

**Statement of the Secretary-General
on the occasion of the 10th D-8 Summit
08 April 2021**

Bismillahirrahmanirrahim,

*Madam Chair Lady, Honourable Prime Minister of the
People's Republic of Bangladesh, H.E. Sheikh Hasina,*

*Outgoing Chairman of the D-8, Honourable President of the
Republic of Turkey, H.E. Recep Tayyip Erdogan,*

Excellencies Heads of State and Government

Distinguished Guests,

Esteemed Participants,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Assalamu alaikum and good afternoon from Istanbul,

Before I deliver my statement, please permit me to air a short video on D-8 Projects and Initiatives. The video was prepared by the Secretariat in cooperation with the Turkish Radio and Television Corporation (TRT).

Madam Chair Lady,

Honourable Leaders,

I am honoured to address this august gathering of our esteemed leaders at the 10th Summit of D-8 Organization for Economic Cooperation. I would like to begin by expressing our immense gratitude to the Republic of Turkey for excellently chairing the affairs of our Organization over the last three and a half years and we wish the People's Republic of Bangladesh brilliant success as it assumes the chairmanship at this difficult and extraordinary time. The last three days have undoubtedly demonstrated Bangladesh's devotion to the cause of our Organization and I am confident that under their leading hand, D-8 Member States will enhance their cooperation and synergize their efforts so as to further their agenda and deepen their collaboration.

2020 has been a difficult year for humanity. Our resilience, strength and faith were at test. According to the latest figures, over one million people lost their lives. Many more are scared for life with the loss of their loved ones. This health crisis was further exacerbated by the accompanying economic crisis. The world was hit by an unprecedented recession from which we are barely recovering. In addition to these humanitarian, societal and economic crises, we witnessed a widening of the existing gaps - **income gaps, wealth gaps, gender gaps and digital divides**- all of which require our immediate consideration and affirmative action. On top of that, 2020 has been a year of political crises, regional tensions and trade wars. When the world needed sound leadership there was none. When people needed dialogue and collaboration there was none. 2020 has wiped out momentous progress in a wide spectrum of areas and

posed rather significant challenges for international cooperation.

This brings me to the key message of my speech and the very essence of our Organization. The crisis led all countries to focus on their national needs-which was partially inevitable. However, this introversion led to a lack of healthy dialogue and resulted in protectionist measures. The countries failed to help one another on bilateral basis, let alone agreeing on a coordinated and concerted response. In these dark times, D-8 Organization continued to act as a sound, neutral, open and veritable platform for all Member States and for all those who want to contribute. We acted as a medium of discussion, an open channel for communication and an intermediary of dialogue. In accordance with the lofty goals set by our founding fathers, we stood for “peace, dialogue, justice, equality, rule of law and democracy”. At a time when the world realized the importance of international cooperation, I believe D-8 has done its part and will continue to be an effective global infrastructure of multilateral cooperation.

*Honourable Leaders,
Ladies and Gentlemen,*

Permit me to bring to your attention, one more time, our Organization’s monumental achievement of initiating the **D-8 Health and Social Protection Program** and establishing its office in Abuja, Nigeria. We laid the foundations of this program long ago. However, the inauguration of our office which took place on 12th November, 2020 was auspicious, given the ongoing health crisis. The D-8 HSP, under the able leadership of Dr. Ado J. Muhammad, is aimed at strategically promoting D-8 solidarity for effective pandemic response as well as addressing the social impact of COVID19, making

special reference to Sustainable Development Goals of Health for All, No Poverty and Zero Hunger. The Programme team will identify opportunities for joint action, implementation, learning and collaboration across seven areas of focus, namely Health Essential Services and Support System, Health Workforce Governance and Quality of Care, Shaping Markets and Enhancing Trade in Health, Non-communicable Diseases, Social Protection, Innovative and Sustainable Financing and Data for Performance Tracking and Impact. Through this all-encompassing program, we will be able to address some of the most crucial needs of our Member States. I once again would like to thank the Federal Republic of Nigeria for shouldering the responsibility generously.

I also would like to draw your attention to another major milestone, namely our recent collaboration with the **World Tourism Forum Institute** and our mutual pledge to increase cooperation to bolster the tourism sector and reposition it as a foreign exchange earner and employer of labour in the D-8 Member States. There is no gainsaying that the pandemic hit the tourism sector massively. According to the recent estimates, the industry suffered a USD 3.0 trillion loss due to the corona virus pandemic. Our Member States were not immune from this drastic decline. As part of our efforts to alleviate the consequential adversities of the pandemic on this sector, we have signed an agreement with WTFI in November, 2020. We estimate that our efforts of promotion will increase the intra D-8 tourist traffic by 50 per cent and the overall traffic by 100 per cent. In all priority areas of sectoral cooperation and on all fronts, we are trying to help Member States realise their set growth trajectories and developmental aspirations as well as expand their influence in global economic affairs.

In the midst of the crisis, we continued to keep a close watch on the developmental priorities of our Member States and we increased the tempo of activities in key areas so as to advance the D-8 Charter. We held the **D-8, United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) and Institute of Malaysian and International Studies (IKMAS)** virtual meeting to review the impact of COVID-19 pandemic on foreign direct investments of the D-8 Member States. With the aid of a comprehensive report prepared by UNCTAD, we addressed some of the biggest challenges including the halt in trade and investment flows. We also reaffirmed our commitment to renew the existing stock of Bilateral Investment Treaties (BITs) of our Member States, in view of the fact that D-8 Members- along with countries of the Global South-suffer from uneven investment treaties that were signed as early as in 1970s, 1980s and 1990s. They still bear the consequences of these investments' instruments. With the cooperation of UNCTAD, we managed to establish a very productive forum for the Member States to exchange their expertise and stand for one another for more equitable investment terms and improved business climate.

*Honourable Leaders,
Ladies and Gentlemen,*

I tried to summarize some of the most recent initiatives that we have launched specifically to address the adversities of the pandemic. However, the milestones we have achieved since the last Summit in 2017 are numerous. To make best use of our Member States' creative and innovative potential, we have initiated the **D-8 Project Support Fund**. We worked on the modalities of the fund and made an open call to all our Member States to avail themselves of the opportunity. We signed an

MoU with the Islamic Development Bank (IsDB), a scheme that has granted us access to one of the world's leading financial resources. The MoU envisages cooperation in areas of implementation of Joint Projects and SME finance as well as allocation of scholarships through the IsDB Scholarship Programme and exchange of knowledge and information. We inaugurated the **D-8 International University** in Hamedan, Iran and launched the **D-8 Network of Pioneers for Research and Innovation program**. We have also commissioned the

D-8 Research Centre on Agriculture and Food Security in Faisalabad, Pakistan. We worked relentlessly for the establishment of the **D-8 Clearing House**. We have also been working on the D-8 Payment Card system in order to facilitate trade and remittances by our nationals using our local currencies. The D-8 Creative Economy and Financial Centre is also in the pipeline. We are also working on establishing the D-8 Special Zones in all Member States. We have also established a network of D-8 Designated Airports across our Member States in order to facilitate movement and promote tourism and business travels.

Just very recently, we signed an MoU with Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), a deal that gives us a broader geographical reach and a renewed dynamism. In all six priority areas plus health, we held several talks and bilateral meetings with our counterparts, connected with international and regional organizations as part of our outreach efforts and tried to be an open platform for all our Member States. We have made strenuous efforts to instill dynamism, vigor and a sense of greatness to this economic

powerhouse and cooperative structure across continental divides of USD 3.7 trillion GDP, USD 1.5 trillion total trades, USD 110 billion intra trade and 1.1 billion people.

*Honourable Leaders,
Ladies and Gentlemen,*

In my capacity as the Secretary-General of an international Organization, I acknowledge that the world has regressed due to the COVID-19 pandemic. It regressed societally, economically and developmentally. Some of the hard-earned progress recorded over the last decade or two has been wiped out. In order to **compensate for the time lost**, we need to double our efforts. At this juncture allow me to state that it is my utmost wish that you, our esteemed Leaders, acknowledge the **tremendous efforts that the D-8 Secretariat has devoted and will continue to devote, going forward**, in order to advance the agenda of our Organization. We will also continue to apply new ideas and working methods and expand the action envelope. This is in line with the message to perform given to the low tiers by our leaders at the last Summit. It is also my wish that, standing at the dawn of a new decade, we will be able to gather around our new roadmap -The D-8 Decennial Roadmap- in an attempt to align D-8's work with the lofty goals of the United Nations and the Sustainable Development Goals 2030.

As the saying goes: The weak men create hard times. The hard times create strong men. And the strong men create good times. It is now, our duty to be the strong men and women who create the good times. In doing so, we shall help one another, stand for one another and work for one another. Once again, I thank the Republic of Turkey for its able chairmanship and wish the People's Republic of Bangladesh a successful term filled with glorious achievements.

Allah says in Surah Al-Hujurat, verse 10:

“The believers are nothing but brothers, so make settlement between your brothers. And fear Allah that you may receive mercy”.

It is my strong belief that with sincere and concerted efforts, unity of purpose and doctrinal commitment, we will soon overcome the current planetary health situation and the economic meltdown and social circumscription that it brought about.

Madam Chair Lady,

Honourable Leaders,

In view of the fact that this is the last Summit I am attending as the Secretary-General of this Organization, I wish to profoundly express my gratitude to our honourable leaders for their wise counsel and guidance. Personally, I benefitted immensely from your lofty ideas and vision in conducting the affairs of this Organization. You also gave us commitments and timelines and this enabled us to cover a lot of distance in our journey towards our targets. I wish to once again infinitely thank the Republic of Turkey for its inspiring leadership over the last three years and to wish the incoming Secretary-General, Ambassador Isiaka Abdulkadir Imam outstanding success.

I wish you all good health, happiness, success, everlasting prosperity and progress.

I thank you all for your attention.