

**KEYNOTE ADDRESS BY DIRECTOR-GENERAL
OF THE ISLAMIC ORGANIZATION FOR FOOD SECURITY (IOFS)
AT THE MEETING OF CENTRES OF EXCELLENCE
OF ASIA GROUP (AsG) II FOR WHEAT
NUR-SULTAN, KAZAKHSTAN, 14 OCTOBER 2020**

Bismillahir Rahmanir Rahim

Your Excellency, the Ambassador Askar Mussinov, Assistant Secretary General for Science and Technology of OIC;

Distinguished Participants,

Assalam alaekun warahmatullahi wabarakatuhu

First, I would like to express our sincere appreciation to H.E. Ambassador Askar Mussinov, Assistant Secretary General for Science and Technology of OIC for the support and involvement in IOFS initiatives.

It is indeed a great honour and privilege for me to welcome our participants at the First Meeting of Centres of Excellence for Wheat, which is taking place in a video conference format from Nur-Sultan, Kazakhstan. I express gratitude to the Government of Kazakhstan for hosting this very meeting.

Dear participants,

Agriculture has always remained on the top of the agenda of the international organisations, considering its relevance to sustaining human life and livelihood, particularly among developing countries, and indeed the OIC member states, which are plagued by increased food and nutrition insecurity and hunger. In this regard, in line with the OIC Programme on Development of Strategic Commodities and the mandate of Islamic Organisation for Food Security (IOFS), today, IOFS is organising the meeting among the selected National Research Centers in the Asia Sub-Group II to map out modalities for cooperation on research and development in the wheat sector.

As most of you know, the OIC member states face a wide range of challenges in the production of the wheat. Key among these challenges are:

- Soil degradation;
- Rising temperatures, severe weather conditions and decreasing water availability;
- Rapid population growth;
- Poor mechanization and high production cost;
- Inadequate or weak policy environment;
- Low funding of the national agricultural research and extension institutions;

- Lack of investment in infrastructure such as roads, storage and market facilities;
and
- Poor access to improved varieties/seeds.

The main objective of this programme is to start implementing our ideas, research, innovations through cooperation and interaction of the OIC member states through experience and practice exchange.

Creation of a platform for knowledge-sharing such as Centres of Excellence will provide an opportunity for:

- conducting trainings and workshops within the Regional Centres of Excellence in new/improved technologies wheat production, post-harvest and processing activities;
- initiating the development of new collaborative programmes and coordinated actions across OIC countries (reverse linkage programmes) in the area of wheat production;
- fostering cooperation among the agricultural research centers of OIC member states;
- promoting transfer of knowledge and expertise among OIC member states in wheat production through capacity building programmes and sharing experiences.

In addition, we are excited to announce that IOFS launches its quarterly bulletin called “Food Security Hub” about the activities of IOFS, and publications of its partners.

It is my sincere hope that the outcome of these meetings would lead to creating a credible mechanism for cooperation among the OIC member states. There are many challenges before us but the opportunities are also numerous if we strive to adopt those numerous creative and home-grown measures.

I wish this Meeting a fruitful deliberation and a successful outcome.

Wassalam alaekun warahmatullahi wabarakatuhu.