



**PROCEEDINGS OF
17TH MEETINGS OF THE COMCEC TRANSPORT AND COMMUNICATIONS
WORKING GROUP
(October 14th, 2021, Virtual Meeting)**

1. The Transport and Communications Working Group (TCWG) hold virtually its 17th Meeting on October 14th, 2021, with the theme of “Mitigation Strategies for Transport Service Providers During and After COVID-19 in the OIC Member Countries”.

(The Agenda and Program of the 17th Meeting are attached as Annex-I)

2. The 17th meeting was attended by 17 Member States. The meeting was also attended by the representatives of the SESRIC, Turkish Airlines and COMCEC Coordination Office (CCO).

(The List of Participants of the 17th Meeting is attached as Annex-II)

3. The 17th Meeting started with a recitation from the Holy Quran.
4. At the outset, Mr. Fatih ÜNLÜ, Director General of the CCO, delivered his opening remarks. He underlined that the COVID-19 has had unusual implications on the transportation systems and services of the countries. The responses to COVID-19, from implementing social distancing to lockdown policies for affected areas, have huge implications for the mobility and connectivity of people and goods and the continuity of transport services. This also have cumulative impacts on the economic activity of cities, regions, freight logistics, as well as related industries, markets and supply chains.
5. Highlighting the severe impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic on the global transportation industry, Mr. ÜNLÜ expressed that according to the estimations, there has been approximately 90% of air traffic reduction compared to a year ago, 85% reduction in long-distance rail passenger service, 80% reduction in regional rail passenger services and more than 90% reduction for cruise and passenger ships compared to a year ago. Besides, he expressed that the contribution of the logistics industry to the global GDP is estimated to decrease by 6.1% in this year. In addition to this, the global freight forwarding market is expected to shrink by 7.5 % in 2020 compared to 2019.
6. Furthermore, Mr. ÜNLÜ outlined that in addition to national efforts, this outbreak requires strong cooperation and joint efforts at the international level. In the post-pandemic period, the crisis could also provide viable opportunities for our countries to formulate and implement sound policies for uninterrupted and seamless transportation.

7. Mr. Özcan BAŞOĞLU, Acting Deputy Director General, General Directorate of Civil Aviation of the Republic of Turkey, chaired the meeting. Welcoming the participants, Mr. BAŞOĞLU briefly informed the attendees on the agenda and program of the meeting.

I. General Review of the Research Report and Lessons Learnt from the Selected Case Countries

8. Under this agenda item, Mr. Alpaslan GIRAYALP, Consultant, Pglobal, made a presentation on the general review of the research report and lessons learnt from the selected case countries.
9. Mr. GIRAYALP stated that transport sector was significantly affected by the COVID-19 crisis in all sub-sectors. The global passenger demand in aviation, which is the sector most affected by the pandemic, has decreased by 80% compared to the previous year. It is estimated that there will be a loss of 300 billion dollars in revenue due to this decrease. With the increase in COVID-19 cases, especially in February 2020, taking of tougher measures has created a number of factors that have exacerbated the situation for the aviation industry: flight cancellations, aircraft staying on the ground, travel bans, and closing of the borders used for traffic drops, are some of the numerous challenges that have contributed to a substantial loss of revenue.
10. Mr. GIRAYALP outlined that during the pandemic period, as with the disparities in economic wealth among the OIC member countries, there are significant variations between countries regarding their current supportive expenditures. Timely and proper financial support is highly effective to protect operators, services and jobs in transport sector in all forms of the transport.
11. Mr. GIRAYALP expressed that guidance and protocols have been issued concerning COVID-19 measures for ships and ports by several organizations such as World Health Organization (WHO), International Maritime Organization (IMO), International Chamber of Shipping (ICS), International Labour Organization (ILO) and European Maritime Safety Agency. In response to the crisis, shipping companies implemented health protection measures across their ships. Cargo vessels were subject to enhanced maritime health declarations and screening. Strict restrictions were imposed on crew disembarkation, shore leave and substitution. The lockdown and quarantine measures resulted in a shortage of workers at the ports and a shortage of truck drivers to move the goods. Moreover, shipping companies encountered declines in revenues and financial difficulties.
12. When the first regulatory measures were implemented in early 2020, road passenger transport activities declined between 40% to 80% in almost every city globally. In response to the pandemic, almost all countries requested truck and bus drivers to present recent COVID-19 test results. Some countries have banned freight and passenger services from high-risk countries. Public bus and paratransit operators rescheduled their services, and passenger capacities were restricted to around 50%. The total passenger revenue loss of the railway operators reached almost \$60 billion in 2020.
13. Concerning the case studies, Mr. GIRAYALP stated that as the first case study Malaysia, where all modes of transport exist and is strategically located on the Strait of Malacca, is one of the most important shipping lanes in the world. Following the crisis, there was a drop in demand for all modes of transport in Malaysia. Mobility reduced by 26 percent,

and passenger aircraft were modified to carry cargo only. Moreover, bilateral and multilateral agreement restrictions caused delivery issues. Government support was provided to essential services of the supply chain sectors for continuous operation. There were difficulties causing the cancellation of planned projects soon after the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic. Industries were forced to innovate and renovate process and product offerings. In response to the crisis, Malaysia needed to ensure all procedures and guidelines in a one-stop center, as well as providing financial support to transport service providers.

14. The second case country is Pakistan with extensive and varied transport, serving a population of over 212.2 million people, and being the 6th most populous nation in the world. In Pakistan, transport contributes to 22.3 percent of the services sector GDP and accounts for approximately 6 percent of the nation's total employment. As a consequence of the pandemic, 85 percent of businesses were affected due to the non-availability of finance or cash liquidity, 29 percent of the staff were laid off and 77 percent experienced a reduction in their sales and revenues.
15. In Pakistan, National Command and Operation Centre was established but political support was weak at the start of the pandemic. Later, the measures taken were waiving off-airport fees, air navigation fees, landing and parking fees, suspension of personal travel, ride-hailing services in major metropolitan areas, and online delivery providers. Central Bank introduced a payroll refinance scheme by the name of State Bank of Pakistan's Rozgar Scheme and Loans worth Rs. 238 billion have been provided.

II. OIC Member Countries' Practices and Policy Recommendations

16. Prof. Dr. Mehmet BALCILAR, consultant, PGlobal, presented the main findings of the research report regarding the OIC Member Countries' Practices in the subject in question and likely policy recommendations to alleviate the challenges.
17. Prof. BALCILAR emphasized that five domains of indicators are developed to measure the effect of the pandemic and the effectiveness of the measures initiated by OIC member countries. In order to make an assessment of the success and extent of mitigation measures, as well as their post-pandemic effects, countries are divided into five categories, and prioritized minimum standards have been determined for those needing to be included in the indicator set determined for each category.
18. According to the number of criteria met or the score level of the key criteria, the category rank of a country is determined. The five categories are from Tier 1 to Tier 5 in descending order, Tier 1 indicating the most successful/through response and Tier 5 the least successful/through response. To illustrate, if a country meets almost all of the criteria or has a score above 4 out of 5, then it will be included in Tier 1.
19. Five domains used for the assessment of effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on transport services and mitigation measures introduced by the OIC countries are as follows:

A. General Situation in the COVID-19 Process

B. Government Support to The Transportation Sector during the COVID-19 Pandemic

C. Administrative Measures aimed at the Transport Sector during the Pandemic

D. Financial Sustainability of Transport Operators during the Pandemic

E. Operational Measures of the Transport Sector during the Pandemic

20. Prof. BALCILAR stated that general Situation in the COVID-19 Process is evaluated separately for road, air, maritime and rail transport. A survey questionnaire, in four languages, i.e. English, Arabic, French and Turkish, is developed for the Online Survey, using KoBo Toolbox as server platform, to collect information from related institutions' representatives in 44 countries registered with the COMCEC Transport Working Group, covering three groups of OIC Member Countries, i.e. Arab Group, Africa Group and Asia Group.
21. No country is placed in Tier 1 while only Turkey appears in Tier 2. Moreover, no single region is doing better than the others. However, looking at the results, it could be inferred that two regions, i.e., Asia and Arab countries are doing better than the third region, i.e., Africa. If the performance is rated country-wise, Turkey tops the ranking in all countries, followed by Malaysia. Gambia is doing worst exclusively in all domains, except domain E.
22. The poor performance of all countries is largely due to low performance on two domains: Government Support to the Transportation Sector during the COVID-19 Pandemic (domain B) and Financial Sustainability of Transport Operators during the Pandemic (domain D). The worst performance is observed in Government Support to the Transportation Sector during the COVID-19 Pandemic (domain B) while the best performance is observed for Operational Measures of the Transport Sector (domain E).
23. Concerning roadways and railways, Prof. BALCILAR underlined that international travel controls during the COVID-19 pandemic are categorized at five levels:
 - a. No measures
 - b. Screening
 - c. Quarantine from high-risk regions
 - d. Ban on high-risk regions
 - e. Total border closure
24. With respect to maritime, Prof. BALCILAR highlighted that in 2021 the OIC's share in the global merchant fleet is 5.4% of the global merchant fleet. The trade in many OIC countries is mainly dominated by oil tankers and bulk carriers. Indonesia has the largest merchant fleet, followed by Iran, Saudi Arabia, Malaysia and Turkey and Nigeria, respectively. Ship recycling has also been affected by the COVID-19 pandemic.
25. The employee numbers in ship recycling industry were reduced due to hygiene and social distance precautions. In 2020, Bangladesh ranked first in ship recycling, followed by Pakistan, Turkey, Indonesia and Nigeria respectively. Among the coastal OIC countries, Malaysia was the country that connected the best, followed by Saudi Arabia, Morocco, Egypt and Turkey. The coastal OIC countries have an average level of access that is a mere 17.1% of the average level of access of China.
26. Regarding the airways, Prof. BALCILAR expressed that drastic measures taken by governments towards the airlines have caused a serious decrease in the number of passengers in all OIC countries. In the OIC-Arab Group countries, Algeria (-77.95%) was

the country with the highest decline. Algeria experienced a decline above the average stated for the African continent. The country with the least decrease in this group is Sudan (-36.76%).

27. Prof. BALCILAR emphasized on the that transport service providers in all OIC member countries faced challenges including but not limited to governmental restrictions and supply chain capacity constraints with the outbreak of COVID-19 Pandemic. These constraints caused several problems such as freight capacity, suspension of key services as well as issues related to increase in cost.
28. At the end of his presentation, Prof. BALCILAR outlined the policy recommendations as followings;
29. Political Measures
 - Better crowd management in public transport
 - Rebuilding trust of consumers to restore demand
30. Institutional and Organizational Measures
 - Establishing “OIC Countries COVID-19 Transport Strategy Group”
 - Avoiding unilateral and unreasonable decisions that hamper transportation services
 - Enhancing international and regional cooperation
31. Technical and Technological Measures
 - Utilizing digital technologies
 - Leveraging artificial intelligence
32. Legislative Measures
 - New legal regulations to be issued to tackle the changes caused by the pandemic
 - Same-sector businesses can form draft texts on the necessary laws and submit them to the authorities
 - Establishment of a transportation law committee
33. Protection of Transport Workers
 - Training transport workers and tracking their contracts
 - The health security of transport workers
34. Procedural Measures
 - Building “Green Lanes” to keep borders open
 - Exemption of entry prohibition for transport workers across the country borders.
35. Other Recommendations
 - COVID-19 government response tracker
 - Re-evaluation of railway services
 - Outsourcing and sharing some part of transport functions

III. Member States’ Experiences

36. Under this agenda item, Turkey made presentations concerning their country practices in mitigating the adverse effects of the COVID-19 on Transport Service Providers.

IV. Private Sector Perspective

33. Under this agenda item, Dr. Taner ERİM, International Relations and Agreements Manager(Middle East & Africa), Turkish Airlines, delivered a presentation titled “The

Impact of COVID-19 Pandemic on the Aviation Sector: The Challenges and Opportunities”.

34. Dr. ERİM highlighted that while the end of 2021 Passenger Traffic Expectation in December 2020 was 51% of 2019, this forecast was revised as 43% in April 2021 and 40.3% in October 2021. He stated that with respect to the general impacts on the aviation sector, there is a huge difference between the COVID crisis and other ones occurred in the past. In this regard, the COVID crisis has had unprecedented impacts on the aviation sector.
35. The civil aviation industry has made a net loss of 137.8 billion USD in total in 2020 and has melted the profits of the past 4 years. Turkish Airlines, on the other hand, differentiated positively in the sector.
36. International Tourist Arrival Numbers decreased by 73% in 2020 compared to 2019 and fell below the 1990 level. Before the pandemic, 55% of these passengers were traveling by air. (Turkey: 77%) It is anticipated that the 2019 level will be reached in 2023-2024. Turkish Airlines is the airline with the most flights in Europe among Full Service Carriers in 2021.
37. Dr. ERİM emphasized that in order to increase travel and trade among the COMCEC Member States, non-infrastructural barriers meaning that frequency and capacity restrictions shall be removed and visa liberalization shall be secured. Furthermore, the followings non-physical barriers shall be taking out to boost the travel among the countries;
 - Maximizing the operations, services and limited resources in member countries.
 - Economies of Scale: The more the supplies-the less costs
 - Increasing propensity to travel within the member states.
38. Dr. ERİM concluded that facilitation of transportation also means reinforcement of trade volumes for each countries. In this concept, removing frequencies and capacity restriction shave high level priority.

V. Policy Debate Session on “Mitigation Strategies for Transport Service Providers During and After COVID-19”

39. Under this agenda item, the participants deliberated on the policy options concerning the mitigation strategies to tackle the negative impacts of the COVID-19 on the transport servise providers in the OIC Member Countries. Mr. Özcan BAŞOĞLU, Acting Deputy Director General, General Directorate of Civil Aviation of the Republic of Turkey, moderated the roundtable session. At the outset, Mr. Nihat AKBALIK, Expert at the COMCEC Coordination Office, introduced the room document including the policy recommendations. After fruitful discussions and deliberations, the Working Group has come up with the following policy recommendations to be submitted to the 37th Ministerial Session of the COMCEC for consideration.
 - **Policy Recommendation I:** Making use of modern and innovative financial measures (i.e. cash support, low-interest long-term loan support, tax breaks etc.) in order to facilitate the access to the adequate financial tools for transport service providers (TSPs) to maintain their services during and after global pandemic.

- **Policy Recommendation II:** Improving the regulatory framework for mitigating the adverse impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on TSPs.
- **Policy Recommendation III:** Utilizing digital technologies including artificial intelligence in the transport industry to alleviate the supply-chain risks and thereby mitigating the negative impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on TSPs.
- **Policy Recommendation IV:** Restoring and strengthening competitive conditions of the transport sector to effectively tackle with the negative impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on the TSPs.
- **Policy Recommendation V:** Organizing promotion and communication campaigns to restore and enhance demand in various modes of travel like railway, airlines and bus coupled with substantial discounts.
- **Policy Recommendation VI:** Promoting cooperation among TSPs and considering the establishment of an OIC TSP Alliance or joint transport companies, wherever feasible.
- **Policy Recommendation VII:** Introduction of transport innovations to ease burden on conventional transport means.
- **Policy Recommendation VIII:** Promoting measure for safer travel with respect to COVID pandemic and other infectious diseases.

(The Policy Recommendations and their rationale are attached as Annex-III)

VI. Utilizing the COMCEC Project Funding

40. Mr. M. Adil SAYAR, Expert at COMCEC Coordination Office delivered a presentation on utilizing the COMCEC Project Funding (CPF) for the transport-related projects of the member countries as well as the OIC institutions.

(All presentations made during the meeting are available on the COMCEC website.)

Closing

41. In his concluding remarks, Mr. Selçuk KOÇ, Director at the CCO, expressed his thanks to all the presenters and participants for the fruitful deliberations made during the meeting.



AGENDA

17TH MEETING OF THE COMCEC TRANSPORT AND COMMUNICATIONS WORKING GROUP

(October 14th, 2021, Virtual Meeting)*

“Mitigation Strategies for Transport Service Providers During and After COVID-19”

(2nd Session- Discussion and Review of Final Draft of the Report)

Opening Remarks

37. The Implications of the COVID-19 on the Transport Sector and Global Trends for Mitigating the Adverse Impacts of the COVID-19 on the Transport Services
38. OIC Member Countries’ Practices and Lessons Learnt from the Selected Case Studies
39. Member States’ Experiences in Mitigation Strategies for Transport Service Providers
40. Policy Options for “Mitigation Strategies for Transport Service Providers During and After COVID-19”
41. COMCEC Financial Support Instruments

Closing Remarks



PROGRAMME

**17TH MEETING OF THE
COMCEC TRANSPORT AND COMMUNICATIONS WORKING GROUP
(October 14th, 2021, Virtual Meeting)*
“Mitigation Strategies for Transport Service Providers During and After COVID-19”**

(2nd Session- Discussion and Review of Final Draft of the Report)

- 13.15-13.30** **Joining the Online Meeting**
*(The link will be shared prior to the Meeting)
- 13.30-13.40** **Opening**
- 13.40-14.05** **General Review of the Research Report and Lessons Learnt from the Selected Case Countries**
42. *Presentation: Prof.Dr.Mehmet Balcilar*
Consultant
PGlobal
- 14.05-14.15** - Discussion
- 14.15-14.35** **OIC Member Countries’ Practices and Policy Recommendations**
43. *Presentation: Alpaslan Girayalp*
Consultant
PGlobal
- 14.35-14.45** - Discussion
- 14.45-15.15** **Member States’ Experiences in Mitigation Strategies for Transport Service Providers**
- 15.15-15.30** **Private Sector Perspective**
- The Impact of COVID-19 Pandemic on the Aviation Sector: The Challenges and Opportunities**
44. *Presentation: Dr. Taner ERİM*
International Relations and Agreements Manager(Middle East & Africa)
Turkish Airlines
- 15.30-16.15** **Policy Debate Session on “Mitigation Strategies for Transport Service Providers During and After COVID-19”**
- 16.15-16.30** **Utilizing the COMCEC Project Funding**
- 16.30-16.35** **Closing**

Annex II

LIST OF PARTICIPANTS
17TH MEETING OF COMCEC TRANSPORT AND COMMUNICATIONS
WORKING GROUP
(14 October 2021, Virtual)

A. MEMBER COUNTRIES OF THE OIC

REPUBLIC OF AZERBAIJAN

- Ms. AYTAN TURABOVA

Leading Adviser, Ministry of Transport

PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF BANGLADESH

- Mr. MD JAMSHED ALI JAMSHED

Manager, Bangladesh Road Transport Corporation

- Mr. SULTANA YASMIN

Deputy Secretary, Ministry of Road Transport and Bridges

- Mr. MOHAMMAD HAIDER KAMRUZZAMAN

Engineer, Bangladesh Road Transport Corporation

- Mr. MD. ABDULLAH AL MAMUN

Additional Chief Engineer, Roads and Highways Department

REPUBLIC OF BENIN

- Mr. HADAROU SOULEMANA

Head of Department, Ministry of Transport

- Mr. HINSON ERIC

Head of Department, Ministry of Transport

-Mr. HOUNTONGBE ERIC

Director, Ministry of Transport

BURKINA FASO

- Mr. ZAKARIA BELEM

Counsellor, Ministry of Transport

REPUBLIC OF CHAD

- Mr. MOUTAYE OUMAR

Head of Department, Ministry of Transport

REPUBLIC OF GAMBIA

- Mr. SULAYMAN GAYE

Expert, Ministry of Transport

ISLAMIC REPUBLIC OF IRAN

- Mr. MEHRAN KHAMISIZADEH

Advisor, Ministry of Roads and Urban Development

- Mr. ABBAS AZADI MOGHADAM

Deputy Director General, Ministry of Roads and Urban Development

- Ms. SARA HADAVAND

Head of the Office, Ministry of Roads and Urban Development

HASHEMITE KINGDOM OF JORDAN

- Mr. ANJELIKA SAPRONENKOVA

Head of the Department of Railway Transport Studies, Land Transport Regulatory Commission

- Mr. DIANA ALSABBAGH

Chief of Department, Jordan Civil Aviation Regulatory Commission

KINGDOM OF MOROCCO

- Ms. SOUAD EL OMRI

Responsible of Cooperation, Ministry of Equipment, Transport, Logistics and Water

FEDERAL REPUBLIC OF NIGERIA

- Ms. MARY UDU EJEMBI

Expert, Ministry of Transport

ISLAMIC REPUBLIC OF PAKISTAN

- Mr. KHIZER KHIZER

Deputy Chief, National Transport Research Centre (NTRC), M/O Communications

THE STATE OF PALESTINE

- Mr. SHUROUQ ABO HAMDEH ANTAR

Director, Ministry of Transport

KINGDOM OF SAUDI ARABIA

- Mr. ABDULAZIZ ALSANAD

Director of International Cooperation and Agreements, Ministry of Transport and Logistic Services

REPUBLIC OF SURINAME

- Mr. LLOYD GEMERTS

Manager, Maritime Authority

- Mr. RYAN FUNG A LOI

Head of Department, Maritime Authority

REPUBLIC OF TURKEY

- Mr. OZCAN BASOGLU

Acting Deputy Director General, TURKISH DGCA

- Mr. HIDIR İLYAS KARABIYIK

Maritime Expert, Ministry Of Transport Infrastructure

- Ms. GÖKÇE FİDAN

Chief Operation, General Directorate of State Airports Authority

- Mr. HALİL KALAYCI

European Union Expert, Ministry of Transport and Infrastructure

- Ms. DERYA AKBULUT

Expert, Ministry of Transport and Infrastructure

- Mr. HASAN UMUR ALSANCAK

Environmental Engineer, Ministry Of Transport and Infrastructure

- Mr. HÜSEYİN TEKER

Engineer, TCDD

- Mr. UMUT YILMAZ

Aviation Expert, TURKISH DGCA

B. THE OIC SUBSIDIARY ORGANS

STATISTICAL, ECONOMIC, SOCIAL RESEARCH AND TRAINING CENTER FOR ISLAMIC COUNTRIES (SESRIC)

- Mr. ESAT BAKIMLI

Senior Researcher, SESRIC

- Mr. DAVRON ISHNAZAROV

Researcher, SESRIC

- Mr. THIerno BALDE

Assistant Project Officer, SESRIC

C. COMCEC COORDINATION OFFICE

- Mr. FATİH ÜNLÜ

Director General

- Mr. SELÇUK KOÇ

Head of Department

- Mr. MEHMET ASLAN

Head of Department

- Prof.Dr. MEHMET BALCILAR

Consultant

- Mr. ALPASLAN GIRAYALP

Consultant

- Mr. NİHAT AKBALIK

Expert

- Mr. M.ADİL SAYAR

Expert

**THE POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS OF
17TH MEETING OF THE COMCEC TRANSPORT AND COMMUNICATIONS
WORKING GROUP**

The COMCEC Transport and Communications Working Group (TCWG) successfully held virtually its 17th Meeting on October 14th, 2021, with the theme of “Mitigation Strategies for Transport Service Providers during and after COVID-19”. During the Meeting, TCWG made deliberations on the policy options in the field of mitigation strategies for transport service providers during and after COVID-19. The policy recommendations were formulated by taking into consideration primarily the research report titled “Pricing of Transport Infrastructure in the OIC Member Countries”. The policy recommendations are as followings:

Policy Recommendation I: Making use of modern and innovative financial measures (i.e. cash support, low-interest long-term loan support, tax breaks etc.) in order to facilitate the access to the adequate financial tools for transport service providers (TSPs) to maintain their services during and after global pandemic.

Rationale:

Financial stability is the precondition for the operational stability of the TSPs. Within this framework, implementing modern and innovative financial measures in order to ease the access to the adequate financial tools are vital for TSPs to maintain their services during and after global pandemic. The pandemic has created financial disruptions for TSPs, bringing some businesses closer to the point of bankruptcy. For this reason, countries can first intervene in their tax obligations to ensure financial relief for businesses. Reduced operations of TSPs have diminished their variable costs. However, due to the decrease in revenues, the ongoing fixed costs are still a burden on the enterprises. For this reason, measures to reduce the fixed costs of TSPs should be supported by the governments. Undoubtedly, the highest fixed cost for TSPs is personnel expenses. In order to protect employment, governments support the payment of staff salaries in order to reduce the fixed costs of TSPs. At the same time, cash support, low-interest long-term loan support through public banks, bank loans backed by state guarantee, a well targeted and equity based provision of subsidies, grant to compensate for lost revenues, tax breaks and rebates can be provided to support the TSPs.

Policy Recommendation II: Improving the regulatory framework for mitigating the adverse impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on TSPs.

Rationale:

An enabling legal framework accompanied with a holistic transport policy is of particular importance for the successful implementation of mitigation strategies for transport service providers (TSP) in the era of COVID-19 pandemic. In this respect, the convenient legal approach is the key to perform in a systematic way with an effective participation of all stakeholders including public, private and civil society in easing the effect of the pandemic on the TSPs.

The relevant authorities should take into account the effects of the pandemic and the changes it has created in the sector so far, while issuing the new legal regulations. In order to eliminate the adverse effects of the new regulations on TSPs, businesses should be involved in and contribute to the process. Businesses operating in the same sector may come together and draft the texts of necessary laws, and submit them to the relevant authorities for their consideration. In this regard, establishment of a special transportation law committee with participation of the all stakeholders may provide significant benefits in terms of developing/improving an enabling regulatory framework for mitigating the adverse impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on transport service providers (TSPs).

Policy Recommendation III: Utilizing digital technologies including artificial intelligence in the transport industry to alleviate the supply-chain risks and thereby mitigating the negative impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on TSPs.

Seamless connectivity and uninterrupted supply-chains are the basis of modern transportation policies. The outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic clearly shows that the current supply-chain industry is considerably fragile and even a tiny delay can bankrupt the whole chain. Therefore, it is time for logistic companies to take an enabling action on agility, improvement in operational excellence, end-to-end visibility, process flexibility and collaboration among different stakeholders for the support of their customers in anticipating disruptions and mitigating the respective impacts. In the long run what is necessary is to build robotics systems for warehouse operations, control power operations and artificial intelligence powered technology platforms. These technologies enhance operational efficiency and as a result better customer management will help logistic companies to anticipate supply chain risks. In addition, shortening of supply-chains through reshoring or near shoring may reduce transport costs and fuel consumption to mitigate COVID-19 pandemic on transport. Within this framework, it is obvious that there is a need to invest in risk management and emergency response preparedness for the whole supply-chain systems.

In addition, technological capability of the TSP is important not only in cost reduction and in simplification of visibility and control across the supply chain, but also in risk mitigation strategies addressing the adverse impacts of COVID-19. TSPs with robust digital capabilities (logistics 4.0 technology, such as the Internet of Things (IoT), cloud computing, automation, and data analytics, robotics, drones, autonomous vehicle etc.) that allow them to provide cargo visibility, traceability and do business online have important advantages. Therefore, leveraging usage of digital technologies including artificial intelligence in the transport industry will be beneficial in adapting to the COVID-19 crisis.

Policy Recommendation IV: Restoring and strengthening competitive conditions of the transport sector to effectively tackle with the negative impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on the TSPs.

Rationale:

An efficient and fair competition environment for the TSPs is vital for boosting competitiveness and stimulating economic growth (national GDP, logistics performance) in a country. In order for TSPs to be less affected by COVID-19, the competitive conditions of the sector should be reorganized by the governments. It is necessary to reorganize the transportation routes that will favor enterprise and encourage cooperation between the operators. In many countries, a transport system suitable for creating alternatives has been adopted by favoring one mode of transport over another. However, this situation causes service providers in different modes of transport to intersect. For this reason, integration between transportation modes can be an efficient way to minimize the intersections and at the end effects of the pandemic. Furthermore, TSPs can be protected from the effects of competition during the pandemic by arranging plans with alternative routes, tariff and frequencies, and the mandatory use of different transportation modes for different times and places.

In addition, making use of some fiscal policies such as "floor price policy" and "price ceiling policy" can be used to regulate a fair competition among the TSPs in the event of crisis. Moreover, organizing or supporting travel promotion campaigns by governments can be a strategic move to stimulate the transport sector and reorganize the competition for TSPs. In this respect, providing holiday loans by public banks, holding important events in different cities, organizing big celebrations, such as festivals and traditional events can have a positive impact for an effective competition among the TSPs.

Policy Recommendation V: Organizing promotion and communication campaigns to restore and enhance demand in various modes of travel like railway, airlines and bus coupled with substantial discounts.

Information and communication campaigns can be useful in persuading the passengers to travel without hesitating to be infected by COVID-19. In these campaigns, the effectiveness of vaccination and safety measures can be highlighted to establish trust in passenger transport. These campaigns can be used as effective instrument to re-brand travel with some modes of transport and correct the current perception of them as unsafe. Therefore, since the transport sector is considered as demand-driven sector, provoke demand is vital important for the continuity of transport services provided by the TSPs. Declaring temporary discounts on tickets to incentive early bookings and the use of the online sales channels can be considered to increase the number of beneficiaries of transport services.

Policy Recommendation VI: Promoting cooperation among TSPs and considering the establishment of an OIC TSP Alliance or joint transport companies, wherever feasible.

Enhancing international and regional cooperation is vital important for tackling a global challenge. Governments should strengthen international and regional collaboration for easing the burden of global pandemic. OIC member countries shall be encouraged to increase their cooperation in developing further standard practices in cross border roadways activities and

human mobility; developing the visa facilitation measures for international truck drivers; and developing harmonized contingency plans for procedures during emergency situations. Presence of international bodies can be effective tool for better coordination and collaboration between member countries for the management of the process of fighting the pandemic.

Policy Recommendation VII: Introduction of transport innovations to ease burden on conventional transport means.

Emerging transport innovations can be used as important tools for easing the current travel restrictions. Drones and automated vehicles are the two potential technological means among others in the era of COVID -19 that can help to solve travel restriction problems. Though not used on a large scale, they are considered very effective in transporting infected persons and in delivery of supplies to high-risk areas. Drones can also be used for services such as making public service announcements, for disinfectant spraying as well as for monitoring social distancing. It is high time to consider the use of transport innovations so that travel related regulations could be eased quickly. The use of drones for frequent control of fever, which is an important symptom of the COVID-19 disease, at transportation stations can be expanded. Drones that measure temperature by flying from a certain height can make it easier to detect passengers with signs of illness and to notice an extra risky situation. The autonomous and semi-autonomous robots and drones could be deployed in ports and shipyards of OIC Countries to help to combat the effects of Covid-19. The OIC Countries could deploy drones for delivery and transportation, especially of medical commodities and Covid-19 supplies.

Policy Recommendation VIII: Promoting measure for safer travel with respect to COVID pandemic and other infectious diseases.

Wearing masks, keeping social distance and observing hygiene rules are considered vital in order to prevent the spread of COVID-19 pandemic and reduce the risk of transmission. Transport service providers should ensure that these rules are enforced, making the transportation service safer for the public. Therefore, transportation service providers should pay attention to the use of masks at transportation stations and in transportation vehicles and provide masks for the passengers. Products to meet the immediate hygiene needs of passengers such as napkins, disinfectants and wet wipes should also be provided by service providers. Service providers must bear this cost as the failure to use these products will pose a great risk to the team, other passengers and anyone else in the event of transmission. Dedicated, innovative tools (rail car or train cabin can be equipped by automatic disinfection systems) for the prevention, recovery, and containment processes might be developed to control the virus during mobility activities.

Instruments to Realize the Policy Advice:

COMCEC Transport and Communications Working Group: In its subsequent meetings, the Working Group may elaborate on the above-mentioned policy areas in a more detailed manner.

COMCEC Project Funding: Under the COMCEC Project Funding, the COMCEC Coordination Office calls for projects each year. With the COMCEC Project Funding, the Member Countries participating in the Working Groups can submit multilateral cooperation projects to be financed through grants by the COMCEC Coordination Office. For the above-mentioned policy areas, the Member Countries can utilize the COMCEC Project Funding and the COMCEC Coordination Office may finance the successful projects in this regard. These projects may include organizing seminars, training programs, study visits, exchange of experts, workshops and preparing analytical studies, needs assessments and training materials/documents.