

Assalamu Alaikum wa Rahmatullah wa Barakatuh,

Bismillahi Ar-Rahmanir-Raheem

Vice President (Operations), IDB,

Distinguished Participants,

I would like to express very strongly my sincere thanks to the IDB for taking up this important initiative on “Better Statistics, Better Policy for the OIC”, that is what I call the target of Statistical Working Group (SWG). Statistical improvement is a very significant component of the recent dynamism introduced into the Organisation of the Islamic Conference. We see a lot of new activities being undertaken by different OIC institutions within the framework of the implementation of the OIC 10-Year Programme of Action; improving the quality of statistics and statistical capacities is in fact a key prerequisite for the achievement of almost every single item targeted in the OIC 10-Year Programme of Action. It is not possible to design policies in any subject without knowing the current stance, without knowing where we stand as compared to others, and without specifying achievable targets. All these require statistics: statistics of what, where and how. I do not want to emphasize the need to improve the quality of statistics and statistical capacity in most of the OIC member countries to this august committee as we will be discussing this issue in detail during our workshop.

It is a great pleasure for me to observe the keen interest of many OIC institutions to improve their statistical activities. In this regard, I would like to mention some of the recent undertakings by the SESRIC.

Since May 2006, a strong emphasis has been placed on statistics in our Centre. Two critical areas have been targeted:

- Data collection and Dissemination;
- Training programs for statistical capacity building in the member countries.

Firstly, we have improved our IT infrastructure both in terms of hardware and software tremendously. I would like to express our heartfelt appreciation to the Turkish Statistical Institute (TUIK) for their strong support and cooperation during the improvement phase. The Centre has also launched a new web site, which facilitates the development of the data collection and dissemination system. The accessibility of the SESRIC web site has been vastly increased by the deployment of dedicated and internal web servers located within the SESRIC. All these changes brought the Centre in line with the standards of other international organisations such as the World Bank, and the IMF.

Secondly we have given a special importance to enhancing our interaction with the National Statistical Organizations (NSOs) of the member states. We made use of every opportunity to meet with them. In this regard, I can mention our meetings with the NSOs of the member countries during the

- Regional Pre-conference of Second OECD World Forum for the African Countries in Kigali, Rwanda on 14-17 January 2007,
- UNECA, Fifth Session of the Committee on Development Information-Statistical Capacity Building in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, on 29 April – 6 May 2007,
- Regional Pre-conference of OECD World Forum for Middle East and North African Countries in Sanaa, Yemen on 19 April 2007, and
- Second OECD World Forum on Statistics, Knowledge and Policy in Istanbul, Turkey on 27-30 June 2007.

Regarding the recent initiatives of SESRIC in the area of training, we introduced new strategies that would make the member countries better informed of each other's potentials and needs and, thus, facilitate the elaboration of cooperation projects and integration schemes among them. In this connection, the Centre started to send questionnaires regularly to the member countries in order to determine their capacities and needs in various fields of statistics. The Centre, then, arranges for training programmes to contribute to the statistical capacity building activities in the member countries based on their responses to the questionnaires.

Finally, our Centre also enhanced its cooperation with the most relevant international and regional organisations to provide high-level training opportunities to an increasing number of staff from the member countries in various branches of statistics and socio-economic activities. In this connection and in accordance with a resolution of the 22nd Session of the COMCEC, which was held in Istanbul in November 2006, the Centre became a member of the organisational committee of the Second OECD World Forum, which was held in Istanbul in June 2007, where the Centre facilitated and ensured the effective participation of 16 member countries in the said Forum and its preparatory regional meetings.

The Centre has also been welcomed as a new member of the Committee for the Coordination of Statistical Activities (CCSA) at its 8th Session held in Montreal, Canada, in September 2006. This Committee is composed of international organisations like UN, WB, IMF, OECD etc. that are active in the area of statistics.

By the Grace of Allah SWT, this workshop will be a turning point for a substantial improvement in the statistical mandate and activities of the OIC institutions. I applaud and congratulate the IDB for taking the initiative in this regard. I wish all the success to this workshop, and may Allah SWT bestow his mercy on the undertakings of this august committee.