

20 Years of Unique Experiment in Economic Cooperation

Article by D-8 Secretary-General on the 20th Anniversary of D-8

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Twenty years ago, precisely on June 15, 1997, the Heads of States of Bangladesh, Egypt, Indonesia, Iran, Malaysia, Nigeria, Pakistan and Turkey came together for an exalted purpose and signed the Istanbul Declaration to establish the D-8 Organization for Economic Cooperation. In light of the noble vision of Prof. Dr. Necmettin Erbakan, our Organization's founding father, D-8 aimed to promote:

- Peace instead of conflict,
- Dialogue instead of confrontation,
- Cooperation instead of exploitation,
- Justice instead of double-standard,
- Equality instead of discrimination,
- Democracy instead of oppression.

20 Years of Socio-economic Success

Over the last 20 years, D-8 has emerged as one of the world's promising trade and economic blocs. It has established itself as a unique economic group of eight developing countries comprising over 1.1 billion population or 15 percent of the world's population, a combined GDP of over US\$3.7 trillion, an export volume of over US\$693 billion or four per cent share of the global trade, an intra-organizational trade of over US\$100 billion and an annual GDP growth rate of six per cent. In line with this impressive economic growth performance, per capita GDP of the countries rose exponentially and more than doubled. From US\$2,207 in 1997, average per capita GDP of D-8 rose to US\$4,645 dollars in 2016. This has been a strong indicator of the overall improvement in the living standards of the peoples of the Member States. With its young and dynamic population, robust economic growth, strong trade relations and the will to cooperate in all strategic sectors such as industry, agriculture, tourism, transportation and energy, D-8 is poised to carry its success to the future.

In striving to achieve its lofty objectives, the D-8 has successfully held 8 Summits, 16 Council and 37 Commission Meetings and with the participation of hundreds of delegates from its Member States. It has also held several Ministerial, Senior Officials, Task Force, Expert Meetings and Workshops in six priority

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areas of sectoral cooperation, namely Trade, Agriculture, Industry, Energy, Transportation and Tourism. As it marks its 20th Anniversary, our Organization is looking forward to consolidating its success with the 9th Summit that will be hosted by Turkey.

Legal Instruments

Another area of success of the Organization concerns the development of legal instruments required for the regulation of its activities and cooperation in the areas that it considered critical. The conclusion and entry into force of the Visa Agreement, Customs Agreement, and Preferential Trade Agreement (PTA) have served to facilitate, regulate and promote cooperation in variety of spheres among the Organization's members.

Among these, D-8 attaches great importance to the PTA, as it serves the ultimate goal of promoting and increasing the level of intra-trade among its Member States. D-8 PTA was signed by all the eight Member States at the 5th D-8 Summit on 13 May 2006 in Bali, Indonesia and it officially took effect on 1 July, 2016. The D-8 PTA envisages a cooperation scheme that will strongly benefit our Member States, and boost trade volume and economic interactions among them. The PTA also aspires to facilitate intra-trade and increase its volume to US\$500 billion as targeted in the D-8 Roadmap.

Beneficial Dialogue with International Organizations and Sectoral Partners

Over the past 20 years, D-8 has succeeded in establishing and developing cooperation with a wide spectrum of international institutions.

At the 69th session of the United Nations General Assembly, all the Member States of the United Nations adopted the resolution granting Observer Status to the D-8. Observer status in UNGA enables D-8 strengthen its public visibility, benefit from worldwide experience, including the opportunity to enhance its capacity-building process, and share a platform with the international community.

D-8 also signed a Joint Declaration with United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) on April 2, 2015 in Vienna. The UNIDO, having institutional capacity for inclusive and sustainable industrial development linked to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG), will assist in capacity building within the D-8 Organization.

Through these 20 years, D-8 signed MoUs with the Organization of the Islamic Cooperation (OIC), the Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO), the Black Sea Economic Cooperation (BSEC), the

International Youth Foundation (IYF), the Islamic World Science Citation Center (ISC), the African-Asian Rural Development Organization (AARDO), the Turkish Cooperation and Coordination Agency (TIKA), the Agriculture and Rural Development Support Institution (ARDSI), the United Cities and Local Governments Middle East and West Asia (UCLG-MEWA) and the Prof. Dr. Necmettin Erbakan Foundation. A Letter of Intent on establishing cooperation between D-8 and the World Maritime University (WMU) was also signed in the Headquarters of the World Maritime University in Malmo, Sweden, in July, 2012.

In addition to our partnership with international institutions, we highly value the contributions made by our Affiliated Institutions, namely D-8 Seed Bank, D-8 Technology Transfer and Exchange Network (D-8 TTEN), D-8 Federation of Chambers of Commerce and Industry (D-8 FCCI), D-8 Fertilizer Association, D-8 Automotive, D-8 International University, D8COOP and D-8 Animal Feed Information Center (D-8 AFIC) to the development of the shared economic strategy in the Organization.

Future of Our Organization

D-8 is still a young organization that has been in existence for only 20 years. Yet, it has made giant strides towards playing a major role in the global economic arena. However, the challenges ahead are enormous. Given the dynamic nature of international economic relations, we need to redouble our efforts in order to increase the density of traffic and volume of interactions between and among our members with a view to fostering economic cooperation and development. We also need to increase public awareness of the Organization and its activities, first and foremost within the D-8 community and subsequently on a large scale and to expand liaison and cooperation with other economic and regional groups and multilateral institutions. These will enable our Organization to project itself effectively at the international level and play the bigger role that it deserves.