

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