



A QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER OF THE **D-8 ORGANIZATION FOR ECONOMIC COOPERATION**



This issue's highlight:

**COMMEMORATION OF THE 26th
ANNIVERSARY OF THE D-8**

**D-8 SECRETARY-GENERAL'S
OFFICIAL VISIT TO BANGLADESH**

**AMBASSADOR IMAM HAD
SEVERAL BILATERAL MEETINGS IN
ANKARA**

D-8 INKED AN MOU WITH SMIIC



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26th ANNIVERSARY OF THE D-8 ORGANIZATION WAS COMMEMORATED

The D-8 Secretariat, in conjunction with the Nigerian Embassy in Ankara, hosted a networking event for the media and partner international organizations in Ankara on Thursday, 15 June 2023.

The well attended event was graced by Ambassadors and representatives from the D-8 member States, media houses and international organizations based in Türkiye.



HEADLINES

- **COMMEMORATION OF THE 26TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE D-8 ORGANIZATION**
- **VISITS, EVENTS AND EXTERNAL RELATIONS**
- **“D-8 AT 26: ACCELERATING GROWTH BEFORE 2030” - ARTICLE BY THE SECRETARY-GENERAL**



MESSAGE FROM THE SECRETARY-GENERAL

Distinguished Readers,

I am delighted to address our esteemed readers with this edition of our Newsletter as we celebrate this year's 26th anniversary of the establishment of D-8 Organization for Economic Cooperation (D-8). Over the past quarter of a century, we have worked together to foster economic collaborations, enhance trade relations amongst our member countries, and deepen cooperation in our key priority areas. This edition will cover activities and milestones of the D-8 Organization in those areas between April and June 2023. It will also serve as a tribute to our shared achievements.

In retrospect, the D-8's journey has been characterized by some degree of progress and meaningful accomplishments, albeit modest. As an organization, we have nurtured the spirit of strong collaboration and an environment of mutual trust amongst our member states. We have broadened our horizons and galvanized our common resolve to tap into our vast array of shared potentials.

Further to that, we have endeavored to implement numerous other initiatives that would enhance economic cooperation and promote sustainable development within the D-8 countries. Therefore, our focus on critical areas such as trade, industry, agriculture, energy, transportation, and tourism have yielded notable outcomes. For instance, the D-8 Preferential Trade Agreement (D-8 PTA) which will play a pivotal role in boosting intra-D-8 trade relations among our member countries, as well as remove barriers to trade is set for implementation later this year.

Moreover, the D-8's engagement in various sectors has been instrumental in addressing everyday challenges and harnessing emerging opportunities. Together, we have been working on collective energy, technological innovation, infrastructure development, and human resource and capacity-building projects. These initiatives will contribute to our nations' socio-economic progress and strengthen our collective resilience in the face of global uncertainties.

However, we must commend the dedication of our member countries in moving the D-8 forward, as well as our esteemed partners for supporting us in achieving our shared objectives. And we expect to continue to count on their support in the years to come.



Looking ahead, our focus remains steadfast on harnessing the potential within our member states and promoting inclusive and sustainable economic growth. We will continue to explore avenues for greater cooperation in emerging sectors, facilitate technology transfer, and strengthen institutional mechanisms for dialogue and collaboration.

In line with our commitment to fostering innovation, knowledge exchange, and best practices, the D-8 Organization will take part actively in the organization of capacity-building workshops, expert gatherings, and trade exhibitions, in the near future. These activities will allow our member countries to exchange ideas, share experiences, and forge partnerships to shape our collective prosperity.

I want to encourage all member countries and partners to utilize the D-8 platform to expand our cooperation. Together, we can leverage our shared strength and build a future that upholds the principles of economic prosperity, sustainable development, and inclusivity.

On this special occasion, let us celebrate the spirit of unity, collaboration, and friendship that has propelled the D-8 forward. I want to reiterate our gratitude to all member states, partners, and stakeholders for their unwavering support and dedication to the ideals of our organization.

Warm regards,

Ambassador Isiaka Abdulqadir Imam
D-8 Secretary-General

COMMEMORATION OF THE 26TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE D-8 ORGANIZATION

THE D-8 SECRETARIAT FORGES STRONGER TIES WITH THE MEDIA AND PARTNERS



The D-8 Secretariat, in conjunction with the Nigerian Embassy in Ankara, hosted a networking event for the media and partner international organizations in Ankara on Thursday, 15 June 2023.

The well-attended event was graced by Ambassadors and representatives from the D-8 member States, media houses and international organizations based in Türkiye. Organizations that attended include Anadolu Agency and its affiliates, the Food and Agriculture Organization, the United Nations Regional Office in Türkiye, the Islamic Cooperation Youth Forum, the Union of Chambers and Commodity Exchanges of Türkiye (TOBB), Turkish Cooperation and Coordination Agency (TIKA), Independent Industrialists and Businessmen Association (MUSIAD), The Economic Policy Research Foundation of Türkiye (TEPAV), and Erbakan Foundation, amongst others.

While addressing the August gathering, Ambassador Isiaka Abdulqadir Imam, the Secretary-General, said that the event was organized to strengthen relations with D8 partners, as well as enhance the visibility of his organization in Türkiye and globally. He added that increasing the visibility of the D-8 has been his priority since he assumed duty in January 2022. The Secretary General commended the critical role the media has played in publicizing the activities of his organization.

On this year's anniversary, he said that this media luncheon and networking would be the only commemorative event, while citing the solemn situation occasioned by the devastating earthquake in Türkiye in February.



Ambassador Imam seized the opportunity of the event to highlight some of the major achievements of the D-8 and its future activities. He said that D-8 Organization and the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) will hold a joint event on Investment Policy Guide during the forthcoming 'UNCTAD's 8th World Investment Forum' taking place in Abu Dhabi from 16-20 October, 2023.



In his own remark, Nigeria's Ambassador to Türkiye, H.E. Ismail Abba Yusuf, commended the positive role of D-8 organization in socio economic development of member countries, since its inception 26 years ago, stressing that the D-8 Organization had established itself in the global arena as a multilateral instrument for addressing socio-economic developmental issues affecting member states.



On his part, the Ambassador of Bangladesh, H.E. Amanul Haq, urged member countries to utilize the period of 2023-2027 being the Second Phase of D-8's Decennial Roadmap's implementation to further deepen their intra trade relations, as well as focus on the implementation of various projects. While noting the D-8 has grown in its scope of activities, he however expressed hoped that the private sector would continue to be encouraged to remain the engine of economic growth, as government strive to create an enabling environment and supportive infrastructure, in accordance with respective national plans and priorities of member countries.



In his address, Ambassador Esen Altuğ, the D-8 Commissioner of Türkiye, said that the principles and vision on which D-8 was founded remain all the more relevant today as the global community grapples with unprecedented challenges of the pandemic, climate change and regional conflicts. He called for collective response on a global scale to mitigate those challenges.

**STATEMENT BY HIS EXCELLENCY AMBASSADOR ISIAKA ABDULQADIR IMAM
AT THE LUNCHEON**

Your Excellency Ambassador Ismail Abba Yusuf, the Ambassador of the Federal Republic of Nigeria to the Republic of Türkiye, my dear brother and my co-host for today's luncheon.

Your Excellency Ambassador Esen Altuğ, Director-General for Multilateral Economic Cooperation of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Türkiye, the D-8 Commissioner of Türkiye.

Your Excellencies Ambassadors and Heads of Missions of the D-8 Member States in Ankara, here present.

-H.E. Ambassador Amanul Haq of Bangladesh.

-H.E. Ambassador Lalu Muhamad Iqbal of Indonesia.

-H.E. Ambassador Muhammad Farazmand of Iran.

-H.E. Ambassador Yousaf Junaid of Pakistan.

Our Valued Partners, here present.

Distinguished Heads of Mission and Representatives of international organizations here present.

Distinguished Captains of Mass media Houses in Türkiye, here present.

My Dear Colleagues from the D-8 Secretariat,

Ladies and Gentlemen.

Salam and good afternoon.

My name is Ambassador Isiaka Imam. I am a career diplomat from Nigeria and currently the Secretary-General of the D-8 Organization. I am happy to meet you all today. And, of course, thank you so much for responding positively to our invitation, amidst your busy schedules. I also want to thank my brother, Ambassador Ismail Abba Yusuf, the Nigerian envoy in Ankara, for hosting this luncheon with me. We came up with the idea of co-hosting this luncheon to cover many objectives.

First, it coincides with the 26th Anniversary of the establishment of the D-8 Organization. As you know, and as a glance to our historical background, the then Prime Minister of Türkiye, Prof. Necmettin Erbakan, initiated the establishment of a grouping of developing countries from Southeast Asia to Africa, during the Seminar on "Cooperation in Development" in Istanbul in October 1996.

Less than a year later, Prime Minister Erbakan hosted the First Summit of eight developing countries in Istanbul on 15 June 1997. The Heads of State/Government from Bangladesh, Egypt, Indonesia, Iran, Malaysia, Nigeria, Pakistan, and Türkiye were present at that Summit. The Summit issued the Istanbul Declaration, which laid a foundation for establishing the Developing-8 (D-8). The attendees thus became Members of the D-8.

The D-8 became a full-fledged international organization, with a legal personality, with the signing of the Charter of the D-8 Organization for Economic Cooperation, on 22 November 2012. The D-8's objectives remain the same: achieving sustainable socio-economic development, promoting welfare, alleviating poverty, improving the quality of life of the people of its members, strengthening economic ties, and strengthening cooperation with other countries, and regional and international organizations. Therefore, today's gathering befits the commemorative nature of establishing the D-8 Organization.

Second, through this luncheon, I wish to provide a snapshot of the state of play of the D-8 Organization, where we are, what we have achieved, and our plan for the future development of the Organization. However, and in the interest of time, I will only spell out some of the key achievements recorded and plans in the pipeline.

One highlight that I would like to mention is that the progress made so far with regard to the 'Preferential Trade Agreement among D-8 Member States' --- or the D-8 PTA. I am pleased to inform this August gathering that the D8 PTA, signed by all member states since 2006, is expected to be implemented organization-wide starting this year.

It is heartening to note that some countries, for example, Türkiye, have started to trade under the provision of the D-8 PTA. Some other countries have expressed their explicit readiness to trade using the D-8 PTA provisions. Therefore, I want to use this opportunity to invite all parties that can benefit from the D-8 PTA to start using this instrument, so that our target of attaining intra-trade figure of USD500 billion could be reached sooner than the target date of 2030.

Third, this luncheon also serves as an avenue for the D-8 Organization, represented here by the envoys, and my humble self, to bolster relations with our partners in Türkiye and beyond. Strengthening external cooperation has been one of my twin-vision, since I assumed the office of the D-8 Secretary-General in January 2022. Therefore, the D-8 Organization has closely and actively engaged with other international organizations for the past couple of years, and this has intensified since my headship of the Secretariat.

For example:

- We collaborated with the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA) in organizing a Workshop on e-Government in Istanbul in November last year.

- This year, we will collaborate with the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) to organize a Joint Conference on investment, as a part of the 8th World Investment Forum in Abu Dhabi, from 16 to 20 October. An Online Workshop will precede it on 3 July 2023 to set the tone.

- In Türkiye, the D-8 Organization has also closely collaborated with our partners, mostly present here. Our partnership is designed to promote economic cooperation through business engagements.

Excellencies and Ladies and Gentlemen; One of the challenges that we are facing is that the D-8 is not widely known... yet. Not many people know about the Organization twenty-six years after its formation. The D-8 Organization must be well known for it to benefit from all of the relevant stakeholders. For example, businesses must be aware of the D-8 Organization and the D-8 PTA to tap into the Organization's benefit. Therefore, the fourth objective of this luncheon is our attempt to increase the organization's visibility, through sustained partnership with the media to promote the D8 and its activities.

In this regard, we have closely engaged with the media and signed MoUs with renowned media outlets in Türkiye and other Member States. We are open to further engagement with the media and look forward to further collaborations with the media houses, in the member countries and beyond. We start with an intimate gathering like this one and will continue to organize sensitization programs in the D-8 Member States and beyond.

The fifth, and perhaps most important, objective of this gathering is to obtain insights and inputs to improve the D-8 Organization, further. We can indeed use your valuable inputs and suggestions to address the D-8 Organization's challenges and shortcomings. And again, I want to invite you to engage in an open and frank discussion on improving the D-8 Organization over, the tasteful lunch. Please have an open and frank discussion by observing the principles of the Chatham House rules.

And to conclude, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen, I want to thank you, once again, for being here with us. I treasure your presence here, as I will treasure your views, inputs, and ideas to enrich the D-8 Organization. And lastly, have a wonderful lunch and bon appetite.

Thank you.

VISITS, EVENTS, AND EXTERNAL RELATIONS

D-8 SECRETARY-GENERAL ATTENDED THE IFTAR DINNER HOSTED BY AK PARTY FOREIGN RELATIONS DEPARTMENT



Ambassador Isiaka Abdulqadir Imam, the D-8 Secretary-General, attended the 14th Traditional Iftar Dinner, hosted by the AK Party Foreign Affairs Department, in Ankara, on 4 April 2023. Ambassador Imam attended the Iftar upon the invitation from Mr. Efkan Ala, AK Party Vice Chairman in charge of foreign affairs.

The President of the Republic of Türkiye, H.E. Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, graced the iftar event with his presence. In his speech, President Erdoğan underscored his government's resolve to reconstruct the areas devastated by the 6 February earthquake. Furthermore, the President underlined the solidarity demonstrated by more than 90 countries that contributed to the reconstruction efforts.

At the closing of the Iftar Dinner, Ambassador Imam had the opportunity to exchange greetings with President Erdoğan and reiterated his condolences and sympathy to the Government and people of Türkiye on the devastating earthquake in February. Ambassador Imam also praised Türkiye's role in promoting the global agenda, including within the D-8 Organization's framework.

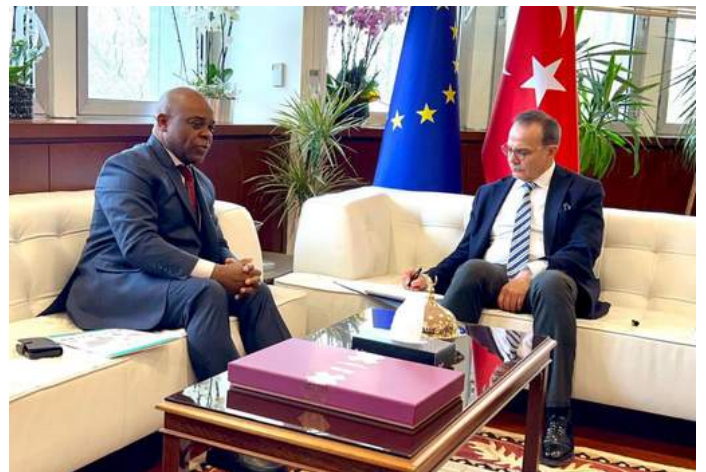


THE D-8 SECRETARY-GENERAL VISITED THE DEPUTY FOREIGN MINISTER OF TÜRKİYE

The D-8 Secretary-General, H.E. Ambassador Isiaka Abdulqadir Imam, paid a courtesy call on the Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of Türkiye, H.E. Ambassador Mehmet Kemal Bozay, in Ankara, on 5 April 2023. The visit was a follow up to their previous meeting during the 49th Session of the Council of Foreign Ministers of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC CFM 49) in Nouakchott in March 2023.

The D-8 Secretary-General briefed the Deputy Foreign Minister on recent developments in the D-8 Organization. Other scheduled activities were also discussed during the meeting, including issues pertaining to youth, women empowerment and trade.

Ambassador Imam during the meeting once again expressed his deep appreciation to the Deputy Foreign Minister for Türkiye's continued staunch support for the D-8, including hosting the Organization and providing conducive office accommodation for effective functioning of its Secretariat. Among those present at the meeting was Ambassador Esen Altuğ, the D-8 Commissioner of Türkiye.



THE D-8 SECRETARY-GENERAL VISITED TOBB HEADQUARTERS



The D-8 Secretary-General, H.E. Ambassador Isiaka Abdulqadir Imam, visited the Union of Chambers and Commodity Exchanges of Türkiye (TOBB) and met with the TOBB Secretary-General, Mr. Mustafa Saraçöz and his team in Ankara, on 5 April 2023.

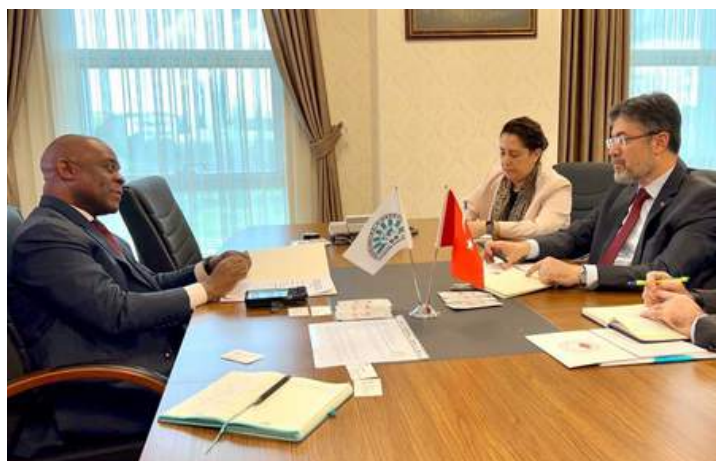
During the visit, the two organizations agreed to organize awareness campaign on the implementation of D-8 Preferential Trade Agreement (D-8 PTA) to business entities in Türkiye. Also, this is to further enlighten the business community on the significance of PTA in boosting intra-D-8-trade relations among member countries.

While pledging to spearhead the implementation of the PTA in Türkiye, Mr Saracoz, the Secretary General of TOBB informed the D-8 Secretary-General that Türkiye had started trading under D-8 PTA since 2020.

THE D-8 SECRETARY-GENERAL VISITED DEPUTY MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE AND FORESTRY OF TÜRKIYE

Ambassador Isiaka A. Imam, the D-8 Secretary-General, met with H.E. Ibrahim Yumaklı, the Deputy Minister of Agriculture and Forestry of Türkiye, at the latter's office in Ankara, on 5 April 2023. The two dignitaries underlined the need to strengthen and revitalize agriculture and food security cooperation in D-8.

The meeting also discussed potential joint activities in core areas of agriculture, including urban agriculture, water security, and fertilizer. The Deputy Minister stated that his office was ready to organize a workshop on climate-smart agriculture in 2023, for D8 member countries.



THE D-8 SECRETARY-GENERAL VISITED THE COUNTRY DIRECTOR OF THE WORLD FOOD PROGRAMME



The D-8 Secretary-General, H.E. Ambassador Isiaka A. Imam, visited Ms. Negar Gerami, the World Food Programme (WFP) Country Director for Türkiye in Ankara, on 5 April 2023.

The D-8 Secretary-General and his host exchanged views on the current global food crisis and its possible solutions.

AMBASSADOR ISIAKA IMAM MET WITH THE ACTING DIRECTOR GENERAL OF COMCEC

The D-8 Secretary-General, Ambassador Isiaka Abdulqadir Imam, met with Mr. Selçuk Koç, the Ag. Director-General of the Coordination Office of the Standing Committee for Economic and Commercial Cooperation (COMCEC) in Ankara, on 6 April 2023. The meeting discussed possible joint programs between the D-8 and COMCEC, which will encompass trade facilitation, investment, and youth.

They also exchanged notes on Project support facilities for the Member States. The meeting agreed to establish contact points between the D-8 and COMCEC to facilitate further collaboration.



They also agreed to co-organize a joint event on the margin of the 39th Session of the COMCEC, scheduled to take place in Istanbul in December 2023.

THE D-8 SECRETARY-GENERAL MET WITH DIRECTOR-GENERAL OF SMEDAN



The D-8 Secretary-General, Ambassador Isiaka Abdulqadir Imam, met with the Director-General of the Small and Medium Enterprises Development Agency of Nigeria (SMEDAN), Mr. Olawale Tunde Fasanya in Abuja, on 27 April 2023.

Their discussion however focused on the preparation for the launching of the D-8 Center for Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) to be hosted by SMEDAN in Abuja. They agreed to expedite action on the launching of the Center, hopefully in August 2023.

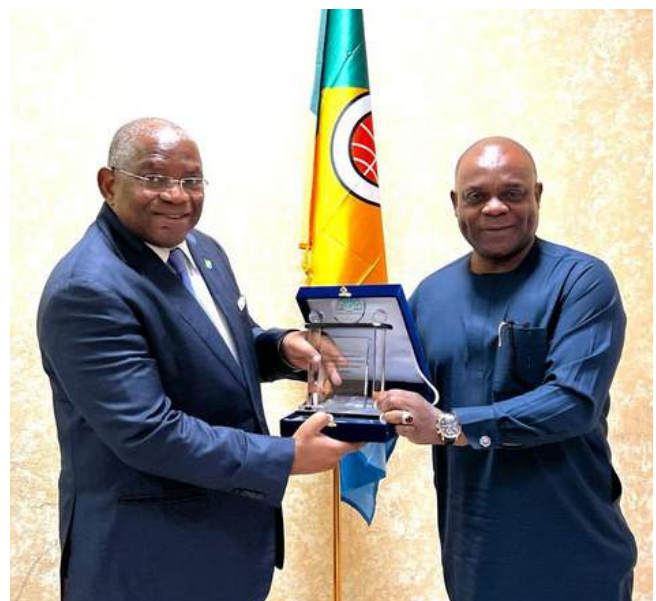
THE D-8 SECRETARY-GENERAL MET WITH THE SECRETARY-GENERAL OF OACPS

The D-8 Secretary-General, Ambassador Isiaka Abdulqadir Imam, met with the Secretary-General of the Organization of African, Caribbean and Pacific States (OACPS), H.E. Georges Rebelo Pinto Chikoti, on the margin of the Global African Diaspora Symposium at Nigeria's State House in Abuja, on 28 April 2023.

The two Secretaries General discussed potential areas of cooperation, particularly SMEs, agriculture, and trade. They also discussed possible participation in each other's activities and programs.

The two dignitaries agreed to work toward establishing an instrument of cooperation between the D-8 and OACPS, which will be supplemented with a joint action plan.

The D-8 Secretary-General and OACPS Secretary-General also agreed to designate contact persons from their respective organizations to work to establish the instrument of cooperation.



THE D-8 SECRETARY-GENERAL PARTICIPATED IN THE GLOBAL AFRICAN DIASPORA SYMPOSIUM



Ambassador Isiaka Abdulqadir Imam, the D-8 Secretary-General, participated in the Global African Diaspora Symposium (GADS), jointly hosted by Nigeria Diaspora Commission (NIDCOM), the Directorate of Technical Cooperation in Africa (DTCA) of Nigeria, the Organization of African, Caribbean and Pacific States (OACPS) and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Nigeria at the State House, Aso Rock Villa, in Abuja, on 27-28 April 2023.

The theme of the symposium: “Building Stronger Connection between Africa and the Global Diaspora,” was timely given the current global efforts to support the social and economic development of Africa.

At the well- attended event, Ambassador Imam chaired the 3rd Plenary Session with the theme ‘The Green Imperative for Africa in the 21st Century’.

The Secretary-General moderated the interactive and lively discussion presenting Awamary Lowe-Khan as a keynote presenter and Prof. Hilary Inyang and Prof. Jimmy Adegoke as discussants.



The 3rd Plenary Session discussed various potential efforts to balance the need to accelerate African economic development with the global responsibility of environmental protection under the international climate regime.

The D-8 Secretary-General led the Plenary Session with the following recommendations:

1. Establish an African Continental Research Foundation equipped with an African Continental Endowment Fund.
2. Utilize the Nigerians in Diaspora Commission (NIDCOM) as a platform to manage and harness the potential of the diaspora on a One-Stop-Shop basis.
3. More engagement with the diaspora and empower them in the consultancy capacity at the African Development Bank.
4. Establish a green bank to finance sustainable development in Africa, including funding the green transition, particularly on green energy generation.
5. Establish African companies and develop practical and robust concept notes or project proposals to tap into the global green fund and financing schemes provided by the industrial countries.
6. Establish cutting-edge technologies to enable African companies, start-ups, and entrepreneurs to leapfrog in the area of ICT.
7. Enjoined the African Diaspora to enhance their partnership, networking, and knowledge-sharing.

THE D-8 SECRETARIAT PARTICIPATED IN THE FAO'S INFORMAL CONSULTATION

The D-8 Secretariat, represented by Director II, Mr. Punjul S. Nugraha, participated in the Informal Consultation of the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), in Budapest, Hungary, from 4-5 May 2023.

The D-8 Secretariat introduced the Organization's agriculture and food security activities, including establishing the D-8 Research Center for Agriculture and Food Security (D-8 RCAFS) in Pakistan.

A joint program on aquaculture and fisheries between the D-8 and FAO was also explored.



THE D-8 SECRETARY-GENERAL ATTENDED THE 6TH INDIAN OCEAN CONFERENCE



Upon the invitation from H.E. Dr. A.K. Abdul Momen, the Honorable Minister of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of Bangladesh, the D-8 Secretary-General attended the 6th Indian Ocean Conference in Dhaka, Bangladesh, from 12-13 May 2023. Her Excellency Sheikh Hasina, the Honorable Prime Minister of Bangladesh, officially inaugurated the conference on 12 May 2023.

Ambassador Imam delivered a statement at the 4th Plenary Session of the 6th Indian Ocean Conference on 13 May 2023. He explained the nexus between the D-8 Organization's priority areas and the economic development in the Indian Ocean Region. He also underlined that, as an economic organization, the D-8 encourages maintenance of peace and stability within its member countries.

While addressing the gathering, the D-8 Secretary-General also harped on the importance of collaboration and partnership in achieving peace and prosperity for a resilient future.



THE D-8 SECRETARY-GENERAL MET WITH THE SECRETARY OF MINISTRY OF YOUTH AND SPORTS OF BANGLADESH



The D-8 Secretary-General, Ambassador Isiaka A. Imam, met with Dr. Mohiuddin Ahmed, the Secretary of the Ministry of Youth and Sports of Bangladesh, in Dhaka, from 13 May 2023. The meeting discussed the preparation of the D-8 Senior Officials' Meeting on Youth and the 1st D-8 Ministerial Meeting on Youth, to be hosted by Bangladesh in Dhaka in July or August 2023.

The two dignitaries agreed that youth play a significant role in the development process in the D-8 region. They are also the key actor for a better future.

The D-8 Secretary-General and his counterpart also agreed to develop an action plan to operationalize the D-8 Youth Council.

THE D-8 SECRETARY-GENERAL MET WITH THE RECTOR OF THE FOREIGN SERVICE ACADEMY OF BANGLADESH

The D-8 Secretary-General, Ambassador Isiaka Abdulqadir Imam, met with H.E. Ambassador Mashfee Binte Shams, the Rector of the Foreign Service Academy of Bangladesh in Dhaka, on 13 May 2023.

The meeting discussed the proposed diplomatic training for diplomats from the D-8 Member States in accordance with the outcome of the 46th Session of the D-8 Commission in Istanbul in February 2023. Bangladesh said they would organize training for mid-level diplomats from the D-8 Member countries in 2023.



THE D-8 AND SMIIC SIGNED AN MOU ON COOPERATION



The D-8 Organization and the Standards and Metrology Institute for Islamic Countries (SMIIC), an arm of the Organization for Islamic Countries (OIC), signed the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on cooperation on 12 June 2023. The MoU covered several areas of cooperation, including capacity building for training, workshops and seminars on standardization, metrology, and halal industries. The D-8 Secretary General, Ambassador Isiaka Abdulqadir Imam and the Secretary-General of SMIIC, Mr. Ihsan Övüt, signed the MoU on behalf of their respective organization.

As a follow-up, the two Secretaries-General agreed to expand their cooperation by organizing joint workshops on halal industries, focusing on exploiting the potential in the tourism sector in member countries. A joint action plan to implement the MoU was also part of their discussion during the visit.



D-8 AT 26: ACCELERATING GROWTH BEFORE 2030

BY ISIAKA ABDULQADIR IMAM*



Twenty-six years ago, Presidents and Prime Ministers from Bangladesh, Egypt, Indonesia, Iran, Malaysia, Nigeria, Pakistan, and Türkiye gathered in Istanbul, Türkiye, and joined forces to boost their economic development.

The Summit, hosted by Necmettin Erbakan, the then Prime Minister of Türkiye, on 15 June 1997, issued the 'Istanbul Declaration.' The Declaration is a foundation for establishing the Developing-8 Organization for Economic Cooperation, or the D-8, with the Summit attendees becoming its founding members.

In 2012, the D-8 gained the status as a full-fledged intergovernmental organization with a legal personality by the signing of the Charter of the Developing-8 Organization for Economic Cooperation.

Twenty-six years old today, no doubt, is a relatively young age for an international organization. During this period, the D-8 has recorded some achievements, albeit modest, in its key priority sectors. Those sectors are trade, agriculture and food security, industry and small and medium enterprises, energy, transportation, tourism, health and social protection, human resources and education, and information and communication technology.

To continue to flourish, an organization must be agile. The D-8 is no exception. While its objectives remain the same, achieving them must be proactively adaptable to the global dynamics.

Guided by the D-8 Decennial Roadmap for 2020-2030, the D-8 Organization is now even more focused on conducting result-oriented tangible programs in its priority areas. That Roadmap also aligns with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Therefore, the confidence is high that the D-8 will remain relevant and true to its objectives. There are several factors to back that claim.

First, the organization's statistics. The D-8 is home to approximately 1.16 billion people. That is more than 7% of the global population. The combined gross domestic product of all D-8 Member States reached US\$4.3 trillion, or almost 8% of the global GDP in 2021, while the bloc's external trade reached US\$2.3 trillion, amounting to 11% of the global trade in 2022.

The founders established the D-8 as an economic organization. Therefore, the D-8 is apolitical in the sense that the Organization is not directly involved or operated in political discourses. Indeed, the political dynamic affects all countries, including the D-8 Member States. However, being economic, the D-8 can continue operating in the economic realm.

Second, most of the D-8 products are complementary in nature. Most D-8 Member States produce commodities that are rarely competing but complementary. This creates an advantage for the Organization to create a complementary economy.

This idea of the D-8 as a complementary economic powerhouse also emerged during my meeting with a prominent global trade organization. And creating a complementary economy has been one of the focuses of the Organization.

To support such an endeavor, the D-8 has established relevant affiliate bodies, such as the D-8 Research Center for Agriculture and Food Security, the D-8 Technology Transfer and Exchange Network, the D-8 Network of Pioneer for Research and Innovation, and the D-8 Health and Social Protection Program.

Third, the geographical spread of the D-8 membership is unique. Our members are spread across three continents: Asia, Africa, and Europe. Unlike the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN), the European Union, or the African Union, which are based on geographical region, the D-8 is not a regional organization per-se.

This situation can sometimes pose a challenge. Lacking a contiguous frontier adds complexity in creating a seamless movement of people, goods, and services. This uniqueness, however, also provides vast economic opportunities. Each Member State can serve as a gateway for market entrance in their respective region.

Egypt and Nigeria can serve as a gateway to access the African Continent Free Trade Agreement (AfCTA). Similarly, Indonesia and Malaysia can link the D-8 with ASEAN, whereas Iran, Pakistan, and Bangladesh to South and Central Asia. Türkiye is widely known to be the global hub with its extensive air service industries.

The group signed the Agreement on Simplification of Visa Procedures for the Businessmen of the D-8 Member States in 2001 to address this issue. To date, six Member States have ratified the Agreement, while the other two are expected to ratify it soon.

Fourth, the D-8 is quite advanced in trade facilitation by the signing of the Preferential Trade Agreement among the D-8 Member States, or the D-8 PTA, in 2006. The PTA entered into force in 2011.

However, it must be admitted that the PTA's organization-wide implementation could be faster than it is now. The difference in ratification date and the start of the schedule of installment are often cited as its cause.

However, it is heartening to note that five Member States have explicitly stated their readiness to implement it and trade under the D-8 PTA. For example, Türkiye has traded under the D-8 PTA since 2020, while Indonesia, Iran, and Malaysia have also stated they are ready to implement the D-8 PTA, having completed their respective internal procedures.

The PTA comprises more than 1.200 tariff lines with varying degrees of concession. Complemented with the Multilateral Agreement Among D-8 Member Countries on Administrative Assistance in Customs Matters, the D-8 PTA will address the stark contrast between its intra-trade with the organization's sheer population.

Currently, the intra-trade among the D-8 Members stands at US\$146 billion. This does not reflect the true potential of a market with 1.16 billion people. Therefore, the D-8 PTA is expected to boost the intra-trade to US\$ 500 billion by 2030.

To further boost its intra-trade, the D-8 is gearing up to establish the D-8 Centre for Small and Medium Enterprises in Abuja, Nigeria, this year. The Centre will serve as a platform to boost the development of SMEs as major stakeholders for the economic activities in most, if not all, D-8 Member States.

Fifth, the organization's extensive external cooperation. We pursue stronger cooperation with other international and regional organizations to support us in achieving our objectives. The D-8's status as an observer of the United Nations General Assembly since 2014 plays a crucial role in our endeavor.

External cooperation is also crucial to address the challenge of our limited resources. Therefore, the D-8 is open to mutually beneficial collaboration. And we are actively approaching potential donors to contribute to the Organization's program execution.

The D-8 has also been actively organizing joint activities with several United Nations bodies and specialized agencies to build the capacity of the D-8 Member States in our priority areas.

With a shared resolve among its Member States, the D-8 Organization can look far beyond the next twenty-six years. The trajectory of growth of its Member States is positive. As proof, two of its members, i.e., Indonesia and Türkiye, have joined the G20. Nigeria and Iran are not far behind. Other members are also exhibiting a healthy appetite for growth.

What's left to do now is to accelerate those growths with all the tools at our disposal.



D-8 Organization for Economic Cooperation



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