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SPEECH OF

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ORGANIZATION OF ISLAMIC COOPERATION

AT

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ON FOOD SECURITY AND

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Bismillahir Rahmanir Rahim

Your Excellency 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, for me, a great pleasure and distinct honour to address the Seventh Session of the OIC Ministerial Conference on Food Security and Agricultural Development being held in this modern city of Astana. Allow me first and foremost, to express my profound gratitude to His Excellency, Nursultan Nazarbayev, President of the Republic of Kazakhstan, for his constant support for the various programmes of the OIC in diverse sectors, including agriculture, rural development and food security. I also wish to extend my sincere appreciation to the Government of Kazakhstan for the excellent arrangements made for this historical session, which is coming at a time when a new OIC specialised institution for food security is being unveiled in Astana. By the same token, I hereby acknowledge the outstanding commitment of His Excellency, Mr. Faruk Celik, Minister of Food, Agriculture and Livestock of the Republic of Turkey, throughout his tenure as the Chairman of the Sixth Session of the Ministerial Conference.

I am full of hope that your deliberations this afternoon would strengthen the long term and mutually beneficial cooperation in agriculture and food security, particularly in view of the multiple challenges faced by our member states in addressing food insecurity and poverty alleviation. Through this important platform, we are in no doubt that we shall attain our long-term plan on attaining food security, strengthen our agricultural sector, and improve the livelihood of the peoples of our Member States.

**Your Excellencies,
Distinguished Delegates,**

I take this opportunity to invite your attention to the fact that today agriculture and food security occupy the centre stage in the development strategies of nations. Countries are realizing that it is not just the growth in Gross Domestic Product (GDP) or their economic strength, but the ability to ensure food security in a sustainable manner, that will guarantee long term peace and stability to the nation. It is, in this context, that with enormous wealth of natural resources and expertise available in our Member States, mutual intra-OIC cooperation in this important sector could play a significant role in the development process and also ensure food security in OIC countries. This is more so considering that OIC has many countries that are highly dependent on international markets for food supply, and some other countries that are major food exporters.

It is a matter of great satisfaction that since the previous Conference held in October 2011 in Istanbul, Turkey, the OIC and its relevant institutions have made significant strides towards the implementation of OIC resolutions in the domain of agriculture and food security.

In this context, several programmes have been completed, while a great number of them are at the various stages of implementation. For example, the Statistical Economic and Social Research and Training Centre for Islamic Countries (SESRIC) has initiated the Agriculture Capacity Building Programme for OIC Member States (OIC-AgriCaB), aimed at enhancing the capacities of the national institutions in our Member States in area of land, water and livestock management, fisheries, aquaculture and food security. On its part, the Islamic Development Bank (IDB)'s interventions in the agricultural sector in OIC countries continued to cover a wide range of activities geared towards creating jobs, alleviating poverty, increasing productivity and enhancing food security. This is evident from the fact that IDB's net approvals stood at US\$5 billion for over 155 agricultural projects in 45 OIC countries by the end of 2014.

More importantly, our efforts towards establishing a specialized OIC institution on agriculture and food security have been successfully concluded by the convening of the Inaugural session of the Islamic Organisation for Food Security (IOFS) today, in the morning. This Organization, charged with the implementation of OIC projects and programmes on agriculture, rural development and food security, will be very helpful for OIC countries in identifying key areas of mutual interest with the aim of enhancing agricultural productivity to meet challenges of food security as well as enhancing people's welfare.

**Your Excellencies,
Distinguished Delegates,**

Notwithstanding the foregoing achievements, agricultural development and food security in OIC Member States continue to face a number of persisting problems and challenges, including population growth, decreasing availability of arable land, competing demands for resources and the impacts of climate change, which are yet to be addressed in a holistic manner. Statistics show that 28 OIC Member States were among the world's 54 low-income food-deficit countries (LIFDCs) in 2015. Similarly, food trade deficit of the OIC countries has increased from US\$ 16 billion in 2000 to US\$ 79 billion in 2014, indicating that the OIC countries, as a group, are, on average, net food importers, where the majority of them still heavily rely on imports of various food products to meet their increasing domestic food demand. This situation is compounded by the fact that, in 2014-16, there were 166 million recorded undernourished people in the OIC countries, corresponding to 20.8% of the total undernourished people in the world. The underlying causes of undernourishment are poverty, disease, lack of access to food and safe drinking water, and conflicts, among others. These are interacting factors, which combine to create conditions in which undernourishment flourishes.

In addressing these challenges, it has become necessary to adopt a more inclusive approach through promotion of sustainable agricultural and food production, in sharing information about seeds, technologies, equipments, policies and institutional support measures to improve food security.

It is in this context that I wish to invite the attention of this august gathering to the following issues, which arose in the course of implementing various OIC programmes and projects in the area of agricultural development and food security:

Firstly, in view of the differing levels of their economic and social development, cooperation among our Member States should be further strengthened, especially in the area of capacity building, joint programmes/projects and efficient management of resources for increased production and productivity in agriculture. In this regard, the activities of Islamic Organisation for Food Security will be very relevant and it is indeed advisable to give maximum support to the activities of this new Organisation.

Secondly, productivity and sustainability in this crucial sector cannot be achieved without investment. We must, therefore, create the enabling environment to bring the private sector fully into this sector. This means developing appropriate and accessible financial instruments on multiple levels. It is, therefore, necessary that investments in the agricultural sector expand the access for opportunities for farmers, especially small-farm holders in OIC Member States;

Thirdly, during the Fourth OIC Ministerial Conference on Food Security and Agricultural Development, which was held in Tehran, Islamic Republic of Iran, on 14-16 January 1995, Ministers agreed to establish an OIC Food Security Reserve, aimed at ensuring food security of OIC Member States, through coordination of national food stock policies and national food reserve; as well as monitoring the food security situation of OIC Member States. Since these projects are yet to materialize, it remains my sincere hope that this issue will form one of issues to be deliberated upon in today's Conference, along with other promising areas for future active collaboration;

Finally and most significantly, promotion of a knowledge-based agriculture, strengthening research and innovation, and bridging the communication gap between farmers, researchers and agribusiness is the cornerstone of our efforts to further promote sustainable agricultural and food production in our Member States. Because it is knowledge and know-how that empower farmers to choose among diverse methods of achieving sustainable agricultural production.

I should not end this speech without recalling the role of this Conference in providing policy support for the new executive institution, charged with implementation of various resolutions taken by the OIC on food security and agricultural development. There is no doubt that a closer collaboration between the two organisations will close the gap between policy-making and policy-implementation as we shift paradigm within our

Organisation to elaborating joint projects, with a view to consolidating the spirit of partnership and cooperation among our member states.

With these few thoughts, I would like to reaffirm the OIC General Secretariat's commitment to working closely with you to address the challenges of agricultural development and food security in OIC Member States.

As I conclude, let me wish this Conference a fruitful deliberation.

I thank you for your kind attention.

Wassalamu Alaykum wa-Rrahmatullahi wa-Barakatuhu.