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**REPORT
OF THE THIRTY-THIRD SESSION
OF THE STANDING COMMITTEE FOR ECONOMIC
AND COMMERCIAL COOPERATION OF THE OIC
(İstanbul, 20-23 November 2017)**

1. The Thirty-Third Session of the Standing Committee for Economic and Commercial Cooperation of the Organization of the Islamic Cooperation (COMCEC) was held on 20-23 November 2017 in İstanbul.

2. The Session was attended by representatives of the following Member States of the Organization of the Islamic Cooperation (OIC):

- 1- Islamic Republic of Afghanistan
- 2- Republic of Albania
- 3- People's Democratic Republic of Algeria
- 4- Republic of Azerbaijan
- 5- Kingdom of Bahrain
- 6- People's Republic of Bangladesh
- 7- Republic of Benin
- 8- Brunei Darussalam
- 9- Republic of Cameroon
- 10-Republic of Cote d'Ivoire
- 11-Republic of Djibouti
- 12-Arab Republic of Egypt
- 13-Republic of Gabon
- 14-Republic of Gambia
- 15-Republic of Guinea
- 16-Republic of Indonesia
- 17-Islamic Republic of Iran
- 18-Republic of Iraq
- 19-Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan
- 20-The State of Kuwait
- 21-Kyrgyz Republic
- 22-Republic of Lebanon
- 23-Libya
- 24-Malaysia
- 25-Republic of Maldives
- 26-Republic of Mali

- 27-Islamic Republic of Mauritania
- 28-Kingdom of Morocco
- 29-Republic of Niger
- 30-Federal Republic of Nigeria
- 31-Sultanate of Oman
- 32-Islamic Republic of Pakistan
- 33-The State of Palestine
- 34-State of Qatar
- 35-Kingdom of Saudi Arabia
- 36-Republic of Senegal
- 37-Republic of Sierra Leone
- 38-Republic of Somalia
- 39-Republic of Sudan
- 40-Republic of Tajikistan
- 41-Republic of Togo
- 42-Republic of Tunisia
- 43-Republic of Turkey
- 44-Republic of Uganda
- 45-State of the United Arab Emirates
- 46-Republic of Yemen

3. The Russian Federation, Kingdom of Thailand and Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus participated in the Session as observers.

4. The Republic of Kosovo participated in the Session as a guest.

5. In addition to the OIC General Secretariat and the COMCEC Coordination Office the following OIC Organs/ Institutions attended the Session:

- 1- Standing Committee on Scientific and Technological Cooperation of the OIC (COMSTECH)
- 2- Standing Committee for Information and Cultural Affairs (COMIAC)
- 3- Statistical, Economic and Social Research and Training Center for Islamic Countries (SESRIC)
- 4- Islamic Center for the Development of Trade (ICDT)
- 5- Islamic Research Center for Islamic History, Art and Culture (IRCICA)
- 6- Standards and Metrology Institute of Islamic Countries (SMIIC)
- 7- Islamic Development Bank (IDB) Group
- 8- Islamic Chamber of Commerce, Industry and Agriculture (ICCIA)
- 9- Organization of the Islamic Ship-owners Association (OISA)
- 10- Federation of Contractors from Islamic Countries (FOCIC)
- 11- Islamic University of Technology (IUT)

12- Association of National Development Finance Institutions in Member Countries of the Islamic Development Bank (ADFIMI)

6. Representatives of the following international organizations attended the Ministerial Session and Special Sessions:

- 1- Developing Eight (D-8)
- 2- Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO)
- 3- Economic Cooperation Organization Trade and Development Bank (ECOBANK)
- 4- Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC)

(A copy of the List of Participants of the Thirty-Third Session of the COMCEC is attached as Annex I.)

7. The Meeting of Senior Officials of COMCEC that preceded the Ministerial Session was held on 20th and 21st November 2017 under the Chairmanship of H.E. Ambassador Salih Mutlu ŞEN, Permanent Representative of the Republic of Turkey to the OIC. The Senior Officials deliberated on the agenda items and prepared the Draft Resolutions for consideration by the Ministerial Session.

Opening Session

8. The Opening Ceremony of the Thirty-Third Session of the COMCEC was held on November 22nd, 2017 under the Chairmanship of H.E. Recep Tayyip ERDOĞAN, President of the Republic of Turkey and the Chairman of the COMCEC.

9. Welcoming the delegates, H.E. ERDOĞAN underlined the importance of consultation in İslam, by recalling a verse from the Holy Quran, which is “Their dealings shall be through consultation” and in the Hadith of the Prophet Mohammad (PBUH) “one who, in performing a task, consults a person adept at it, will deserve the best of outcomes”, however, H.E. ERDOĞAN highlighted that for these consultations during the meeting to achieve their intended purpose, they have to be sincere and the decisions taken need to be implemented and realized.

10. H.E. ERDOĞAN also expressed that the Islamic world has been going through a period of economic, political and social troubles in recent years despite having extensive potential with respect to population, natural resources and geography. In this respect, H.E. ERDOĞAN underlined the significance of utilizing this potential properly by transforming Islamic geography into a remarkable manufacturing base through taking the required economic, technological and cultural development strides and to produce a model for this.

11. H.E. ERDOĞAN continued his statement by highlighting the importance of utilizing all the existing means, particularly the COMCEC, under which the cooperation activities have gained a significant momentum since the operationalization of the COMCEC Strategy in 2013. H.E. ERDOĞAN called upon the member countries to actively participate in the COMCEC Working Groups and to benefit more actively from the COMCEC Project Funding, which are two mechanisms of the COMCEC Strategy for mobilizing the institutional and human resources of the Member Countries.

12. H.E. ERDOĞAN also touched upon the ongoing efforts for the realization of some important COMCEC Projects. Thus, H.E. ERDOĞAN invited all the concerned Member Countries to take action for the operationalization of Trade Preferential System among the OIC Member States (TPS-OIC). Furthermore, while increasing the trade and investments among the Member Countries, H.E. ERDOĞAN stressed developing the ability to resolve their own challenges. Within this perspective, H.E. ERDOĞAN expressed that the establishment of the OIC Arbitration Center would enable rapid, least costly and fair resolution of commercial and investment-related disputes.

13. H.E. ERDOĞAN pointed out the need for paying special attention to the young generations, who provide assurance for the future. Accordingly, this can be achieved by educating qualified and self-confident individuals.

14. Before concluding his speech, H.E. ERDOĞAN emphasized the significance of this year's Ministerial Session's theme that is "Improving Transnational Transport Corridors in the OIC Member Countries."

(A copy of the text of the Inaugural Statement of H.E. Recep Tayyip ERDOĞAN is attached as Annex II.)

15. Following the Inaugural Statement made by H.E. ERDOĞAN, the Secretary General of the OIC made a statement at the Opening Session.

16. His Excellency Dr. Yousef Al-OTHAIMEEN the Secretary General of the OIC thanked the Government of the Republic of Turkey for the traditional hospitality and excellent arrangements made for the success of this annual event. H.E. Al-OTHAIMEEN stressed the readiness of the General Secretariat to accord greater priority to the socio-economic agenda of the Organization as espoused in the OIC 2025-Programme of Action, which was adopted during the 13th OIC Summit held in Istanbul, Republic of Turkey in April 2016. H.E. Al- OTHAIMEEN expressed that the cooperation activities of the OIC in various areas, including trade promotion and financing as well as cross-border infrastructure for trade and investment have impacted positively on the socio-economic development in the member states.

17. H.E. Al-OTHAIIMEEN also expressed that the annual deliberations within the framework of COMCEC transforms the OIC to a veritable international economic actor and contributes effectively to the global agenda on sustainable socio-economic development.

(The text of the Statement of the Secretary General of the OIC is attached as Annex III.)

18. The Heads of Delegations of the State of Qatar, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, the Federal Republic of Nigeria and Islamic State of Afghanistan made statements during the Opening Ceremony. They appreciated the consistent support of the Government of the Republic of Turkey to the COMCEC's activities over the years and thanked H.E. ERDOĞAN for his wise guidance and leadership in enhancing economic and commercial cooperation among the OIC Member States. Highlighting the importance of transnational transport corridors for the development of the member countries, they emphasized the need for deepening socio-economic cooperation and exchanging knowledge in various fields, particularly, science and technology.

19. H.E. Dr. Bandar M. H. HAJJAR, President of the Islamic Development Bank (IDB) Group also delivered a statement at the Opening Session. H.E. Dr. HAJJAR expressed his thanks and appreciation to the Member Countries for their permanent support to the activities of the IDB Group. He also informed the delegations about the important projects in the field of transport corridors, namely the Trans-Saharan road corridor and Kazakhstan-Turkmenistan-Iran Railway Corridor, for which the Bank has provided financial support for their realization.

(The text of the Statement of the IDB Group President is attached as Annex IV.)

20. Mr. Rıfat HİSARCIKLIOĞLU, President of the Union of Chambers and Commodity Exchanges of Turkey (TOBB) and the Vice-President of the Islamic Chamber of Commerce, Industry and Agriculture also made a speech at the Opening Session. Mr. HİSARCIKLIOĞLU underlined the importance of enhancing solidarity among the Member Countries for the expansion of intra-OIC trade and the realization of the potential of the private sector in this regard.

21. A special signing ceremony was held during the Opening Ceremony of the Ministerial Session. 2 loans agreement were signed between the Undersecretary of Treasury of the Republic of Turkey and the IDB Group. H.E. Mehmet ŞİMŞEK, Deputy Prime Minister of the Republic of Turkey and H.E. Bandar HAJJAR signed the above-mentioned loan agreements.

22. Following the Opening Ceremony, H.E. Recep Tayyip ERDOĞAN received the Heads of Delegation.

Ministerial Working Session

23. The Ministerial Working Session of the Thirty-Third Session of the COMCEC was held on November 22nd, 2017 under the Chairmanship of H.E. Lütfi ELVAN, Minister of Development of the Republic of Turkey.

24. The Session adopted the Agenda of the Thirty-Third Session of the COMCEC.

25. Following the adoption of the agenda, H.E. Ambassador Salih Mutlu ŞEN, as the Chairman of the Senior Officials Meeting (SOM), informed the Session of the outcomes of the Senior Officials Meeting as well as the recommendations of the 10th Meeting of COMCEC Transport and Communications Working Group on “Improving Transnational Transport Corridors in OIC Member States: Concepts and Cases” deliberated by the SOM and submitted to the consideration of the Ministerial Session.

26. H.E. Ibrahim Yousif Mohamed ABDALLA, State Minister of Transport, Roads and Bridges has delivered a keynote speech on improving transnational transport corridors. H.E. ABDALLA highlighted the importance of having smooth functioning transport corridors for enhancing trade and economic development. Afterwards, H.E. ABDALLA, underlined that Dakar- Port Sudan railway project is of particular importance for facilitating trade and investment for enroute countries.

27. Following the presentation of H.E. Ambassador Salih Mutlu ŞEN, the Exchange of Views Session of the 33rd Session of the COMCEC was held with the theme of “Improving Transnational Transport Corridors among OIC Member Countries.”

28. H.E. Dr. Bandar M. H. HAJJAR, President of the Islamic Development Bank (IDB) Group, made a statement on the importance of transnational transport corridors for the development endeavors of the Member Countries. In this sense, H.E. HAJJAR mentioned the significance of developing inter-country corridors and promoting regional connectivity for enhancing regional integration in the OIC geography, as well as improving the connection of the landlocked countries to the international ports and maritime routes.

29. Afterwards, the Ministers and heads of delegations of Member Countries made presentations on their country experiences with regards to transnational transport corridors in the Member Countries.

Side Events/Special Sessions

30. The 31st Meeting of the Sessional Committee was held on November 19th, 2017 as a sideline event with the participation of the relevant OIC Institutions.

(A copy of the report of the 31st Meeting of the Sessional Committee is attached as Annex V.)

31. The side event on the “COMCEC Project Funding: Experiences of the Project Owners” was made on November 21st, 2017. During the event, the owners of the successful projects funded under the third project call of the COMCEC Project Funding made presentations with respect to the implementation of their projects.

32. The special session on “Private Sector Perspective on Transnational Transport Corridors” was held on November 23rd, 2017. The session was moderated by Mr. Turgut ERKESKİN, Chairman of Logistics Business Council, Foreign Economic Relations Board of Turkey (DEİK). The speakers for this special session were as follows: Mr. François DAVENNE, Secretary General of Intergovernmental Organisation for International Carriage by Rail (OTIF), Mr. Majid Sabbagh KERMANI, Director of ICD, IDB Group, Mr. Medih DİZDAR, Director of Oyak-Renault.

33. The special session on the “Governance of Transnational Transport Corridors: a Managerial Perspective” was held on November 23rd, 2017. The session was moderated by Mr. Mircea CIOPRAGA, Secretary General of the TRACECA. Mr. Elias Leju LEONARDO, Director for Monitoring and Evaluation of NCTTCA, Mr. Ali Haider ALTAF, Director of ETS SAARC Secretariat and Mr. Sinan KUŞÇU, Deputy Director General of the Ministry of Transport, Maritime Affairs and Communications of the Republic of Turkey were the speakers of this special session.

34. The special session on “Economic Impacts of Transnational Transport Corridors” was held on November 23rd, 2017. The session was moderated by Prof. Roger VICKERMAN, University of Kent. The speakers of this special session were as follows: Prof. Eduardo HADDAD, University of Sao Paulo, Prof. Euijune KIM, Seoul National University and Prof. Dr. Carolina Cosculluela MARTÍNEZ, King Juan Carlos University.

35. The special session on “Developing Special Transnational Transport Corridors” was held on November 23rd, 2017. The session was moderated by H.E. Ibrahim Yousif Mohamed ABDALLA, State Minister of Transport, Roads and Bridges. The other speakers at this session were, H.E. H.E. Hamid OPELOYERU, Assistant Secretary General Organization of Islamic Cooperation; Prof. James Jixian WANG, Research Centre of One-Belt-One-Road the City University of Hong Kong and Mr. Cavid QURBANOV, Chairman of Azerbaijan Railways.

36. The Forum on Transnational Transport Corridors was held on November 23rd, 2017. The session was moderated by Prof. Roger VICKERMAN, University of Kent. The speakers of this special session were as follows: H.E. Ibrahim Yousif Mohamed ABDALLA, State Minister of Transport, Roads and Bridges, Mr. Turgut ERKESKİN, Chairman of Logistics Business Council, Foreign Economic Relations Board of Turkey (DEİK) and Mr. Mircea CIOPRAGA, Secretary General of the TRACECA.

37. As a sideline event of the 33rd Session of COMCEC, COMCEC Project Funding Exhibition took place on 20-23 November 2017.

Closing Session:

38. The Closing Session of the Thirty-Third Session of the COMCEC was held on November 23rd, 2017 under the Chairmanship of H.E. Lütfi ELVAN, Minister of Development of the Republic of Turkey.

39. H.E. Yousaf JUNAID, Rapporteur of the Senior Officials Meeting, summarized the outcomes of the Senior Officials Meeting and Ministerial Declaration on Improving Transnational Transport Corridors in the OIC Member States and highlighted some salient points in the Resolutions and Declaration.

40. The Session adopted Resolution OIC/COMCEC/33-17/RES. and Ministerial Declaration on Improving Transnational Transport Corridors in the OIC Member States.

41. H.E. Ambassador Hameed OPELOYERU, Assistant Secretary General read out the message of H.E. Dr. Yousef Al-OTHAIMEEN, Secretary General of the OIC. In his message H.E. Al-OTHAIMEEN extended his congratulations to the Republic of Turkey for hosting the 33rd Session of the COMCEC and to all participants for the successful conclusion of the Session.

42. H.E. Salim MUSLUMOV, the Minister of Labour and Social Protection of the Republic of Azerbaijan, made a statement on behalf of all participating Member Countries. His Excellency the Minister thanked the Government of the Republic of Turkey and all OIC and other institutions for contributing to the successful conclusion of the 33rd Session of the COMCEC. H.E. MUSLUMOV emphasized the need for active cooperation and solidarity among the Member Countries in this difficult period. H.E. MUSLUMOV also highlighted the importance of OIC Labour Center for enhancing cooperation in this important area. His Excellency also thanked the Government of the Republic of Turkey for the warm hospitality extended to all delegations.

43. H.E. Lütfi ELVAN, Minister of Development of the Republic of Turkey, made a closing statement at the Session. Quoting the famous hadith of Prophet Mohammed (PBUH) “Engage in trade, for nine tenths (ninety percent) of rizq (sustenance) is derived from trade” and underlining the critical role of trade for economic development, H.E. ELVAN expressed his concern for the sharp decrease in the Member Countries’ exports in the last four years. H.E. ELVAN also stressed the Member Countries need to take all required actions for economic diversification and

decreasing their dependence on raw materials and single commodities. H.E. ELVAN highlighted the importance of TPS-OIC, which can be used as an important tool for eliminating tariff and non-tariff barriers, facilitating regional integration and thus, increasing commerce among the Member Countries.

44. H.E. ELVAN also expressed that efficient transport corridors have an indispensable role in linking countries and regions. Accordingly, H.E. ELVAN stated that transport corridors connect seaports to inland markets and landlocked countries and regions with others. Moreover, H.E. ELVAN pointed out that improved transport corridors reduce transit times, decrease the costs of freight transport between remote locations. These are all critical for boosting our competitiveness.

45. H.E. Lütfi ELVAN concluded his statement by expressing the significance of Member Countries' active participation in various cooperation programs and projects conducted under the COMCEC.

(The text of the Closing Statement of H.E. Lütfi ELVAN is attached as Annex)

46. All documents submitted to the 33rd Session of COMCEC will be available on the COMCEC web site (www.comcec.org).

