

**Speech of the D-8 Secretary-General in
4th edition of ‘International Model OIC’ of Islamic Conference Youth Forum for
Dialogue and Cooperation (ICYF-DC)
23 October 2016, Mashhad, Iran**

**Your Excellency Ambassador Elshad Iskandarov, President of ICYF-DC
Distinguished participants,
Ladies and gentlemen,**

I am delighted to be here with you all on the occasion of this 4th edition of ‘International Model OIC’ of Islamic Conference Youth Forum for Dialogue and Cooperation (ICYF-DC). I am certain that we will have useful discussions on utilizing young talents, their intellect through the universities of our Member States. I find this as relevant as you do, for our organizations continuously seek to promote the life, living and state of the people, especially youth.

I take this opportunity to thank Ambassador Elshad Iskandarov, President of ICYF-DC, for this invitation to share our views on how we may more fruitfully engage to deepening and advancing cooperation. I look forward to some very interesting ideas coming out of our discussions today.

**Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,**

Millions of youths have been deprived of a dream. They see no future; no hope for prosperity. They are stuck in the vicious cycle of poverty and unemployment. This silent majority is a time bomb. They will explode when we expect it the least. We must first ensure that they have sufficient means to live a life with dignity. Economists and political scientists have long argued that citizens, especially youth, are most productive and peaceful when they have the freedom of choice. It is the freedom of politics, economy, jobs, way of life and so on. Society must ensure economic freedom alongside the rule of law. Incentives to work hard must come as insurance for prosperity. The D-8 Organization works to give governments more economic choice and offer their youth better living through peaceful means of trade

and economic activities. Allow me to highlight in brief the premises that brought the leadership of D-8 together in one platform in 1997 and the works we pursue in the organization.

In 1997, leaders of Bangladesh, Egypt, Indonesia, Iran, Malaysia, Nigeria, Pakistan and Turkey formed the D-8 Organization for Economic Cooperation through the historic '*Istanbul Declaration*'. The spirit of establishment of this inter-governmental entity entails economic cooperation through intensification of trade and commercial relations and enhanced participation in decision-making at international level. The common and shared belief as well as diversity among the Member States makes it a unique organization with opportunities as well as challenges.

The D-8 is a mix of Members with different economic size and strength. Some of its Members place their seat among the top economies of the world. During the establishment of this economic group back in 1997, the leaders of the Member States had strong political will as well as commitment to cater to the need of the countries in a small but more effective group that might necessarily be able to avoid complexities of a large organization and make decisions that are prompt, effective and result-oriented. Since its establishment in 1997, the D-8 successfully formulated the Charter, Global Vision, Roadmap and several other documents in order to ensure growth through effective partnership and elevate Member States' positions in the world economy, diversify and create new opportunities in trade relations and provide better standard of living. The D-8 is also committed to work towards broadening the support for the Organization at the national level within the Member States and strengthening its visibility and image at regional and international levels, including through active engagement in and promotion of South-South and South-North cooperation. The Charter of the Organization stipulates establishment of 'mutually beneficial collaborative relationships with other states, regional or international organizations, institutions and non-governmental organizations with a view to establishing partnerships and/or initiating joint projects'.

Peace and prosperity through economic cooperation being the core business of the Organization, its Members have set trade targets and agreed on trade facilitation measures having major impact on the level of economic activities within the D-8.

Ease in movement of people and goods are being worked out and we are striving to make the Organization a self-reliant, mutually inter-dependant entity that not only sustains the demand within itself but also feeds beyond its periphery. We do these as a response to the change taking place in the fabric of international relations which have undergone radical shift in approaches.

Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The whole purpose of establishing clubs of nation states is to cooperate, to engage peacefully so that peoples live in harmony with dignity, peace and enjoy prosperity. I have been invited to contribute to ‘Necessary Building Blocks for Deepening and Advancing Cooperation’ within the context of international organizations. As I have elaborated above, our Organization was established to further cooperation in a more concrete, consolidated and efficient manner within the Islamic world. The D-8 leadership envisioned a unique platform stretching the physical borders from Asia to Europe to Africa, whereby the nations could act with more agility, efficiency and within a more efficient perimeter. The D-8 leaders have limited the scope of the Organization only to economic development and diversity of people’s economic choice through rapprochement of nations by trade and development activities. As Secretary-General of the Organization, I cannot contend myself with the progress so far achieved, but, I see great potentials and untapped areas which could be promoted to better the lives of our peoples. Being an integral part of the Organization, I along with my team in the Secretariat have been continuously engaging in making positive things happen so that the impact of establishing such unique organization becomes apparent and reasonable to the people.

In the first decade since our birth, we succeeded in doing policy formulation and coordination with a slow pace of implementation. The D-8 moved steadily in institutionalizing its working procedures--defining cooperation, hierarchy of meetings, setting up of the Secretariat, etc. Multilateral instruments started to be implemented and economic matters began to realize. We have succeeded in prioritizing our cooperation in six broad areas: trade, agriculture, industry & sme, energy, transportation and tourism.

In order to realize our goals and objectives, we have partnered with international organizations. We have entered into partnership arrangements with a number of international and regional organizations, including the UN and the OIC. We have harmonized our priorities, short, medium and long term goals so that in partnership we achieve our targets most efficiently and timely. All D-8 Members have common membership with the OIC. If you scan closely, you will see that the common members have unique characteristics in human capital, trade, values, natural resources etc. The Members share common belief; the organization is not limited by geography, rather expanded throughout continents, it has unutilized human resources and a great knowledge base, it has unexplored natural potential, huge internal market and over a billion population with huge workforce and a lot of young people and so forth. The high return will be a determinant within the Organization once leaders sufficiently invest in the Organization. None of the D-8 countries are each other's major trading partners even though the Organization achieved a significant level of intra-trade transactions. Most of them are still relying on trade extensively with the western countries, which prevents their industrial base from fully blooming and perpetuates their dependency. It is, therefore, incumbent for the leaders of the Organization to decide on its future fate: cooperate in partnership for a more integrated economy or follow suit as a usual entity.

Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

We are working hard to nurture our youth. We have done significant progress to establish D-8 International University in Iran. The D-8 International University will promote scientific research and innovation in the D-8 Member States.

We envisage revival of the golden age when great minds in our region excelled in every field of science from astronomy and astrophysics, medicine, biology, to political science and philosophy. Establishment of the D-8 International University will help us in our joint effort to achieve our glory in science, technology and innovation.

Governments in developed and developing countries, including the D-8 Organization are revitalizing their national economies through various strategies, policies, and measures, including through enhancement of investment in human resources development. A solid base in human resources will return economic benefits manifold. We, in the D-8, are adding to individual government efforts. Therefore, I eagerly look forward to any further opportunity for collaborative partnership with other universities and centers of excellence in the region.

As I mentioned in the beginning that our youth is one of our greatest treasure and this formidable force has to be guided properly with education, employment and appropriate religious enlightenment. Once we can ensure decent employment for our youth or provide enabling environment for entrepreneurial prospect, they will not only be the driving force of our economy but also be immune from extremism and radicalism. We aim at replacing dispossession with economic choice and thus, contribute to removing the criteria for security threat in local as well as global context.

Finally, **Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen**, impoverished states are more vulnerable to conflict and chaos, endangering their citizens, regional neighbours, and the wider world as livelihoods are destroyed, investments vanish, and uncontrolled regions become a breeding ground for terrorism, trafficking, environmental devastation, and disease. In a vicious circle, these destabilizing effects of conflict as well as demographic and environmental challenges make it even harder for leaders and institutions to promote human development.

We cannot let this happen; let our commonalities and complementarities create conditions for optimizing our potentials through cooperation, let us assist one another to progress and prosper. And let us deepen and strengthen the bonds that tie us all. The D-8 with its sizeable population, resources and physical area deserves more. Let each of us add to the strength of others.

The D-8 as an international player is still young but it is worth noting that the Organization strives to be an important agent of positive change. The diversity of its spread is a strength and opportunity that the Organization should actively nourish to

reap the maximum benefit from. The more we cooperate, the nearer we will be to success. We should come closer to realize the benefits of partnership. Our governments need our proactive role and collective partnership in order to enable them achieve the goals and targets.

I thank you all for your kind audience and wish this event a resounding success.