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PRESS RELEASE

D-8 ORGANIZATION FOR ECONOMIC COOPERATION

D-8 ADVANCES SME COOPERATION WITH IMPLEMENTATION ROADMAP

At the 9th Meeting of the D-8 SME Governmental Bodies, hosted by Nigeria's Small and Medium Enterprises Development Agency (SMEDAN), the central role of SMEs as drivers of growth, employment, and innovation across D-8 economies was strongly underscored. The meeting, held in a virtual format, brought together Heads and Senior representatives of Small and Medium-sized Enterprises Governmental Bodies from D-8 Member States to advance a coordinated and implementation-focused SME cooperation agenda.

Speaking on the occasion, Ambassador Sohail Mahmood, Secretary-General of the Developing-8 Organization for Economic Cooperation (D-8), emphasized SMEs' role as the engines of growth across the world, including in D-8 countries; highlighted SMEs' vital contribution to job creation and innovation; and underlined their indispensable part in the realization of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). He also stressed the critical importance of SMEs in achieving the intra-D-8 trade target of USD 500 billion by 2030, building on the recorded USD 157 billion in 2024.

In his comprehensive statement, the Secretary-General also highlighted priority areas requiring focused follow-up, including strengthening collaboration with international partners such as the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA) and the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) for capacity-building support, advancing the integration of digitalization and Artificial Intelligence (AI) into SME ecosystems, and promoting knowledge-sharing among Member States. He also lauded Malaysia's initiative to collaborate on the International Day of Micro-, Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (MSMEs) with a thematic focus on Green MSMEs and medical tourism.

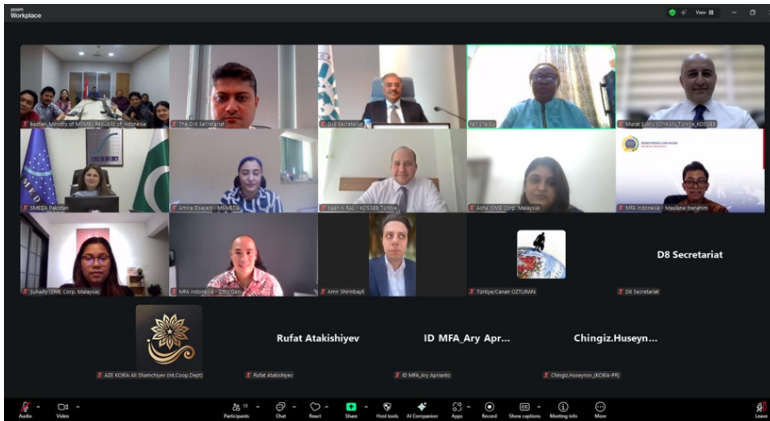
As for the D-8's frameworks to promote SME cooperation, the Secretary General underscored the importance of ensuring universal adherence to the existing Memorandum of Understanding (MoU), expediting accession processes by remaining Member States, and operationalizing the D-8 SME Centre as a central coordinating platform for capacity-building, business linkages, and SME internationalization.

Secretary-General Sohail Mahmood encouraged Member States to deepen mutual cooperation and align national SME strategies with collective D-8 priorities. He commended Azerbaijan for proposing an elaborate Action Plan for the operationalization of the MoU between D-8 SME Governmental Bodies, and complimented Nigeria for tabling a structured draft Action Plan for the D-8 SME Centre in Abuja — both recognized as key instruments for institutionalizing cooperation and delivering measurable outcomes. The



Secretary General encouraged Member States to convene dedicated technical session(s), preferably within one month, to refine and consolidate the two Action Plans, with a view to finalizing the texts ahead of the next (10th) D-8 SME Governmental Bodies Meeting, where their formal adoption is envisaged.

The meeting featured insightful national interventions covering MSME formalization, access to finance, market facilitation, and capacity-building programmes, with a shared emphasis on innovation and resilience. It concluded with a clear consensus on structured follow-up, sustained coordination through designated focal points and the Secretariat, and collective ownership of the agreed Action Plans, underscoring that their timely implementation will be instrumental in strengthening SME ecosystems, enhancing intra-D-8 trade, and advancing inclusive and sustainable economic growth across the D-8 geography.



Istanbul, 1 May 2026