

**Statement by the D-8 Secretary-General  
at  
the 18th World Clean Air Congress in September 2019 in Istanbul**

*Distinguished Guests,*

*Ladies and Gentlemen,*

It is a great pleasure to join you today in this highly important panel on low carbon economy and address an issue that bears immense significance not only for the D-8 Member States but for the whole world. Before I begin, I would like to take the opportunity to thank Turkish National Committee for Air Pollution Control (TUNCAP) and the International Union of Air Pollution Prevention Associations (IUAPPA) for co-organizing this event. I also would like to thank Dr. Noor Zaitun Yahaya and The Clean Air Forum Society of Malaysia (MyCAS) for bringing this important issue to the attention of our Secretariat.

*Ladies and Gentlemen,*

I think most of our participants will agree when I say that having this meeting in the wake of the **UN Climate Summit is extremely timely**. Just this Monday, we heard the strong voice of the youth. They expressed their disappointment and resentment about the fight against climate change. A 16-year-old girl stepped up to say that she is stripped off her future and blamed previous generations for the long-pending negligence. She is right. We cannot expect our kids to bear the burden therefore if we want to win the climate battle and achieve Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by 2030, **we have to claim full responsibility, get our facts right, cooperate, change and act!**

*Ladies and Gentlemen,*

For long we have treated climate change as a separate, isolated issue. We spent time and effort to find ways to boost economic growth, increase employment and expand production. And in most of these endeavours, carbon footprint and climate change were treated merely as unpleasant by-products. Today, however, we finally recognize that without solving this issue, there will be no growth, no employment and no production. Therefore, it is high-time for all of

us to realize that climate change is not an issue that we can handle in isolation, it is rather embedded in all our actions. If we want to be successful and win this fight, **we should change our mindset, place the concept of “sustainability” in the very core of all our decisions and cooperate.** This brings me to the role of international cooperation in maintaining sustainability and the importance of D-8 in international fora.

### *Distinguished Participants,*

Intergovernmental organizations play a crucial role in global policy making. There is no gainsaying that this role becomes even more vital when it comes to stir cooperation and create synergies among states to address **issues that exceed their borders.** As D-8, we work relentlessly to align our line of business with UN SDGs and see ourselves especially committed to **SDG No:17, that is Partnership for Goals.** During my meeting with the Deputy Secretary General of UN, Mrs. Amina J. Mohammed, I was pleased to see that Her Excellency also attaches a special importance to this goal. Emphasizing especially the role of South-South cooperation, she rightly stated that this goal motivates us to bring different stakeholders on the same table for them to discuss, share experience, develop actionable projects, and create meaningful outcomes. I would like to inform you on some of the recent initiatives that we have undertaken in this vein.

As you are well aware, renewable energy investments lie in the very heart of switching to a low carbon economy. Almost all D-8 Member States have abundant renewable energy resources in various forms. It is saddening though, despite the great potential, most of these resources are under or non-utilized. In this regard, as D-8 Secretariat we have reached out to the **International Renewable Energy Agency (IRENA)** early this year and agreed to prepare a comprehensive report on the resource metrics as well as the legal framework of renewable energy investments in D-8 Member States. The report will be launched in a workshop attended by senior energy officials as well as private sector representatives of the Member States. Our aim is to increase the flow of information and hopefully investments among our highly promising countries.

Another initiative that I would like to share with you, refers back to my initial remark about how we should change our mindset and cooperate while doing it. Just early this month we held the “Workshop for D-8 Countries on International Investment Policy Reform” in cooperation with United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), Islamic Development

Bank (IsDB) and Turkish Cooperation and Coordination Agency (TIKA). The workshop revealed some bitter truths about the bilateral investment treaties signed by our Member States, as early as in 80s, 70s, even 60s. Senior legal experts from the relevant Ministries asserted that **these agreements deprive our Member States of the right to act selective or impose restrictions on the foreign investments**. Taking a cue from developed nations, our aim is to capacitate our Member States to modernize their agreement as to protect human health, environment and resources. We are placing “**sustainability**” at the very core of investments and ensuring that it is preserved through legal provisions.

The same bitter truth exists for foreign trade. A couple of weeks ago, The Economist published a shocking statistic revealing that two-thirds ocean plastic comes from the rivers in ten countries, **5 of which are D-8 Member States**. After China has placed a ban on plastic imports in 2017, South East Asian countries including Malaysia and Indonesia have become major destinations for American and European waste. And this waste is piling up in the landfills of these countries who lack sufficient recycling capacity. We are pleased to see that significant restrictions have been placed but still there are more to be done. Recognizing trade as a priority area, we support the right of our Member States to protect their environmental assets in all international trade deals. Therefore, we encourage our Member States to align their policy agenda and take a common stance in international fora, to better protect their rights.

*Ladies and Gentlemen,*

D-8 is the most promising economic group of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Our combined GDP, which stands at USD 4 trillion today, is estimated to grow into USD 38 trillion by 2050, **making us the third largest economy after China and India**. It is our responsibility to support this growth while keeping a vigilant eye on sustainability. As D-8 we recently mapped out our Decennial Roadmap which lays the foundations of our economic cooperation. As part of our efforts to align our line of work with UN SDGs, we designated 2020-2030 as the timeframe of our roadmap. Through the Roadmap, we propose a three-staged monitoring mechanism for our Member States to report on their success regarding priority areas. This will allow us to make an objective assessment of our past performance and develop mechanisms to help whoever is lagging behind. Prior to reaching the target year 2030, we expect all our Member States to submit an evaluation of their achievement. I believe this will be complimentary to UN’s work and will present a praiseworthy example of South-South cooperation.

Further to that, we incorporated the idea of sustainability and the concept of climate change to many of our work. In agriculture, we encourage our Member States to do collaborative research to develop new technologies and in particular address the effect of climate change on crop degradation problem. In energy, we instruct our Member States to synergize their efforts to capitalize their renewable energy resources. We encourage cooperation, exchange of knowledge and technology transfer on the optimal use of energy. We propose protecting marine environment by the implementation of relevant International Maritime Organization (IMO) instruments. Last but not least, we commit to expand eco-tourism in Member States, which will reduce the overall emissions accruing from this industry.

*Distinguished Guests,*

*Ladies and Gentlemen,*

**The pessimists are abundant and more vocal, yet the future always have and always will belong to the optimists that dare to take action.** I chose to align myself with this attitude. We should not boast for the big achievements or underestimate the smaller ones. Instead, we should adopt an inclusive mindset that reflects sustainability in all our actions, initiatives and endeavours. It might be as big as a major technological breakthrough and as small as reducing our own carbon footprint. The important thing is to never give up and keep improving.

Before I finish, I would like to quote from the Prophet (peace be upon him): “If the Resurrection were established upon one of you while he has in his hand a sapling, then let him plant it.” **This is a reminder to all of us that we should insist in developing, growing and fighting.** And in doing so we should renew our faith in international dialogue and cooperation for that no country is potent enough to solve this problem by itself.

I wish to once again register my deep appreciation to all our distinguished invitees for their invaluable participation.

I thank you for your kind attention.