

**Statement by the D-8 Secretary-General at the COVID-19 Virtual Round Table which is
organized by the D-8 held on 16 April, 2020**

I wish to start by thanking you all for honoring our invitation to attend this important roundtable. Your kind and valuable attendance in the midst of galvanizing national efforts is a testimony of the desire to cooperate and support one another in this trying time of the COVID 19 pandemic and your resolve to strengthen our collaboration through the D-8 Health and Social Protection programme platform. The key expectation from this meeting is to enhance cooperation, identify constraints and bottlenecks faced by Member States in tackling the pandemic and build post pandemic resilient health systems. This would be complemented through mobilizing needed resources from within and other sources as we strive to support the national efforts of the Member States.

The world is facing a pandemic unlike any in recent history, with huge disruptions to livelihood, economy and health systems. The attendant effect of the pandemic, according to the IMF, will lead to recession far deeper and more devastating than that of 2008. Loss of income worldwide, the aggregate of which is in the region of 3.4 trillion dollars, will affect billions of people across the world. There is no gainsaying that this impact would be felt in our Member States. This clearly brings to the fore the nexus between health security and economy. It is therefore imperative that D-8 as an economic bloc use this sectoral track to support one another in order to mitigate the consequential adversities of the pandemic as well as facilitate partnerships, experience sharing and mutual support and assistance.

The impact of the pandemic on our Member States varies, with some more negatively impacted than others. However, the scale of the economic impact transcends national frontiers, with loss of jobs and revenues in some of the best performing sectors such as tourism, manufacturing, commerce, agriculture and mineral resources as well as disruption of supply chains that serve as the world's central nervous system. Current responses by Member States, though commendable, need to be complemented with beneficial multilateralism and veritable cooperative frameworks such as this, considering the overwhelming nature of the pandemic. In other words, D-8 Member States need to cast their nest much wider. As pointed out by David Mitrany in his book "A Working Peace System", the problem of our time is not how to keep nations peacefully apart, but how to bring them actively together. It is in this light that the D-8 Member States have to work together as the untold hardships can be lessened through effective cooperation and solidarity. Within the group are countries that are better endowed that can help others in the spirit of economic cooperation and solidarity in the areas of commodities, technology, equipment, pharmaceuticals and other needed items. We are as well reaching out to the private sector, philanthropists and charity organizations to also support our needs after receiving and computing Member States' requirements. This is a time that requires innovative, decisive and coordinated responses from the Member States in order to secure the lives of our 1.1 billion citizens. We cannot afford to falter at this crucial time.

Our message is simple. We are at war and the world faces a common enemy, hence our response must match the magnitude and uniqueness of the crisis. Thankfully, our call for global partnership is yielding results, I am happy that a renowned global think tank, the United Kingdom based

Chatham house is partnering with the D-8 to support Member States to ward off the negative effects of this pandemic and support the long term Universal Health Coverage strengthening going forward.

In a bid to facilitate the endeavors of this working group, the Islamic World Science Citation Center (ISC), has designed and launched the COVID-19 Visualizer Map for the benefit of the D-8 Member States as a useful resource to guide policy making, case management and interventions in support of national responses. In addition, we are also in advanced discussion with a global leading research institution to urgently manufacture quality ventilators for the D-8 Member States at significant reduced cost for the use of our national health systems; you therefore need to avail us of your country requirements.

Ladies and gentlemen, every challenge offers profitable opportunities for innovative solutions that could be leveraged upon for better outcomes. This pandemic provides such an opportunity. Therefore, we must, as humanity, seize the moment to tackle the pandemic as well as reposition our national health systems along the path of universal access and inclusiveness. As you proceed into the discussion phase of the round table, I believe you will be guided by these lofty aspirations.

We need now more than ever, collective hope and cooperation as well as innovative solutions to see us through this crisis, and we will get through this.

I thank you for your attention.