

OPENING STATEMENTS

Dr. Savaş ALPAY, SESRIC, Director General

Bismillahi Ar-Rahmanir-Raheem

Distinguished Participants,

Assalamu Alaikum wa Rahmatullah wa Barakatuh

It is a great pleasure to welcome you, on behalf of SESRIC, to the Second Meeting of Statistical Working Group taking place today at SESRIC Headquarters. I would also like to express our thanks and appreciation to you for honouring our invitation. The First Meeting of Statistical Working Group was held on 25-26 March 2009 at IDB Headquarters. It was the first time in the annals of OIC, where representatives of OIC Institutions dealing with statistical activities were brought together during that Meeting to discuss and put in place a coordination mechanism for achieving greater synergy between OIC Institutions and for better organizing statistical programs and activities with a view to avoiding duplication of efforts and reporting conflicting statistics. It is a great pleasure now to welcome the representatives of some of the National Statistical Offices of the member states as well in addition to the OIC Institutions to get their views on the role of National Statistical Offices in Statistical Working Group.

I do not want to get into details of the progress observed since the First Meeting of the Statistical Working Group since this august committee will be discussing this and the way forward during these two days of the Second Meeting. However, I believe that there are some points which are worth mentioning. Firstly, it is very important that in the history of COMCEC Sessions, coordination of statistical activities at the OIC level took place for the first time in the agenda of COMCEC during the 24th Session of COMCEC which was held in Istanbul on 20-24 October 2008 and the Framework of Statistical Working Group had been presented during the Session.

Secondly, it is very exciting to notice that there is more synergy now among the institutions of OIC. Since the First Meeting of the Statistical Working Group, institutions started sharing their statistical publications for review and feedback before they are printed and released. Moreover, there are links provided to the databases of institutions in the web sites. BASEIND of SESRIC had been started to be used as the main source, rather than World Bank or UN databases, in most of the OIC publications. More than 1000 people are visiting SESRIC web site everyday and most of these visits are to BASEIND. In addition to this, I would like to mention that SESRIC receives many requests of data related to Islamic Countries from various research institutions and universities which shows the acceptance and trust to SESRIC as a provider of data.

Distinguished Guests,

It also gives me great pleasure to observe that the relations with the National Statistical Offices of the member states are improving continuously. The initial steps of improving synergy between the institutions and the National Statistical Offices were taken during the Meeting with the Delegates of National Statistical Offices (NSOs) of the OIC Member States to the 40th Session of UN Statistical Commission which was held on February 26, 2009 in New York. IDB and SESRIC represented Statistical Working Group during that Meeting. Introduction of the new interface of online data submission to the National Statistical Offices during that Meeting was very important and I am very honoured to inform you that some of the countries started to use the interface. One other very important outcome of that Meeting is the decision on organizing regular meetings of National Statistical Offices of the OIC Member States. The first Meeting is planned to be organized during the first quarter of 2010 in Istanbul and it is in the agenda of this Second Meeting of Statistical Working Group to discuss the agenda and work programme of this exciting event.

In concluding, I wish all the success to this Meeting, and may Allah SWT bestow his mercy on the undertakings of this august committee.

Dr. Abdullateef Bello, IDB, Chief of Data Resource Centre

Director General, SESRIC

Distinguished Participants from OIC Institutions and NSOs

Assalaam 'alaikum warahmatullahi wabarakatuh

It is a great honour and privilege for me, on behalf of the Islamic Development Bank, to address this important 2nd Meeting of the Statistical Working Group which begins today in this beautiful city of Ankara, Turkey. I would like to thank and register our appreciation to SESRIC for hosting the meeting, for the generous hospitality we have received, and for all the excellent arrangement made towards the SWG-2.

More than one year ago today, the SWG was set up as a forum for addressing statistical issues, strengthening cooperation, and harmonizing Statistical activities among OIC institutions. It aimed, among other things, to avoid duplication of efforts, cut-cost, and minimize (as much as possible) any discrepancies in data and aggregate figures reported in various Statistical publications released by OIC institutions.

At the first meeting of SWG, held at IDB Headquarters in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia, on 25th March 2008, the participating OIC institutions collectively resolved to work together to take up the challenges of the 21st Century in the realm of statistics especially in the wake of proliferation of initiatives at national, regional, international and institutional levels. The initiatives -such as the MDGs, OIC Ten Year Program of Action and IDB 1440H Vision — present additional tasks for statisticians and Statistical institutions who are required to translate the goals and targets in the initiatives into indices for the purpose of measuring progress of member countries. Between SWG-1 and SWG-2, the world has seen four new crises - food, energy, financial, and economic—all of which require comprehensive, reliable, consistent, accurate and timely data to gauge their impacts, understand the Channel of transmission, and develop adequate policy response.

In today's world, Statistical institutions are facing serious challenges. The demand for data has increased tremendously but the resources available to provide quality data services are limited. Because Statistical institutions do not generate data themselves, they must rely on member countries which are at different development levels to obtain data on various development indicators. In order to encourage these member countries to supply timely data, efforts must be made to assist them to scale up their Statistical capacities which cannot be undertaken by a single institution. Therefore, there is a need for statistical institutions to pool resources and collaborate to design a mechanism for cost-sharing and developing joint programs.

It was in the spirit of these joint programs that we all agreed at our last SWG-1 meeting to assign responsibilities to each institution so that in our next meeting which is taking place

today, individual institution will report its progress made in completing the assignments given to it. As is evident in the agenda of SWG-2, each institution has been allotted time to present its journey so far concerning the assignments to be completed. Unless, we enshrine this type of accountability in all our SWG meetings we risk becoming a talk-shop.

It is too early to say anything about the progress of SWG, but hopefully this afternoon when all institutions would have presented their reports we shall then be able to tell whether progress has been made or not. I would like to stress that SWG was never conceived to encroach on the functions of any member's mandates. Every institution in SWG will continue to do its work and publish all its documents; all what SWG stands for is strengthening coordination, harmonization, and standardization. We need to coordinate statistical activities to save cost and avoid duplication of efforts. We need to harmonize sources of data we use to avoid sending conflicting messages to the public and policy makers. We need to standardize our method of calculating aggregation to avoid reporting conflicting figures in our respective statistical publications.

To achieve coordination, harmonization, and standardization among OIC institutions, we need the support of member countries' national statistical offices, which are represented in this meeting today. These NSOs should try as much as possible to be responsive, transparent and helpful. They should treat OIC institutions like any other international organizations to which they supply data on regular basis. They should be transparent when they request for statistical capacity assistance and not to exaggerate cost and waste resources, rather they should be bold to declare other sources of resources they expect to receive for their activities.

At IDB, we have taken steps to assist member countries' NSOs to break from the vicious circle of underperformance by creating statistical capacity building facility called IDB-STATCAP - whose aim is to provide financial and technical supports for statistical capacities. The facility provides scholarships for MSc. degree in statistics —the first STATCAP to include human capital development as one of the pillars --, training (on or off site), physical infrastructure including equipment, and statistical operations. The utilization rate of the facility during its first year (2008) by member countries was encouraging but somewhat low.

We therefore encourage member countries with inadequate statistical capacities to make use of the facility as well as statistical institutions to work with us and help spread information about the IDB-STATCAP to our common member countries. We are now entering a new phase in the implementation of IDB-STATCAP where we will target only the statistical components in the National Strategy for the Development of Statistics (NSDS) and for countries without NSDS; we plan to embark on preparing country statistical diagnostic studies for them.

Our deliberations in the next two days will test our will to succeed, our desire to remain committed and move SWG forward and our capacity to play to win in the interest of our

institutions and member countries. It is better for all of us to ride the wave than to lean against it. Let it be known that we cannot move the clock back because the SWG is here to stay, and your support and sincerity in fulfilling obligations is required. We should resist any tendency of one party taking undue credit for the work undertaken by another; it destroys trust, betrays confidence, and discourages others. In any activity of SWG, let us consult each other at all cost and resolve differences politely and professionally. We should take inspiration from the motto of IDB: "Together we build a better future". I am convinced that we can build a better SWG future if all hands are on deck working closely as a team and sharing best practices, experiences, and lessons learnt in various initiatives embarked upon by SWG members.

I would like to assure you that IDB stands ready to do all it takes to support the SWG and looks forward to other members of SWG as well as NSOs to do the same, so that together we can work in attaining the required cooperation and commitment level needed to stay the course and achieve a win-win situation. In this meeting, I expect us to reach consensus in three broad areas namely (i) adopting the OIC Charter of Statistics, (ii) harmonizing questionnaire for sourcing data from NSOs, and (iii) scaling up statistical capacities at institutional and national level.

Wishing you all successful and productive discussions in the next two days.

Thank you and God bless you all.

Wassalam 'alaikum warahmatullahi wabarakatuh