

**OPENING STATEMENT DELIVERED BY THE SECRETARY GENERAL
OF D-8 ORGANIZATION FOR ECONOMIC COOPERATION, H.E.
AMBASSADOR ISIAKA ABDULQADIR IMAM, AT THE 45TH SESSION
OF THE D-8 COMMISSION HELD IN DHAKA, BANGLADESH FROM
25-26 JULY, 2022.**

Honourable Chairman,

Distinguished Commissioners,

Excellencies,

Delegates,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Good morning and Asalam o Alaikum to all,

First of all, I feel greatly delighted to warmly welcome Your Excellencies to the 45th Session of the meeting of the D-8 Commission.

As you are aware, this marks my first physical interaction with Distinguished Commissioners, since I assumed duty at the Secretariat as Secretary General of our noble organization on 1 January, 2022. I would, therefore, like to thank all of you for endorsing my candidature unanimously at the 10th D-8 Summit. I also would like to welcome our new colleague and D-8 Commissioner from Indonesia, **H.E. Ambassador Tri Tharyat**, Director General for Multilateral Cooperation in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia.

Let me also thank the Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh, being the host of this meeting, for the wonderful reception accorded my delegation since our arrival here in Dhaka few days ago. We also express appreciation to the Government and the officials in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Bangladesh for the excellent arrangement made in organize the Commission and the Council Meetings.

I would like to commend the President of D-8 Chambers of Commerce and Industry, Mr. Sheikh Fazle Fahim, and his team for the arrangements being made to organize the D-8 Business Summit, Expo and Multi-Cultural event, in commemoration of the silver jubilee celebrations of the D-8 organization.

Distinguished Commissioners,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is an honor and pleasure for me to present the Progress Report on activities of the Organization since November 2021. Since I assumed duty, my Directing Staff and I at the Secretariat had undertaken several programmes and activities, successfully. However, I would not want to bore you with the listing of the activities and events we have had; rather instead I will draw attention to important ones, which I believe call for the attention of the distinguished Commission.

Upon assumption at the D-8 Secretariat, I set to work in repositioning the office to make it more effective and efficient in the delivery of its mandate, as set out in the Charter establishing the organization. Part of what I intend to achieve, and very close to my heart, is the twin-approaches of my vision of increased intra-D8 trade relations amongst member countries, as the organization enters into the lifecycle of its project implementations; and secondly is increasing visibility for the organization in member states and beyond, through project implementation and partnership with the Organized Sector and our Development Partners.

In furtherance of my vision for the organization, in the past six months of being in the saddle, I undertook several visits to international organizations both in and outside the Republic of Turkiye, with the purpose of establishing stronger partnerships and cooperation for mutual benefits. In this connection, new Memoranda of Understanding (MoU) are being signed, while existing ones are

being reviewed for mutual benefits. Within this short period of being in office, I also paid official visits to a number of D-8 member countries to have productive engagement with our leaders in government, the business community and other stakeholders, with a view to charting a new course for the organization.

I also participated in international conferences and seminars to further strengthen our existing relations with International Institutions and also increase the visibility of the organization at international platforms. For example, on the invitation of the Government of the Republic of Turkiye, I participated at the 2nd Antalya Diplomacy Forum, which was held in March, 2022 in Antalya, Turkiye. Furthermore, I attended FAO Regional Conference for Eastern Europe in Poland in May, 2022, on the invitation of the Director General of FAO. I made presentation on the D-8 Organization, and called for collaboration between FAO and D-8 in the area of agriculture and food security.

The detailed Progress Report, for the period under report, is attached as Annex 3.1, for Your Excellencies, consideration.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Today, I am happy to report to this August gathering that we have made significant progress in the area of trade cooperation, which is the cornerstone of our organization. I am pleased to inform Your Excellencies that the Trade Facilitation Strategy of the PTA was finalized on 16 November, 2021, while negotiation of the protracted Dispute Settlement Mechanism of the PTA was equally successfully concluded on 20 April, 2022.

Both documents, which are central to the smooth implementation of the PTA, are expected to be adopted in the next Session of the D8 Trade Ministers Meeting, which is expected to be hosted during the Presidency of Bangladesh. All Member States have now set 31st October 2022 as the kick-off date for full operationalization of the

PTA. With these positive developments, we are now close to the full implementation of D-8 PTA Agreement, as most of the outstanding issues have been resolved.

We at the Secretariat are also taking practical steps to enhance the Organization's financial and payment systems in order to support trade cooperation. In this regard, I am pleased to inform the Commission that D-8 is in the process of developing a comprehensive ecosystem to enable our people achieve financial and economic independence through the development of payment products such as **D-8 Payment Card system, D-8 Clearing House, D-8 Creative Economy and Financial Center, and D-8 Barter Trading System**. These initiatives, which are still being developed, are useful tools to settle our trade balances and reduce the pressure on our foreign exchange reserves and achieve the target economic independence.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen

As you are aware, D-8 is celebrating the 25th anniversary of its establishment this year. During this short journey, our organization has recorded some modest achievements, especially in the area of establishment of the required Legal Framework and Structures in the key priority areas of cooperation. To mark the silver Jubilee celebration of the Organization, the D-8 Secretariat had recommended and subsequently enjoined member states to organize various activities to commemorate the occasion in their respective countries, including the Secretariat.

In this regard, I would like to inform Your Excellencies that the following events were held, while some are in the pipeline in member states and the Secretariat:

- i. D-8 Investment Forum and a Silver Jubilee Reception, held on 16 June, 2022 in Istanbul, Turkiye.**
- ii. Junior Diplomatic Training programme, held from 19-25 June ,2022 in Ankara, Turkiye.**

- iii. D-8 Business Summit, Expo and Multi-Cultural event, holding from 25-27 July,2022 in Dhaka, Bangladesh.**
- iv. D8 Culture and Food Show, planned for September, 2022 in Istanbul, Turkiye.**
- v. D-8 Forum on Small and Medium Scale Enterprises scheduled in Abuja, Nigeria from 23-24 August 2022.**

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

The adopted agenda, placed in front of you, contains a number of important issues to be deliberated and decided. Among such important issues is the 25 Anniversary of the establishment of the Organization. We plan to organize a number of events all-round the year to mark the formation of the Organization. The detailed report on proposed events will be discussed under Agenda item No. 4.

Under agenda Item 6 the Commission will deliberate upon the Calendar of events for review and update.

Under Agenda item 7, we will discuss financial and administrative matters, including the next year's budget, proposed allowances and purchase of new vehicle of the Secretariat.

After that, the Commission will discuss and may finalize the vacant positions of Assistant Director and Program officer, under item 8.

Under agenda item 9, the Commission will deliberate upon a number of updates in the basic documents, as suggested by the Secretariat.

An updated table showing the status of legal instruments is placed before the Commission for its consideration and updates, under agenda item No. 10.

In next agenda item No. 11, a progress report on External relations is placed before the Commission, for review.

Republic of Azerbaijan has formally applied for Membership of the organization. This matter will be deliberated upon under Agenda Item No. 12.

A proposal from Nigeria for establishment of a Youth Council will be deliberated upon, under agenda item number 13.

Nigeria's proposal on adequate representation from member states at the Secretariat will be discussed, under agenda item number 14.

We consider this issue important, given the current manpower shortage in the secretariat and need to strengthen the Secretariat to make it more robust than it currently is.

Under agenda item number 15, the Commission would consider and discuss the matter of accrediting D8 Embassies in Ankara to the organization.

The Commission will deliberate upon and may approve short listed project proposals, as received from member States.

Progress reports on D-8 Affiliate Institutions as well as D-8 Initiatives will be presented for consideration of the Commission under Agenda item 19 and 20, respectively.

The Commission is invited to discuss and finalize the Draft Agenda of the 20th Session of the Council of Ministers, under Agenda Item No. 21.

Date and Venue of the next Commission meeting will be discussed, under agenda item 22.

Honorable Chairperson,

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

As you could see, we have a long list of decisions and discussions to engage us in the next two days. Therefore, I would urge all respected Commissioners to indulge in constructive discussions during the course of the next two days, so that we have a worthwhile report to present to the Council of Ministers, for their consideration and approval.

Before I conclude my remarks, let me raise the issue of salary increase for the staff at the Secretariat, which had earlier been tabled

but a consensus could not be reached on the matter. I want to appeal to Your Excellencies to revisit this issue of salary increase as an urgent matter for consideration, to serve as a motivation for the staff of the Secretariat.

On that note, I would like to, on my own behalf, as well as on behalf of the Secretariat staff, express my utmost gratitude for the kind support and cooperation from Member States, particularly since my assumption of duty six months ago. My staff and I look forward to your further support and cooperation to enable us deliver on our mandate.

I thank you for your attention.