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SPEECH OF

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SECRETARY GENERAL OF THE
ORGANIZATION OF ISLAMIC COOPERATION,

AT THE INAUGURAL SESSION
OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF ISLAMIC
ORGANIZATION FOR FOOD SECURITY

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Bismillahir Rahmanir Rahim

Your Excellency Mr. Karim Massimov, Prime-Minister of the Republic of Kazakhstan,

Your Excellency Mr. Assylzhan Mamytbekov, Minister of Agriculture of the Republic of Kazakhstan,

Honourable Ministers and Heads of Delegation,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Assalamu Alaykum wa-Rrahmatullahi wa-Barakatuhu

It is indeed a great privilege for me to address this inaugural session of the General Assembly of Islamic Organization for Food Security holding in this dynamically thriving and modern city of Astana. Let me, first and foremost, congratulate the President and Government of Kazakhstan for hosting this meeting and for the generous hospitality accorded all dignitaries and participants. We are gathered here to witness the launch of the new specialized institution of the OIC - Islamic Organization for Food Security (IOFS).

The inauguration of this new specialized institution of the OIC today is no doubt a momentous event. It represents an important milestone in our collective efforts at increasing socio-economic cooperation among OIC Member States. This measure adequately complements our on-going cooperation activities in the area of trade promotion, development financing, research and development, education, science and technology, and the mainstreaming of the private sector, among others. This new executive institution could not have come at a better time, considering the pre-occupation of our Organisation with scaling up intra-OIC cooperation in the vital sector of agriculture, rural development and food security.

More importantly, the Islamic Organization for Food Security (IOFS), following this monumental step of the convening of the inaugural General Assembly, will now join other OIC specialized institutions, such as the Islamic Developing Bank (IDB), and the Islamic Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (ISESCO). The latter institutions represent the foremost OIC specialized institutions charged with the implementation of our cooperation projects in the area of trade, investment and infrastructure development, education,

science and technology and sustainable development, respectively. Certainly, the new institution would seek to consolidate national and regional solutions to the development challenges in our respective countries, as we address the socio-economic disparities among the various segments of our populations.

It, therefore, goes without saying that the challenges facing our respective countries in the agricultural sectors are as legion as they are multi-dimensional. They require the translation of our political decisions into national, regional and international actions on the ground through effective programmes and projects. The current situation whereby the net food import deficits is almost equal to the amount of food wasted or destroyed due to absence of an efficient food-processing mechanism would need to be reversed through an effective mechanism for addressing post-harvest losses and promoting agro-food industrial development. The high expenditure in foreign currencies spent on food imports is making it difficult to free resources for desired interventions in other critical sectors, such as food and nutrition security, rural development, education, health and sanitation, among others. This is in addition to the challenges of humanitarian intervention in the food security sector, owing to the plethora of man-made and natural crises in our region.

**Mr. Chairman,
Your Excellencies,**

There is no doubt that the history of OIC cooperation in the food security sector is replete with policy decisions on intra-OIC cooperation in this important sector. The six sessions of OIC Ministerial Conferences on Agriculture and Food Security have adopted series of resolutions on the establishment food security reserves, the creation of an executive framework for food security, and the establishment of an agro-industrial mechanism among OIC member states, among others. However, these policies require our putting in place adequate operational frameworks to carry out needed research, capacity-building and financing aspects of these decisions. In this regard, there is no doubt that this new institution would seek to consolidate actions towards implementing the various decisions of the OIC on agriculture, rural development and food security. It is envisaged that the activities of IOFS would reinforce the existing programmes, such as the Jeddah Declaration, which sought to executive joint projects, using the technical competences of the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD).

It is most appropriate, at this juncture, to commend the leadership and wisdom of His Excellency, Nursultan Nazarbayev, President of the Republic of Kazakhstan for proposing the establishment of this executive institution during his historical address made at the 38th session of OIC Council of Foreign Ministers, which was held in Astana, Kazakhstan on 28-30 June 2011. Also commendable are the roles of the OIC General Secretariat, the Islamic Development Bank Group and other OIC institutions for their support and guidance, which have contributed to the successful elaboration of an inclusive but innovative Statute for IOFS. I must single out for mention here the generous allocation by the Islamic Development Bank of an amount of US\$300,000 for the consolidation of the structures of this new OIC institution.

It is gratifying to note that some preliminary consultations made prior to this inaugural session have identified the importance of embarking on quick win projects in order to make-up for the dividends of intra-OIC cooperation, which have eluded us over the years. These projects should feature, among others, execution of microfinance projects in agricultural domain; a study on early warning and food information systems in Member States; and a programme on capacity enhancement to reduce post-harvest losses in Member States. This Assembly would need to proceed expeditiously to give necessary directives for their immediate implementation.

**Mr. Chairman,
Your Excellencies,**

As we congratulate the OIC family for the coming into being of this specialized institution, it is important to note that the Islamic Organisation for Food Security, like other specialized institutions would establish collaborative relations with the OIC General Secretariat and its various institutions, through the instrumentality of the Annual Coordination Meeting of OIC Institutions. The significance of enhancing synergy among the various executive organs of the OIC will increase effectiveness, avoid duplication and quicken realization of the overarching objectives of the OIC, which are contained in the various Summit declarations and OIC Council of Foreign Ministers (CFM) resolutions. On its part, the General Secretariat is ever ready to continue its current closer collaboration with IOFS as we scale up our attainment in this critical sector of socio-economic development.

As I conclude this address, let me invite your kind attention to the work ahead of us. The provisional application of the Statute of the IOFS presupposes that all the countries that have signed the Statute of IOFS would need to proceed most expeditiously to effecting the necessary ratification. I also avail myself of this auspicious occasion to call on all OIC member states, which are attending this inaugural session as observers to accede to the Statute of this important organization. I heartily congratulate the entire membership of IOFS on this historical event, much as I extend my hand of fellowship to all those who would be elected at this General Assembly to steer the activities of IOFS in the coming phase.

Assalam alaekun warahamatullahi wabarakatuhu.