



## Summary of Discussion

### 2020 UN Day for South-South Cooperation: Side Event Launch of South-South in Action Report, 15 September 2020

#### Background:

As a subsidiary organ of the OIC, the Statistical, Economic and Social Research and Training Centre for Islamic Countries (SESRIC) has been a focal point for South-South technical cooperation and a facilitator for the exchange of knowledge, experience and best practices among the OIC Member States since its establishment in 1978. SESRIC's activities are aligned with its three main mandates: collating, processing, and disseminating socioeconomic statistics; conducting economic and social research; and organizing and supporting training and technical cooperation.

To spotlight SESRIC's strategic efforts on South-South cooperation, SESRIC and UNOSSC jointly developed a publication which provides new insights in the field of South-South Cooperation based on the accumulated experience of SESRIC over the last four decades. [South-South in Action – SESRIC: Transforming Potentials into Shared Prosperity](#) presents selected programs and best practices initiated by SESRIC towards enhancing collective capacity for greater prosperity in the South. The wealth of technical knowledge and experiences in this report shed light on the role of SESRIC in supporting the global development agenda utilizing South-South Cooperation modalities.

#### Event Proceedings:

The moderator, **Ms. Xiaojun Grace Wang, Deputy Director, UNOSSC** welcomed the participants and introduced SESRIC, which is subsidiary of OIC, with a membership of 57 states in four continents that aims to represent the collective voice of the Muslim world to safeguard and protect the interests of member nations promoting international harmony and peace. She highlighted the role of SESRIC and its corporate partnership with UNOSSC as an active player in South-South Cooperation South partner. She further introduced the speakers and experts/panelists for the event, to present all aspects of SESRIC work.

**Mr. Nebil Dabur, the Director General of SESRIC** in his opening remarks underscored the trend of South-South Cooperation as over the last four decades developments in the South of the globe have been intensive and challenging with an increase in global interdependence. The nations of the South have become actively involved in addressing social and economic development challenges by fostering technical cooperation to share knowledge skills and resources among themselves. In particular, the least developed countries, traditionally the recipients of technical support, have started to provide know how and best practices to other to help the other nations. He highlighted that countries of the South play a significant role not only in the enhancement of truly global partnerships for development but also in providing solutions to various contemporary issues, such as climate change, migration and security as well as sharing the global development agenda.

He added that southern countries actively participated and contributed to the post-2015 development agenda debates and their vision of development has been incorporated into the 2030 agenda for sustainable development. In this context, he explained the role of OIC as an important platform for

cooperation in the global South. It serves as a forum for dialogue and cooperation for a significant number of the Southern nations. It brings its member countries together for policy dialogue, technical cooperation and joint action through its different high level forums such as the Islamic Summit, the conference of Foreign Ministers, the Steering Committee and the various sectoral ministerial conferences as well as through its various subsidiary specialized and affiliated institutions.

Mr. Dabur explained that OIC reinforces South-South cooperation through providing strong political backing to countries that have development needs with those that have solutions and through enabling sharing of technical knowledge skills and resources needed to facilitate the individual and collective development endeavors of each member countries. As a subsidiary organ of the OIC, SESRIC executes a wide range of programs and activities from providing up-to-date statistics and policy analysis to conducting various training and capacity building programs to support and promote South-South cooperation and sustainable development efforts within the framework of the OIC. SESRIC contributes to South-South cooperation by preparing technical background reports and research studies on important issues on OIC's agenda to identify the problems and challenges, bring to attention the best practices and suggest appropriate policy actions to address these challenges. Research on various social economic developmental issues contributes to the OIC policy dialogue mechanism and guides policymaking process within the OIC cooperation framework. In addition, SESRIC plays a significant role in enhancing South-South cooperation among the OIC member countries through its flagship technical cooperation projects and capacity building programs which aim at facilitating the transfer at exchange of knowledge and experience among the member countries through different modalities and effective partnership and cooperation with national, regional and international partners.

To conclude, he acknowledged and appreciated the partnership with UNOSSC, thanking the organization for the joint event on and launch of South-South in Action series.

**Mr. Jorge Chediek, Director of UNOSSC and UN Secretary General Envoy on South-South Cooperation** reflected upon the significant effects of COVID-19 on the world and in particular, on the economies of the OIC countries that were expected to grow over 3 percent this year and which are instead going to contract by over 2 percent and its effects on flows of trade and investment and other ways of collaboration for the new needs generated by this pandemic. He emphasized the multilateral system, collectively, make a strong case on the importance of South-South and Triangular Cooperation. In spite of all the problems and the limitations that the pandemic has generated, South-South cooperation can provide spaces for shared responses, both from the sanitary perspective to the developmental and social perspective. He also praised that many international organizations, including the OIC system and its subsidiary organs such as SESRIC, have become more active in promoting those exchanges and advocating for them.

He highlighted that pressure on countries from the fiscal and social perspectives, makes a strong case for South-South cooperation. This can be done by showcasing the cost effectiveness of these efforts and the mutuality of collaboration. He emphasized that institutions like SESRIC, which have a prominent role in the generation of collective knowledge and sharing of experiences, should become more engaged in responding to the pandemic and also post pandemic, as it will require to redefine many parameters of the global development architect. For this, OIC system provides an extraordinary space as it represents quarter of the volume of the economies of the global South. It has established a significant internal mechanisms of exchange including trade preferential systems, a strategic health plan of action, and a plan to combat the effects of the pandemic that can be showcased to the rest of the world.

He appreciated the expansion and deepening of collaboration between UNOSSC and OIC/ SESRIC over the last four years. He added that UNOSSC's South-South in Action series is a mechanism for countries or organizations to showcase their work in South-South Cooperation, providing evidence of the results that this development cooperation model is generating. The launch of the joint South-South in Action publication, showcased SESRIC's contributions. Mr. Chediek assured the full commitment and continued partnership from UNOSSC. This was followed by launch of the joint publication "South-South in Action – SESRIC: Transforming Potentials into Shared Prosperity".

**Dr. Atilla Karaman, Director, Statistics and Information Department**, talked about SESRIC's role in compiling and disseminating statistics to facilitate South-South cooperation. He explained that, among the 38 institutions under the roof of OIC, SESRIC is the only OIC subsidiary organ with the mandate of collating, processing and disseminating data in order to facilitate the dialogue among the member states, where they explore their needs, capacities and potentials and develop several cooperation and collaboration streams among each other.

, The OIC statistics database provides comprehensive data on member states which currently has over 1,100 indicators under 25 different topics and also provides country profile for each member state. This serves as one-stop shop for providing information to policymakers and researchers. It also analyzes and supports visualization of data through live statistics database. Its flagship publication presents the data tables and also a short analysis on each indicator and relevant code categories. It also publishes brief statistical publications/ outlook providing one-page analysis on a selected indicators.

In line with its mandate and to contribute to the efforts of its member countries in leveraging their statistical capacities, it also hosts the OIC Statistical Commission and implements the SESRIC statistical capacity building program. The SESRIC statistical capacity building program was initiated in 2007 based on the South-South Cooperation modality, focusing on the needs of member countries whose needs can be met by the provider countries. To identify the capacity needs, SESRIC circulates, every two years, a questionnaire among member countries on what they need, what can the offer and how they can provide this. An annual work program based on the equitable geographic distribution, country preference and other criteria is developed to provide/ establish linkages for technical cooperation. As a result, short-term statistical training, technical missions, workshops and more recently due to the COVID-19, online courses are also organized. Since 2017, the program has organized/ facilitated more than 300 statistical trainings benefiting 51 OIC members, provided by 26 OIC member states in which more than 8000 experts in the domain of statistics have been trained since 2007.

Another modality used to initiate the cooperation programs among the member countries is the OIC Statistical Commission, established in 2007. It is similar to the UN statistical Commission where heads of national statistical offices of OIC member states come together under the facilitation and the secretariat of SESRIC. SESRIC as secretariat facilitated discussions among the member states for technical cooperation in the domain of official statistics. The Commission covers the most recent statistical agenda such as the SDGS or the Population & Housing or the Agricultural surveys and the Census to enhance the statistical capacities of the member states. It acts as a cooperation fora for exchange of experience among members and provides a unique SSC approach for strengthening solidarity as the beneficiary and knowledge providers, both come from member states.

**Mr. Mazhar Hussain, Director, Economic and Social Research Department** focused on SESRIC work in utilizing the Research-Policy Nexus to Promote South-South Cooperation. SESRIC is the main research organ for OIC to undertake studies and evaluates economic and social development in OIC member states

with a view to generate proposals that can be useful to initiate and enhance cooperation among the member countries. It intends to guide policymaking and support the formulation of regional strategic programs and frameworks and encourage cooperation through identification and sharing of best practices among OIC member countries. It also undertakes monitoring and evaluating the socio-economic performance and implementation status of various regional strategic programs and frameworks. These functions assist OIC member countries and their institutions in effectively identifying socioeconomic developmental challenges and formulating appropriate policy response to tackle those challenges.

SESRIC uses several operational modalities such as technical background reports and research studies on a wide range of social economic issues on the agenda of various high level forums in ministerial conferences and facilitates the policy debate in dialogue process in sectors ranging from agriculture development to women's empowerment and youth-related issues. These technical reports have been very instrumental in strengthening the research-policy nexus and providing foundation for chalking-out mode intra- regional programs for promoting social cooperation and streamlining national and regional policies to implement the national, regional and International Development agendas, such as OIC 2025 Program and the 2030 Agenda.

SESRIC is also actively involved in monitoring the implementation of these regional strategies and programs through online questionnaires and surveys to collect primary data and information from the national focal points. The findings of these surveys are very informative and instrumental in documenting the progress, understanding the opportunities and challenges, and charting out a more efficient way forward by the member countries to attain higher socio-economic development levels.

SESRIC research activities contribute to the promotion of South-South Cooperation among OIC member countries based on principles of exchange of knowledge and policy coherence, given the diverse socio-economic profiles. SESRIC also undertakes joint research and projects with relevant OIC regional and international institutions such as the upcoming report with UNOSSC on 'Accelerating Women Social Entrepreneurship'. SESRIC also contributes to the regional and global policy discourse by actively participating in various national, regional and international events.

**Ms. Semiha Abdullah Inan, Technical Cooperation Specialist, Training and Technical Cooperation Department,** highlighted SESRIC's work on building capacities and networks to catalyze South-South cooperation. She presented SESRIC's various capacity building training activities on a wide range of socio-economic issues of interest to the OIC member states to enhance the human and institutional capacities. These programs are designed based on the capacity needs assessment or upon requests receive from the member countries. SESRIC matches the countries that can offer training opportunities with the ones that are in need.

She further explained that the center facilitates the transfer of trainers from a national institution in one OIC member country with the capacity to offer training to another national institution in the recipient member country that needs capacity building. SESRIC also organizes study visits and training workshops to share member countries' success stories or best practices to give a hands-on experience on site and to share expertise and improve skills through knowledge exchange. As part of digital transformation and in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, SESRIC introduced online trainings which have proved to be practical and cost effective, taking into consideration the diversity of the OIC regions and the geographical distribution.

She further introduced SESRIC technical cooperation modalities by establishing OIC networks such as OIC Occupational Safety and Health Network and OIC Public Employment Services. These networks bring together high-level representatives of the relevant national institutions biannually where knowledge exchange and sharing experience are the main focus. National focal points discuss work plans and roadmaps of these networks in order to reach consensus and find mutual solutions to help increase the institutional capacities of their respectful authorities.

The Training and Technical Cooperation Department also manages domestic portals at the OIC level in coordination with the relevant national institutions which provides active platforms and a knowledge hub for professionals for easy access to information and resources in the areas of water, health and vocational education among others. SESRIC also implements linkage projects - a technical cooperation mechanism developed by the Islamic Development Bank Group (IsDB), implemented jointly with other stakeholders including national, regional and international institutions. For example, capacity development of the 'Africa City of Technology' in Sudan is currently being implemented to increase capacity in the area of technology incubation, infrastructure guidelines etc. to contribute to the scientific advancement of the country.

SESRIC continues to expand its partnerships in order to enhance its role in South-South Cooperation and facilitate collaboration and technical cooperation. It signs MOUs with various national, regional, international, OIC institutions, peace agreements, bilateral, multilateral and arrangements for cooperation for the benefits of OIC member states. She also shed light on initiatives related to women and youth empowerment as critical pillars of OIC 2025 Program of Action.

In conclusion, UNOSSC's Ms. Wang summarized the discussion: i) She highlighted the power of vision, strategy and synergy. SESRIC, with its clear positioning, builds on three strong pillars with strong internal logic to link and synergy among the three streams of its work which helps to achieve the result and impact; ii) the power of institutional mechanisms with mandatory linkage between policy making body and the initiatives i.e. using knowledge to inform policy and leveraging and working with the institutional mechanisms; iii) the power of partnership i.e. through collective efforts within OIC member countries but also proactive engagement beyond. She further added this has been an opportunity to learn from SESRIC and look forward to continued collaboration. The meeting ended with the vote of thanks to all participants.