

Statement
By
the D-8 Secretary General, Dr. Seyed Ali Mohammad Mousavi
at the 1st Turkey-Africa Agriculture Ministers Meeting and Agribusiness Forum
28 April 2017, Antalya, Turkey

Mr. Chairman,
Distinguished Delegates,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am delighted to be here at the Ministerial Session of the Turkey-Africa 1st Agriculture Ministers Meeting and Agribusiness Forum. On behalf of the D-8 Secretariat, I extend my warm welcome to all Honourable Ministers, Heads of Delegations and distinguished delegates to the Forum.

I would like to express my profound gratitude and sincere appreciation to the Government of the Republic of Turkey in general and the Ministry of Food, Agriculture and Live Stock in particular, for hosting this important and well-organized event in this beautiful and historic city of Antalya as well as the elaborate arrangements and warm welcome and generous hospitality accorded to us all. I would also like to welcome and express my appreciation to all the distinguished delegates for their presence as well as their valuable contributions during the Senior Officials' Meeting.

In the D-8 Organization for Economic Cooperation, Agriculture is considered as one of the priority areas of cooperation as it contributes significantly to economic growth and foreign exchange earnings as well as it serves achieving food security. Simultaneously, agriculture has strategic importance in national economic development, especially in reducing poverty, providing employment and facilitating sustainable utilization of natural resources and environment. Currently, D-8 agriculture employs almost 32 percent of the total workforce and contributes about 14.2 percent to the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of the D-8 Member Countries. It should be pointed out that two Member-States of the D-8, namely the Arab Republic of Egypt and the Federal Republic of Nigeria are African countries and they account for a large chunk of the continent's agricultural imports and exports.

*Mr. Chairman,
Distinguished Delegates,*

Allow me, at this point, 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 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.

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. We have succeeded in prioritizing our cooperation in six broad areas: trade, industry & sme, energy, transportation, tourism and as I mentioned above, agriculture.

So far, the D-8 Organization has concluded five Ministerial Meetings on Agriculture and Food Security and there are five working groups operating under the Agricultural cooperation, namely Standard on Trade, Seed Security and Trade, Marine and Fisheries, Animal Feed and Fertilizer. The sub-sector of the Agriculture and Food Security sector among others includes fish and aquaculture, cereals, vegetables, fruits, and livestock.

Some of the major achievements under the D-8 agriculture cooperation include the creation of the D-8 seed bank web site which provides a wide spectrum of database on matters related to seed production, the establishment of the D-8 Fertilizer Association and the creation of the D-8 Animal Feed Information Center (AFIC) web site.

It is worth mentioning that aggregate intra D-8 trade has increased substantially from \$20 billion in 1997 to \$122 billion in 2014. Out of this figure, intra D-8 agricultural trade accounts for \$20.2 billion or 16.5 per cent of the total. Before the creation of the D-8 Organization in 1997, the value of intra-agricultural trade amongst the D-8 countries was \$3.7 billion. It is the lofty goal of the leaders of the Organization to give intra trade a quantum leap by moving it to \$500 billion within the shortest possible time. It is my believe that this forum will give impetus to this aspiration by further deepening the existing sectoral cooperation and trade relations in agriculture and food security amongst some of the D-8 Member-Countries. It is therefore a welcome development.

*Mr. Chairman,
Distinguished Delegates,*

The African continent is endowed with fertile soil, favourable climate, abundant rainfall and infinite water sources. Agriculture is Africa's largest economic sector, representing 15 percent of the continent's total GDP, or more than \$100 billion annually in monetary value. The sector also plays an important role in Africa's foreign trade. African countries export a wide variety of agricultural commodities to the world such as cereals, nuts, tea, coffee, cocoa, fresh and dried fruits, vegetables, sesame seeds, gum arabic and livestock products. However, the agricultural sector in Africa is relatively underdeveloped as public and private investment in the sector remains very low. Only few African countries invest up to 10 percent of their annual national budgets in agricultural development as envisaged under the Comprehensive African Agriculture Development Programme (CAADP). Most of them commit between one per cent and three percent of their annual public expenditure to the sector. Therefore, there is the need for the inflow of streams of public and private investments to this critical sector in order to increase its productivity, develop its value chain and optimize its contributions to the GDP. It is against this back drop that I wish to call on Turkish private equity investors to explore the lucrative business opportunities provided by the African Agriculture.

It is important to point out that foreign investment is crucial for African and indeed other developing countries' economies. This is because it engenders the transfer of technology and facilitate improvement in productivity. It can also help alleviate Africa's high unemployment and

poverty levels by creating jobs, increasing per capita income and elevating the overall standards of living. Furthermore, it fast-tracks economic growth and development, improves efficiency and competitiveness, creates a multiplier effect that benefit the entire society and provides a veritable linkage to the global economy.

In this regard, it is gladdening to note that African governments are vigorously working on the major factors that thwarts investment interests and activities and block opportunities for substantial inflow of long-term investment into Africa. These include the dearth of socio-economic and industrial infrastructure; absence of modernized, predictable and harmonized regulatory environment; as well as social instability and political volatility and other security challenges that constitute disincentive for international investors.

I also wish to point out that infrastructural development in Africa is a lucrative investment frontier from which optimal value can be derived. I therefore urge Turkish entrepreneurs to consider investing their resources in fixing Africa's infrastructure and constructing non-existing ones, rather than being daunted by the absence of same. Some of these infrastructural facilities include electricity generation and distribution, rail transportation, road networks, world-class aviation facilities, water supply, irrigation facilities, health care, etc. Africa requires mixed financing options in order to close the wide infrastructure funding gap, as conventional statutory budgetary allocations will not suffice in its efforts at infrastructural upgrade and modernization.

Turkey is a great country with enviable expertise in the areas of agricultural production, food security and rural development. Therefore, it can assist African countries in areas such as irrigation systems, agricultural mechanization, land consolidation, desertification and climate change mitigation strategies, etc. Furthermore, Turkey can exchange its experiences and best practices and provide supports to Africa on agricultural financing and credits; climate resilience, agricultural trade and investment; agricultural inputs; agroindustry; youth and women empowerment as well as food and nutrition security.

In conclusion, I would like to reiterate the need for Turkey and African states represented here to use this forum to map out collaboration strategies and come up with sound decisions and viable projects towards promoting sustainable agricultural growth and development and agro-trade and investment as well as raising the quality and quantity of agricultural commodities through the creation of an enabling environment that engender public and private investment and partnerships in the agricultural sector and agro-based industry.

Once Again, I would like to express, through you Mr. Chairperson, my deep appreciation to the Ministry of Food Agriculture and Livestock of the Republic of Turkey for their warm hospitality and elaborate arrangements. I wish you fruitful deliberations and success in all your endeavours.

I thank you very much for your attention.