regional and international level.

Thanking once again all the participants for sparing time to attend this gathering, I wish all the success to this Meeting and pray to Allah Almighty to help us all and guide our steps to achieve prosperity and welfare for the Islamic Ummah.

Wassalamu Alaykum we Rahmatullahi we Barakatuhu