



**INTERVENTION OF DIRECTOR-GENERAL, IOFS AT 43RD ISLAMIC
COMMISSION FOR ECONOMIC, CULTURAL AND SOCIAL COOPERATION
(ICECS)**

JEDDAH, SAUDI ARABIA, 4-6 FEBRUARY 2020

Mr. Chairman

Distinguished Delegates

Permit me to congratulate you, on behalf of the Islamic Organisation for Food Security headquartered in Nur Sultan, Kazakhstan, on your well-deserved election as the chairman of this meeting. I also salute distinguished delegates on the occasion of the 43rd session of ICECS, the meeting that has proved very relevant to the socio-economic agenda of the OIC over the years.

The Islamic Organisation for Food Security is one of the latest specialised institutions of the OIC and it deals with the key issues of developing intra-OIC cooperation in the domain of food security, agriculture and rural development. Since the adoption of the Statute of Islamic Organisation for Food Security (popularly known as IOFS) by the Council of Foreign Ministers in Conakry, Republic of Guinea in December 2013 and thanks to your collective support, we have continued to strengthen the structures of this specialised OIC institution.

I am glad to report that after an initial delay due to procedural issues, the various organs of the Organisation are now functioning properly and developing progressively. The Second General Assembly held here in Jeddah on 27-29 August 2019 saw the reconstitution of the Executive Board of the Organisation and my election as the Director-General. It is gratifying to note that IOFS Executive Board held its fourth meeting in Nur-Sultan, Kazakhstan on 11-12 December 2020 and reviewed the status of implementation of the various projects and programmes, aimed at accelerating intra-IOFS cooperation in all sectors.

Accordingly, we have prioritized regional programmes aimed at increasing the food production capacities of our member states, including crop production and conservation of plant genetic resources for food and agriculture. Our objective, both in the short and medium terms, is to reduce the food trade deficit among our member states, which stood at US\$ 67 billion in 2018 alone, according to recent studies by COMCEC. To this end, we have recommended swift action on the adoption of the OIC Programme of Action for Agricultural Strategic Commodities, featuring Wheat, Rice and Cassava, three agricultural crops that constitute staple foods in most our member countries. The proposed Steering and Project Committees as well as the Centers of Excellence would be seized with the issues of increasing both the human and physical capacities of our member states.

In the same vein, the draft OIC Regional Food Security Reserve has also been submitted for consideration of our member states as we step up action on the humanitarian component of our multilateral cooperation. Ultimately, the proposal for the creation of a Grain Fund, among the various funding mechanisms for the Food Security Reserve, deserves your kind attention and support. Equally significant are the various programmes of IOFS in support of the OIC Science, Technology and Innovation Agenda 2026 (STI Agenda 2026). In this regard, we propose to hold a Workshop of the Development of Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture during the first half of this year. Similarly, our Roundtable on Increasing Water Use Efficiency in the Agricultural Sector is also slated for Jeddah, Saudi Arabia on the sidelines of the 5th Session of the Islamic Conference of Ministers Responsible for Water in October this year.

Furthermore, IOFS Workshop on Cooperation among National Food Safety Authorities is being proposed in collaboration with SMIIC to review major issues on food safety and Halal Food Development in accordance with extant OIC decisions. Accordingly, our value-chain development agenda would also feature a Forum on the development of the Palm-Oil Sector, through the reverse linkage programme of the Islamic Development Bank, among other initiatives.

In addition to the foregoing, IOFS intends to mainstream the role of the Private Sector, in line with the relevant OIC agenda. The proposed creation of the Islamic Food Processing Association (IFPA) would seek to address the perennial problem of post-harvest losses and food waste, which have constrained our food production efforts. Accordingly, the draft statute of IFPA is receiving adequate attention of our member states, in collaboration with the Islamic Chamber of Commerce, Industry and Agriculture (ICCIA). I am full of hope that your deliberations today on these issues would provide the needed boost for the take-off of these programmes within the shortest possible time.

I must not end this presentation without acknowledging the copious support, which IOFS received from the Government and people of Kazakhstan, the host country of IOFS Secretariat. In addition to the administrative and logistical facilities, the Government of Kazakhstan has fulfilled its commitment to finance the budget of the Secretariat for the past three years.

In the same vein, I wish to register our appreciation to the Government of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia for its pledge to support the Secretariat with US\$ 2 million for the next five years, excluding its normal statutory mandatory contributions. Similarly, I wish to acknowledge the gracious offer of the Government of the Republic of Turkey to host the 3rd General Assembly of IOFS in Istanbul, Turkey on 14-15 April 2020.

Accordingly, permit me to seize this auspicious occasion to express my appreciation to all OIC member states, which have signed or ratify the Statute of IOFS, while calling on other OIC member states to hasten their signing and ratification of the Statute, in order to collectively proceed with the inclusive implementation of OIC food security agenda.

I thank you all for your kind attention.
