

**Statement**  
**by**  
**The D-8 Secretary-General at**  
**The D-8 Private Sector Meeting**  
**1-2 September 2015, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia**

*His Excellency,*  
*Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of Malaysia,*  
*Datuk Seri Reezal Merican Naina Merican*

*Distinguished President of the National Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Malaysia*  
*(NCCIM), Datuk Syed Ali Alattas*

*Distinguished Presidents of D-8 Chambers of Commerce and Industry,*  
*Distinguished Delegates,*  
*Ladies and Gentlemen,*

I am pleased to be here with you today in this very important meeting, *the D-8 Private Sector Meeting*. This meeting is a fundamental platform to coordinate and integrate the role of private sector of the D-8 Member States in a concerted manner and subsequently, contribute in building economic growth, enhancing trade and investment, innovating, and providing goods and services that improve lives of the people in the region.

On behalf of the D-8 Organization for Economic Cooperation (the D-8), I would like to cordially welcome you all to this meeting. At the outset, I would like to extend my heartfelt gratitude to the Government of Malaysia, especially to the National Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Malaysia (NCCIM) for their initiative and effort to voluntarily organize and host this important meeting in the capital city of Kuala Lumpur. I also would like to congratulate Malaysia for commemoration of the 58<sup>th</sup> Independence Day on 31<sup>st</sup> August 2015, yesterday.

Here, I would like to express my appreciation to D-8 Member States for their commitment mainly the respective Chamber of Commerce and Industry of the D-8 Member States and delegates here, whose dedication and support has made this meeting possible.

It is already about 18 years since the establishment of the D-8 Organization. This is the high time the organization particularly the private sector of the D-8 Member States to have an in-

depth assessment, review and consolidate effort to reap the benefit through this organization. Indeed, the past years have seen immense economic challenges in the D-8 Member States, including in some parts of developing and developed countries. Private sectors remain the key driver for increasing trade, investment, as well as catalyst for the economic growth and development.

Therefore, the D-8 Chambers of Commerce and Industry have an important role to play in promoting private sector cooperation and collaboration in the D-8 Member States. There are vital needs to streamline our efforts and seek strategic approaches to overcome economic challenges. This includes implementation of feasible programmes and conducting the feasibility study of new possible projects for implementation. There are great potentials in the D-8 with market of more than one billion population, strategically located in four major continents mainly southeast Asia, south Asia, some part of Europe and central Asia and west Africa, rich with natural resources and abundant of skilled and semi-skilled human resources and low labour cost.

### **Distinguished Delegates,**

As you may concur with me that trade is a backbone of D-8 Member States' economy and it needs to be increased constantly. As illustration, the volume of D-8 intra-trade increased impressively from US\$ 20 billion in 1997 to around US\$ 122 billion in 2014, which represents a solid improvement. However, this level is still below the target of D-8 Roadmap, which is US\$ 500 billion by end of 2018. This is a strong message that we should pursue and achieve.

On the Government side, effort has been made to simplify the rules of origin and harmonize the custom codes for implementation of the Preferential Trade Agreement among the D-8 Member States. However, the private sector must highlight to their respective government that there is need for the creation of new trade and investment opportunities to boost our D-8 intra trade. I know that many of our partners are currently working on this. Openness to trade and investment is not an option: it is a must. It stimulates job creation, technological progress and innovation. It will be equally important to support economic diversification, specialisation and competitiveness of SMEs to become part of value chains and benefit from trade linkages.

Enhancing the capacity and competitiveness of the small and medium enterprises (SMEs) is absolutely crucial in the quest to the economic growth and development. The fact that, the SMEs in the D-8 Member States contributes significantly in terms of job creation, total employment, and enhancing trade and investment and economic growth. Building economic foundations, growing businesses, promoting public-private partnerships, adopting of the triple helix collaboration and investing in people are instances of the paths that need to be pursued by both governments and private sectors. Taking into account that each country has its own mix of constraints, challenges and opportunities to stimulating economic growth and development cooperation, it is imperative to build value chain essential within a coherent logic of model among these paths.

**Distinguished Delegates,**

A well-functioning private sector is critical to achieving strong and sustainable growth and economic development. In this context, I believe the D-8 Chambers of Commerce and Industry or D-8 FCCI can be a platform for the D-8 private sector and business community of the D-8 Member States to share their views, exchange experiences, explore, and appraise business opportunity. Among others measures to enhance the collaboration between the D-8 private sectors include:

- Improving the business environment notably through reforms and reduction of administrative burden for businesses;
- Creating a transparent and open regime for both domestic and foreign investors;
- Facilitating access to finance mainly for the SMEs and stimulating development in innovative and creative industries;
- Upgrading the human resource expertise and skills; and
- Strengthening market institutions and good economic governance;

**Distinguished Delegates,**

I look forward to hearing your views and recommendations. Moreover, the discussions you will have in this meeting will also serve as a valuable input to the work of our D-8 Chambers

of Commerce and Industry. I would like to underline that we have every intention of ensuring that this review is done in partnership.

To conclude, there are many opportunities for doing business with D-8 as it moves toward the D-8 Roadmap 2018 milestone and beyond. I hope this meeting will explore in much more detail than my cursory rundown here of the challenges D-8 faces in the years ahead, and the important contributions outside investors can make. I also expect that this meeting to be held every year in and in every capital of the D-8 Member States by rotation basis, as presently the Business Forum is hold back to back to back as a sideline of the Summit. However, this is entirely up to the private sector to decide, because only this forum can lay out framework and mechanism towards enhancing future cooperation among the private sectors of the D-8 Member States.

Last but not least, I would like to express, once again, my deep thankfulness and high appreciation to the Government of Malaysia, especially to the National Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Malaysia (NCCIM) in particular, for their timely initiative to bring the delegates from the D-8 countries to this important meeting and I hope such an initiative be followed by other D-8 Member States in future.

I wish all the success of this meeting and thank you for your kind attention.