



PR/26/020

PRESS RELEASE

D-8 ORGANIZATION FOR ECONOMIC COOPERATION

D-8 HIGHLIGHTS GREEN INNOVATION AND MEDICAL TOURISM FOR MSME GROWTH

The Developing-8 Organization for Economic Cooperation (D-8) marked the International Micro, Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (MSME) Day by convening a special Webinar on "Green MSMEs and Medical Tourism: Opportunities for MSME Development." The event brought together over 40 participants from D-8 Member States, including representatives of Ministries of Foreign Affairs, Health, Culture and Tourism, Energy, SME governmental bodies, chambers of commerce, and business support institutions, underscoring the pivotal importance of MSMEs for inclusive growth and sustainable development across the D-8 region.

In his opening statement, H.E. Ambassador Sohail Mahmood, Secretary-General of the D-8, highlighted the role of MSMEs as the engine of growth globally and as the backbone of D-8 economies – generating employment, driving entrepreneurship and innovation, and contributing to the achievement of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). He noted that the transition to greener and more sustainable economies presents vast new opportunities for MSMEs to enhance productivity, strengthen competitiveness, improve resource efficiency, create quality employment, and attract sustainable investment. He further highlighted green entrepreneurship and medical tourism as emerging sectors that can integrate MSMEs into regional and global value chains. The Secretary-General expressed appreciation to SME Corp. Malaysia for its valuable contribution through expert speakers to share Malaysia's experience and best practices. He also highlighted the Secretariat's efforts to engage more closely with international partners including the UN to promote access to capacity-building and financial services and engender further practical cooperation.

The technical sessions featured Ms. Michelle Tee, Founder and Chief Marketing Officer of Wakili Venture Berhad, who shared practical approaches for integrating sustainability into MSME operations through circular business practices, AI-enabled inventory management, and sustainable procurement, emphasizing that sustainability is a strategic investment rather than a business cost. Mr. Lokman Izam, Vice President of Marketing and Communications of the Malaysia Healthcare Travel Council (MHTC), highlighted Malaysia's successful healthcare travel ecosystem and demonstrated how medical tourism generates extensive business opportunities for MSMEs across hospitality, transport, wellness, digital services, and related industries.

The webinar also served as a platform for Member States to exchange national experiences and best practices. Mr. Emre Gürleyik of KOSGEB presented Türkiye's comprehensive framework for supporting the green transformation of MSMEs through its Strategic Plan 2024-2028 and dedicated green industry

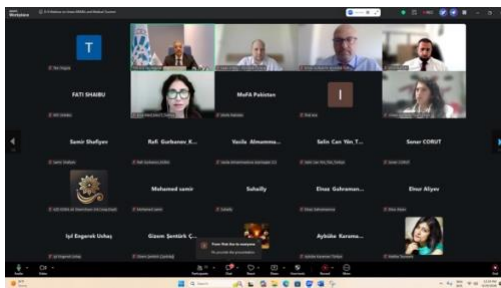


programmes, while identifying access to finance as a key challenge. Mr. Elnur Aliyev, Adviser to the Chairman of KOBIA Azerbaijan, introduced the Baku Climate Coalition for SMEs Green Transition, inviting D-8 Member States to join the initiative aimed at accelerating sustainable MSME development following COP29.

Delegations from other Member States also contributed to the deliberations. Bangladesh shared its experience in promoting sustainable supply chains, particularly within the textile and manufacturing sectors, while emphasizing the importance of enhanced financing mechanisms for green MSMEs. Türkiye's Ministry of Culture and Tourism highlighted the country's progress in sustainable tourism certification in line with Global Sustainable Tourism Council (GSTC) standards and noted that health tourism welcomed approximately 1.4 million international visitors in 2025, generating USD 3.3 billion in revenues, demonstrating the significant economic potential of medical tourism for MSME development.

The interactive discussions reaffirmed that while access to finance, technology, certification, and technical expertise remain common challenges, stronger regional cooperation, knowledge-sharing, and institutional partnerships can significantly accelerate the transition towards greener and more competitive MSME ecosystems across the D-8 region. Member States also expressed their commitment to strengthening collaboration on green entrepreneurship, medical tourism, and engagement with the Baku Climate Coalition for SMEs Green Transition.

The Webinar reaffirmed the D-8's continued commitment to advancing MSME development through practical cooperation, building upon the 2015 Memorandum of Understanding among D-8 SME Governmental Bodies; the D-8 Decennial Roadmap 2020-2030; and the work of the D-8 SME Centre in Abuja, Nigeria. Through strengthened partnerships, innovation, and knowledge exchange, the D-8 continues to promote resilient, sustainable, and globally competitive MSMEs that contribute to inclusive growth and shared prosperity across its Member States.



Istanbul, 1 July 2026