



**Standing Committee  
for Economic and Commercial Cooperation  
of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (COMCEC)**

**Proceedings of the 21<sup>st</sup> Meeting of the  
COMCEC Poverty Alleviation Working Group**

**“Effective Vocational Education and Training Strategies to Reduce Youth  
Unemployment in the OIC Member Countries”**



**COMCEC COORDINATION OFFICE**

**November 2023**

**PROCEEDINGS OF THE 21<sup>ST</sup> MEETING OF THE  
COMCEC POVERTY ALLEVIATION WORKING GROUP**

**“Effective Vocational Education and Training Strategies to Reduce Youth  
Unemployment in the OIC Member Countries”**

(October 9-10, 2023, Ankara, Türkiye)

**COMCEC COORDINATION OFFICE**

**November 2023**

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## INTRODUCTION

The 21<sup>st</sup> Meeting of the COMCEC Poverty Alleviation Working Group (PAWG) was held, as a sequel of the 20<sup>th</sup> Meeting, on 9-10 October 2023 in Ankara, Türkiye with the theme “Effective Vocational Education and Training Strategies to Reduce Youth Unemployment in the OIC Member Countries”.

The representatives of 12 Member States, which have notified their focal points for the PAWG, attended the Meeting. The representatives of the Islamic Conference Youth Forum (ICYF), SESRIC and Islamic Development Bank Group (IsDB) also participated in the Meeting.

The Meeting considered the main findings of the research report titled “Effective Vocational Education and Training Strategies to Reduce Youth Unemployment in the OIC Member Countries” which has been conducted specifically for the this year’s Meetings of the PAWG with a view to enriching the discussions.

In line with the tradition of the Organization of the Islamic Cooperation (OIC), the Meeting commenced with the recitation from the Holy Quran. Afterwards, Mr. Selçuk Koç, Acting Director General of the COMCEC, made an opening speech. After his speech Mr. Koç gave the floor to Mrs. Juldeh CEESAY, Deputy Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Finance and Economic Affairs of the Gambia, as the Chairperson of the Meeting.

In the beginning, Ms. CEESAY summarized the Program of the Meeting and gave the floor to Dr. Belgi TURAN to make her presentation on the Poverty Outlook for the OIC Member Countries. Following the presentation of Dr. TURAN, Dr. Bekir GÜR and Dr. Zafer ÇELİK presented the main findings of the research report that their team prepared, introducing background and key concepts about youth unemployment and the general state of the issue in the world.

The four case country analysis covered in the research report namely, Germany, Tunisia, Türkiye and Uganda were presented by Dr. GÜR and Dr. Zafer ÇELİK. Afterwards, the representatives of Indonesia, the Gambia and Türkiye presented their experiences in reducing youth unemployment and vocational education systems of their respective countries. With regard to international institutions, Mr. Sami SERDAR from ICYF and Ms. Esmâ DEMİRTAŞ from SESRIC presented their experiences in the technical and vocational education and training. Lastly, Mr. Hasan YENİGÜL, Expert at COMCEC Coordination Office, made a presentation on the COMCEC Project Support Programs.

### 1. Outlook of Poverty in the OIC Member Countries

The first presentation of the Meeting was made by Dr. Belgi TURAN, Professor of Economics at TOBB ETU. She began her presentation by stating that there have been substantial increases in global income and wealth generation in recent decades. However, these gains have not been evenly distributed among all nations. High-income and upper-middle-income countries have experienced strong economic growth, while lower-middle-income and low-income countries have faced greater challenges. Notably, while GDP growth has exhibited disparities, the

reduction in poverty, as measured by the percentage of the population living below the \$2.15 threshold, has been noteworthy, averaging a significant decrease of around 20% to 35%.

Dr. TURAN indicated the fact that in member states of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), we encounter a different scenario. Economic growth is predominantly concentrated in upper-middle-income countries, with varying degrees of success in high, lower-middle, and low-income OIC nations in terms of GDP per capita. Progress in reducing the average poverty headcount ratio in OIC countries, while significant, falls short of the global average. It also exhibits fluctuations, as opposed to the consistent decline seen worldwide.

She continued with the figures concerning the OIC group. The OIC countries together represent one-fourth of the world's population, yet they contribute only one-eighteenth of the global GDP. This means that, on average, individuals in OIC countries experience more significant economic challenges compared to the rest of the world. She underlined that the OIC countries are not a homogenous group. Among this diverse set, 21 member states are among the 46 least developed countries, while some of the world's wealthiest nations are also part of the OIC. As a result, GDP per capita varies significantly among these nations, with the richest member having a per capita income of \$114,648, while the poorest struggles with only \$1,364. Notably, a considerable segment of the population in lower-middle-income and low-income OIC countries continues to face extreme poverty, with rates ranging from 20% to 74%.

While GDP growth is straightforward to target and measure, non-monetary poverty indicators are just as crucial as monetary poverty. Importantly, statistics show that GDP and development do not always align. To address this complexity, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) introduced the Human Development Index (HDI), which includes factors like health, education, and standard of living. Dr. TURAN pointed out that over the past three decades, the world has seen significant improvements in the Human Development Index (HDI). However, the OIC countries, despite an increase from 0.505 to 0.648, still, on average, fall behind the global, OECD, and developing country averages regarding both growth rate and HDI level, surpassing only the least developed countries.

She added that within the OIC countries, the human development classification reveals a diverse situation. Specifically, 34% of the member states (19 countries) are classified as having low human development, while 18% (10 countries) fall into the medium human development category. Furthermore, 30% of these nations (17 countries) achieve a high level of human development, with the remaining 18% (10 countries) boasting a very high human development status. She noted that income classification and development classification do not always align, leading to some upper-middle-income countries surpassing high-income countries in terms of development, and certain lower and lower-middle-income countries outperforming upper-middle-income nations. This discrepancy in GDP per capita is also reflected in non-monetary poverty within the OIC Member States. Key indicators such as life expectancy per capita vary from 60.9 to 77.1 years, and years of schooling range from 3.5 to 10.5.

Furthermore, the Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI), also developed by UNDP and based on individual-level surveys rather than macroeconomic data, reveals that the OIC countries exhibit higher rates of multidimensional poverty compared to global and developing country averages, surpassing only the sub-Saharan Africa region in this regard. Moreover, the Global Hunger Index, which assesses inadequate food supply, child mortality, and child undernutrition,

classifies 18 OIC countries as having alarming or serious levels of hunger and 14 countries as having a moderate level of hunger.

Dr. TURAN attracted the attention of participants on another crucial aspect of development which lies in gender equality and women's empowerment. The UNDP employs various composite indices to measure disparities between men and women in terms of health, education, labour, financial inclusion, and participation in decision-making. Metrics such as the Gender Development Index (GDI), the Global Gender Parity Index (GGPI), the Women Empowerment Index (WEI), and the Gender Inequality Index (GII) consistently show that OIC countries lag behind in terms of gender equality. This is a concern both in terms of human rights and as it relates to efficient resource utilization, as women's potential contributions to economic growth are underutilized.

Dr. TURAN summed up her presentation with key points. The member countries of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) present a diverse situation regarding poverty and development. While many developing countries have made significant progress in reducing both monetary and non-monetary forms of poverty in recent decades, a substantial number of nations continue to face high poverty rates. Within the OIC region, more than 377 million people experience the challenges of poverty, and the progress made in poverty alleviation has been hindered by the COVID-19 pandemic. As a result, she concluded that poverty alleviation remains a recurring item on the agenda and within the scope of cooperation areas for the Standing Committee for Economic and Commercial Cooperation (COMCEC). Collaborative efforts, supported by the COMCEC, are crucial for individual member states as they strive for sustainable development. This encompasses essential aspects like health, education, a decent standard of living, the reduction of gender inequality, and the empowerment of women.

## **2. Background and Key Concepts**

The first presentation on the main findings of the research report conducted specifically for enriching the discussions was made by Dr. Bekir GÜR and Dr. Zafer ÇELİK, explaining the background and key concepts related to the vocational education system and other active labour market policies (ALMPs).

Dr. GÜR's analysis emphasized the urgent issue of youth unemployment, highlighting its wide-reaching consequences. Globally, the challenge of youth unemployment was alarming, with a significant number of young people not engaged in education or employment. This issue was encapsulated by the concept of "NEET," which referred to young individuals aged 15-24 who were not participating in education, employment, or training. Dr. Gür underscored that there was a significant disparity in NEET rates across countries, with the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region, primarily composed of OIC member countries, experiencing particularly high rates.

Dr. Zafer Çelik addressed the issue of youth unemployment and the NEET, affecting both developing and developed countries. According to data from the International Labor Organization (ILO), nearly 300 million young people are not participating in employment or education. The Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) has been working to reduce youth unemployment rates for many years. This research report aims to offer effective strategies for vocational education and training to tackle this problem. The study utilizes a literature review and case studies from Germany, Uganda, Tunisia, and Türkiye to identify problems and

challenges while providing guidance for OIC member countries. The report also delves into other active labor market policies that have proven effective in mitigating youth unemployment. Tunisia boasts a successful education system, allocating 20% of its resources to education, with a special emphasis on vocational education and training (VET). Uganda has developed a new strategic plan for VET and has initiated internationally funded vocational education projects. The study gathered data from diverse sources and conducted field visits to Uganda, Tunisia, and Türkiye, interviewing key informants including experts from ministries, policymakers, academics, and researchers.

Youth unemployment is not uniform, and specific groups, including those with lower levels of education, disabilities, or ethnic minority backgrounds, encounter more significant challenges when it comes to securing employment. Dr. Gür emphasized the complexity of youth unemployment, framed by theoretical models such as human capital theory, highlighting the role of education and skills in employability. Conversely, screening theory suggested that the relationship between education and employability was intricate. Additionally, labor market segmentation theory pointed to institutional, societal, and structural factors as contributors to disparities in youth unemployment.

Dr. Gür acknowledged the significant impact of economic downturns on youth employment, as evident in events like the 2008 financial crisis and the more recent repercussions of the COVID-19 pandemic, which disproportionately affected young job seekers. Education plays a pivotal role in mitigating youth unemployment, but concerns persist regarding mismatches between the supply of education and labor market demand, particularly in developing regions. Demographic changes, including population age structures, fertility rates, and child mortality, also exert influence on the youth labor market. High fertility rates serve as a primary driver of youth unemployment in many developing countries.

Dr. Gür also underscored the critical importance of effective governance and institutions in addressing youth unemployment. They are instrumental in creating an environment conducive to job creation and human development. Inclusive policies, supported by governments, international organizations, NGOs, and donors, have the potential to reduce discrimination and promote social inclusion. ALMPs, including training programs and employment incentives, are designed to expand job opportunities for young job seekers.

Dr. Gür recognized the challenges associated with measuring youth unemployment, especially in poorer countries, because of data limitations and disruptions caused by conflicts and disasters. The interrelated problems of conflict, natural disasters, and recent global events such as the COVID-19 pandemic, the Russian invasion of Ukraine, and climate change, have further exacerbated the complexities of addressing youth unemployment, particularly in OIC countries.

### **Question(s) and Comment(s)**

**Comment:** Youth unemployment represents a crucial concern for OIC Member Countries, and the efforts made by COMCEC in addressing this issue hold great significance. Projects initiated by the Islamic Development Bank, such as Reverse Linkage, serve as valuable starting points



for empowering OIC Member Countries and drawing insights from successful examples within the OIC community.

### **3. Lessons Learnt from the Selected Case Studies and the Policy Options**

The second presentation focused on studying the experiences and recommended practices from four case countries. Dr. Bekir GÜR presented the case studies of Germany and Türkiye, while Dr. Zafer ÇELİK presented the case studies of Tunisia and Uganda.

#### **Germany:**

Dr. GÜR presented the German VET system, outlining its strengths and challenges. He explained the shared governance of education between the central government and the states in Germany. The German VET system is highly esteemed for its ability to achieve objectives established through consensus among policymakers at both state and federal levels in the education sector. He also emphasized that vocational education schools in Germany are designed to provide training for specific professions, offering practical training in real-world work environments within a dual system.

The dual vocational education and training (*Duale Berufsausbildung*) system in Germany combines practical on-the-job training with theoretical education, equipping students with hands-on experience and essential theoretical knowledge for their chosen careers. This system is a cornerstone of the German education system and widely recognized as one of the world's most successful vocational training models. In this system, students typically spend three to four days per week in a company or organization, gaining practical training and work experience under the guidance of skilled workers or trainers. The remaining one to two days per week are spent in a vocational school, where they acquire theoretical knowledge about their chosen profession. The dual vocational training system exemplifies the close collaboration between the government and the business sector, reflecting the amalgamation of corporatism and federalism principles. The financing of vocational schools is divided among the *Länder* (primarily for teacher salaries), local authorities (for equipment and infrastructure), and companies (for workplace training). In some sectors, companies have established a general fund to cover the costs of the training institution through contributions paid by all participating companies, while in others, each company bears its own costs.

Dr. Gür also emphasized the critical role played by chambers, including chambers of commerce, chambers of crafts, and chambers of industry and commerce, in the German VET system. These chambers act as intermediaries between employers and vocational schools, ensuring that the training provided aligns with the labor market's needs. In addition to overseeing the certification process, they provide guidance and support to both apprentices and employers

Finally, he pointed out that this system significantly contributes to reducing youth unemployment by equipping students with practical skills in high demand by employers. One of the strengths of the German VET system is the strong cooperation between employers and vocational schools. Employers play a central role in the German VET system by collaborating closely with vocational schools to design training tailored to the labor market's requirements. Nonetheless, Dr. Gür noted that the German VET system faces challenges related to social

inequality, flexibility, recognition of non-formal learning, and an aging workforce. Addressing these challenges is crucial for the continued success of the system.

### **Türkiye:**

Dr. Gür presented the VET system in Türkiye. He emphasized that the secondary education system was divided into vocational and academic tracks. In Türkiye, VET was accessible through both formal and non-formal channels. Formally, VET was available in public and private secondary education institutions, as well as at the higher education level in vocational schools and faculties. The Ministry of National Education (MoNE) also delivered VET programs through distance education. Various public and private organizations were responsible for organizing VET, offering individuals several opportunities to enhance vocational knowledge, acquire new skills, and prepare for higher education. Additionally, special vocational schools were established to cater to students with disabilities.

The financing of VET in Türkiye primarily depended on the central government budget, with an annual subsidy allocated for VET schools located in Organized Industrial Zones through collaboration between the MoNE and the Ministry of Finance. Additional financial resources were sourced from international projects, income generated by public sector entities, NGOs, and revenue from enterprises operating revolving funds within schools. İSKUR provided financial support for vocational courses designed for unemployed individuals.

Dr. Gür highlighted that youth unemployment in Türkiye is a significant concern, with a youth unemployment rate of 19.5% for individuals aged 15-24. This rate was further broken down into 16.4% for males and 25.4% for females, which was notably higher than the OECD average youth unemployment rate of 10.9% for both males and females. Additionally, women's participation in the labor force remained relatively low.

Dr. Gür emphasized that the most significant issue concerning youth unemployment in Türkiye is the unemployment of young higher education graduates, primarily due to the mismatch between the skills acquired and market demands. In response to this challenge, programs were initiated to enhance collaboration between the sector and universities, introduce practical training in various sectors, and implement a national internship mobilization. İŞKUR organized vocational training courses and on-the-job training programs, while İŞKUR and the Small and Medium Enterprises Development Organization (KOSGEB) provided entrepreneurship training and grants for program completers.

In addition to youth unemployment, the issue of NEET was a major concern in Türkiye, particularly for the 20-24 age population. In 2021, the NEET rate stood at 33.2% in total, 22.8% for men, and 44% for women. In contrast, the average for OECD countries was significantly lower at 16.2% in total. Türkiye's NEET rate for young people was the highest among OECD countries, with young women being almost twice as likely to be NEET. This situation posed significant social risks and the marginalization of young people, making it imperative to ensure their participation in employment or education. To address these challenges, various programs were initiated to improve industry-university collaboration, introduce practical training, and implement a national internship mobilization. KOSGEB provided entrepreneurship training and

grants to enhance youth employability, with a focus on monitoring the effectiveness of these initiatives to achieve significant and sustainable reductions in youth unemployment.

Dr. Gür stressed that the reputation of vocational training had suffered due to political interventions in the university entrance system and vocational education in the late 1990s, although it has become a more appealing alternative in certain study areas and schools. Nonetheless, more effort is needed to correct the image of vocational education for students who opt for VET programs due to lower academic achievement. Dr. Gür also pointed out that monitoring and reporting activities needed to be strengthened to ensure the effective implementation and progress tracking of initiatives, as Türkiye had the capacity to produce national development plans and strategy documents.

### **Tunisia:**

Dr. Çelik mentioned that Tunisia prioritizes education as a fundamental right, with compulsory basic education for ages 6 to 16. The education system includes both general and vocational streams, with transitions between them. VET programs in Tunisia are developed and implemented by a combination of public and private entities. Tunisia has been grappling with high youth unemployment rates. The formal employment sector encompasses only 28% of Tunisian youth. There is a peculiar occurrence of overeducation and unemployment in Tunisia, with a higher unemployment rate among those with a high school or post-secondary education than among those with no education or those with VET credentials. To address youth unemployment, Tunisia shifted its employment policy to emphasize self-employment through entrepreneurship programs and SME support.

Dr. Çelik discussed the challenges encountered by the VET system in Tunisia. These challenges encompass the social perception of VET as a secondary choice, the difficulties of the job market and a stagnant private sector, the disparity between VET skills and the job market's requirements, insufficient funding, lack of coordination among institutions and ministries, inadequate youth involvement in policy and program design, and the migration of vocationally trained individuals. The text also underscores the collaborative efforts between Tunisian ministries, civil society, and international organizations to enhance the capacity of VET programs.

### **Uganda:**

Dr. Çelik emphasized that Uganda implemented Universal Primary Education (UPE) in 1997, resulting in increased school attendance and literacy rates. Private schools play a significant role due to limited public secondary schools. Uganda offers vocational training programs. The Business, Technical and Vocational Education and Training sector in Uganda has seen significant increases in domestic funding. Youth unemployment is a pressing issue, with only 30% of young people employed in the formal sector. Uganda introduced the Technical Vocational Education and Training Policy in 2019, which focuses on establishing a sustainable funding strategy targeting priority skill development needs. Uganda implemented Universal Primary Education (UPE) in 1997, resulting in increased school attendance and literacy rates. Private schools play a significant role due to limited public secondary schools. Uganda offers vocational training programs. The Business, Technical and Vocational Education and Training

sector in Uganda has seen significant increases in domestic funding. Youth unemployment is a pressing issue, with only 30% of young people employed in the formal sector. Uganda introduced the Technical Vocational Education and Training Policy in 2019, which focuses on establishing a sustainable funding strategy targeting priority skill development needs.

Dr. Çelik highlighted that Uganda faces a challenge in providing job opportunities to its young population due to a shortage of new job opportunities and a negative attitude towards agriculture. The education system does not align with the job market and does not reflect the needs of the country. Vocational Education and Training (VET) is crucial in addressing youth unemployment, but there are challenges related to providing vocational skills, such as expensive certification processes and lack of new technologies in vocational training centers. Entrepreneurship is considered important for economic growth and job creation, and the Ugandan government provides financial assistance to the youth to create jobs. Modernizing agriculture is essential to absorb the youth workforce. Weak policy implementation hampers progress, requiring expertise and technical knowledge from international organizations.

### **Question(s) and Comment(s)**

**Comment:** While examining non-OIC exemplars like Germany is valuable, it is essential to recognize that such models may not be universally applicable to the majority of OIC Member Countries. Hence, there is a pressing need to prioritize the exploration and utilization of resources and case studies within the OIC context.

**Comment:** OIC Member Countries are encouraged to enhance their collaboration, leveraging the presence of commendable practices and exemplary models within certain member states. Mechanisms for the transfer of knowledge and expertise among OIC Member Countries should be strengthened. Institutions such as the Islamic Development Bank and COMCEC are well-positioned to help in addressing the challenge of youth unemployment in select OIC Member Countries. Additionally, there is potential to extend support for entrepreneurial initiatives aimed at fostering the growth of small- and medium-sized enterprises.

## **4. Experiences/Perspectives of the Member States**

### **4.1. Indonesia**

Ms. MUJIASTUTI, Trainer at Ministry of Social Affairs of Indonesia, made a presentation on the efforts to reduce youth unemployment and the role of vocational education strategies in this respect.

She firstly expressed that the unemployment rate in the young age group reached 16.46%, which means that out of 100 people aged 15-24 years who are part of the workforce, there are around 16 unemployed people. She then mentioned about the commitment of the government to reduce this rate and enumerated a number of legal regulations on the subject.

Ms. MUJIASTUTI touched upon the relevant Ministries responsible to take actions on specific roles. The Ministry of Education, Culture, research and Technology responsible to coordinate the Work Skills Education and Entrepreneurial Skills education program. Then she pointed out that the Ministry of Manpower is responsible to coordinate the on-the-job training and off-the-job training. She added that there are 255 institutions spread across 21 regions in Indonesia.

Another responsible institution is the Ministry of Social Affairs (MoSA). The MoSA provides vocational training program for beneficiaries or vulnerable groups including youth. One of the entrepreneurship program carried out by the MoSA is called PENA which includes training of young people in the urban areas (i.e. in Papua) from poor families; a basic training for mechanics and heavy equipment operation. The MoSA also provides vocational training for children/youth staying in social rehabilitation institutions.

Ms. MUJIASTUTI completed her presentation expressing that the Ministry of National Development is planning to optimize entrepreneurship programs for youth by giving sufficient budget to all relevant government bodies.

#### **4.2. The Gambia**

Mrs. Juldeh CEESAY, Deputy Permanent Secretary at Ministry of Finance and Economic Affairs of the Gambia, presented the state of youth unemployment and how the response by vocational education has the potential to address it.

She firstly touched upon some demographic figures of the Gambia including total population which is estimated around 2.8 million. Youth population between 15 and 24 years old segment constitutes around 57.6 percent of the population. The youth are almost equally distributed between urban and rural areas with 50.1 percent in the urban areas and 49.9 percent living in the rural areas.

Afterward, Mrs. CEESAY presented the National TVET Roadmap of the Gambia. She stated that the Gambia, like many developing countries, faces obstacles both in youth engagement and SME competitiveness. SMEs face difficulties finding the skilled employees they need to be competitive. Therefore, to reconnect young populations and SMEs, the Gambian Government has focused on the prime intermediary between them, which is TVET.

She expressed that the TVET Roadmap also builds on the existing apprenticeship framework and leverages it to cover “the last mile” in technical education through formalization and quality assurance. She then briefly explained the apprenticeship in the Gambia. She pointed out that a potential apprentice or their parent approaches a master craft person to get training and development in the workplace. After that, the master craft person provides unpaid on-the-job training. An apprenticeship varies in length and content, and it is at the discretion of the master craft person within a particular trade or sector.

Mrs. CEESAY stated that the TVET units of the Ministry of Higher Education, Research, Science and Technology and the Ministry of Basic and Secondary Education are currently developing their respective curriculum frameworks, which will serve as guidelines for teachers and set the standards and regulations that will ensure that TVET education is mainstreamed into the overall education system of the Gambia. She added that the quality of TVET has been improved through enhanced TVET institutions management, TVET teacher training and provision of pedagogical resources and equipment.

She also mentioned about additional efforts to improve the TVET system including equipment provision, review and development of curricula, further and adult education and teacher

training, and celebration of Skills Competitions to enhance TVET visibility and positive perception etc.

### **4.3. Türkiye**

Ms. Merve KARAKUŞ, Expert at Turkish Employment Agency, shared the experiences of Türkiye with regard to vocational education courses and on job training programs. Ms. KARAKUŞ started his speech by saying that there is a strong relationship between vocational education and poverty reduction. Active labour market practices, which are one of the tools used to reduce youth unemployment, play an important role in this sense.

She expressed that vocational training courses and on-the-job training programs are organized by İŞKUR within the scope of active labour force programs to improve the professional qualifications of the unemployed, reduce unemployment, and ensure that people and groups that require special policies are included in the labour market.

With vocational training courses, the employability of unemployed people who do not have any profession, who have a profession but cannot find a job, or who are not qualified in their profession is improved and their employability is increased. The vocational training courses aim at improving the professional qualifications of the unemployed and bringing them into the labour market.

After briefly talking about the purpose of vocational training courses and service providers, Ms. KARAKUŞ touched upon issues such as participation conditions, course duration, monitoring and evaluation, examination and certification and employment obligation.

Finally, regarding on-the-job training programs, Ms. KARAKUŞ mentioned that through these programs, people who do not have professional or business experience gain professional and business experience, thereby increasing their employability. In this way, people who are looking for a job but cannot find a job due to lack of work experience can gain work experience, and employers can have the opportunity to train the workforce they need themselves.

## **5. Experiences/Perspectives of International Institutions**

### **5.1. SESRIC**

Ms. Esmâ Demirtaş, Project Officer at SESRIC, made a presentation on the role of SESRIC in supporting the efforts on Vocational Education through its OIC-VET Programme. First, she touched upon demographic profile of youth and then the challenges faced while implementing TVET in the OIC Member Countries. Afterwards, she presented the OIC-VET Programme and lastly she mentioned about the OIC-TVET Strategic Roadmap 2020-2025.

Regarding the youth population Ms. Demirtaş indicated that OIC Member States are home to 350.8 million youth which represents the 29 percent of the world's total youth. She expressed that the youth literacy rate of the OIC Member Countries stands at 84,8 percent while this rate is about 94 percent for the non-OIC developing countries. She also highlighted that the youth literacy rate of the developed countries is around 99,5 percent while the world average is 91,3 percent.

Ms. Demirtaş also shared the youth unemployment rate of some country groupings including the OIC Member Countries. She pointed out that the rate of unemployed youth is 15.8 in the OIC group while this rate is 11.7, 16.2 and 15.6 percent for developed countries, non-OIC developing and the world respectively. In this respect, she highlighted the importance of TVET in terms of sustainable socioeconomic development, economic growth, competitiveness and equipping people.

Concerning the challenges faced while implementing TVET Ms. Demirtaş enumerated some important issues for the OIC Member Countries including insufficient teacher capacity, mismatch between TVET supply and labour market skill demand, lack of digitalization, cost sharing by public and private sectors and insufficient access to relevant TVET programs.

Afterwards, Ms. Demirtaş mentioned about the OIC-VET Programme which was launched in 2009 with the aim of supporting and supplementing the OIC Member States' efforts to overcome the current challenges and limitations faced in the area of TVET, enhancing the quality and innovation capacity of TVET systems, and strengthening cooperation among TVET institutions, enterprises, social partners and other relevant bodies in the OIC Member States. She also gave information about the organizational structure of the OIC-VET Programme namely, Monitoring and Advisory Committee (MAC), Executing OIC Organ and National Focal Points (NFPs).

Ms. Demirtaş lastly presented the OIC-VET Strategic Roadmap 202-2025 which was welcomed by the 35<sup>th</sup> Ministerial Session of the COMCEC, held in 2019. She pointed out that the Roadmap has 4 cooperation areas namely, Legislative Framework, Governance and Promotion; TVET Teacher Education; Occupational Standards and Qualification & Quality Assurance System; and Certification and Modular Training Programs. Then she touched upon the implementation modalities of the Roadmap which are training of trainers, projects, training courses, training workshops, and study visits.

## **5.2. Islamic Conference Youth Forum (ICYF)**

Mr. Sami SERDAR, CEO of Young Business Hub, Islamic Cooperation Youth Forum (ICYF) presented the efforts exerted by the ICYF to contribute to addressing the youth unemployment problem in the OIC Member Countries.

After presenting the ICYF and the main challenges and potential strength areas in the member countries, Mr. SERDAR touched upon the efforts carried out under the Young Business Hub (YBH) and International Incubation Centre (IIC) for economic empowerment of the OIC youth.

Then he enumerated some prominent events organized by the YBH, such as Start-up Investment Summits, Entrepreneurship Forums, Bootcamps, and Vocational Educational Training programs. Mr. SERDAR also briefed the participants about some TVET and economic empowerment projects implemented by the YBH in Niger, Lebanon, and Uganda.

Afterward, Mr. SERDAR explained that the IIC is a pilot model initiative of ICYF which was established to inspire other OIC countries to adopt this kind of centre for their youth's innovative entrepreneurship development and enhancements of capacities and capabilities. He added that the IIC aims to produce quality and competitive entrepreneurs by using innovative global trends to adapt them to the digital age. The Centre creates innovative solutions,

distinguishing start-ups with two different programs, Pre-Incubation and Incubation. He lastly pointed out that the ICC offers some significant opportunities for start-ups, including coaching/mentoring, training programs, and networking opportunities.

## **6. COMCEC Project Support Programs**

Mr. Hasan YENİGÜL, Program Coordinator at the COMCEC Coordination Office, made a presentation on COMCEC Financial Support Instruments, namely COMCEC Project Funding, COMCEC COVID Response Program and COMCEC Al-Quds Program.

Mr. YENİGÜL informed the participants about the essentials and details of the COMCEC Project Funding. In his presentation, Mr. YENİGÜL gave information on the main elements of COMCEC Project Funding, namely its objectives, sectoral areas, priorities, actors, project types etc.

He also touched upon the updates and improvements regarding the multilateral aspect of the projects under COMCEC Project Funding. In this respect, participants were informed about the opportunity to implement the projects individually. Also, he pointed out that digital transformation area was newly added cooperation area, which member countries and OIC institutions can submit project proposals.

Mr. YENİGÜL continued his presentation by highlighting the timeline and budget limits for the project submission. He stressed the importance of finding a project idea and informed the participants on how they can find project topics. He also explained the main project types along with the criteria for being an applicant for a project.

He informed the participants about the Project Preparation and Submission Guidelines as well as Project Management Information System.

Lastly, participants were informed about the poverty alleviation projects implemented under the COMCEC Project Funding in 2023.

## **7. Policy Debate Session: Formulation of Policy Recommendations for the 39th COMCEC Ministerial Session**

A policy debate session was held during the 21<sup>st</sup> Meeting of the Poverty Alleviation Working Group (PAWG). Before the policy debate Dr. GÜR summarized the main points of the Guide that was included in the research report.

Dr. Gür emphasized that the Guide delineates the fundamental principles for policies aimed at enhancing vocational education and mitigating youth unemployment. The structure, quality, financing, infrastructure, and level of digitalization in vocational education vary across OIC countries. This Guide is particularly valuable for countries with high youth unemployment rates and less robust vocational training systems. Dr. Gür explained that reforms in the vocational education system, intended to reduce youth unemployment, should adopt a holistic approach. The guide has been prepared to ensure that both public institutions and the labor market, along with other stakeholders, collaborate effectively within this comprehensive approach. The Guide's objective is to decrease social inequality across all policies and practices.



1. Identifying challenges and risks of youth unemployment, youth informal employment, and NEET
2. Learning from Failure and Developing Strategies for Replicating Success Stories
3. Developing a Legal Framework and Policies to Overcome the Risks and Challenges
4. Developing a Guideline for Digital Transformation of National VET Systems
5. Establishing Clear Roles and Responsibilities for NGOs, International Organizations, and Donors
6. Securing Finance to Initiate Vocational Training and Active Labor Market Programs
7. Developing Monitoring Indicators to Follow-up Progress

### Question(s) and Comment(s)

**Comment (ISFD):** When classifying IOC member countries, it is insufficient to rely solely on the World Bank's classification. A classification specific to IOC member countries is necessary. Analyzing only by income group is insufficient, as some countries may have a high level of education but lower income. The education system should prioritize entrepreneurship, and a new mechanism should be established to facilitate the employment of new graduates. IOC Member Countries should share their successful examples with other nations, focusing on the transfer of know-how. An ecosystem should be developed for vocational training and the reduction of youth unemployment.

**Comment (Islamic Countries Youth Forum):** IOC countries should establish a digital platform for showcasing their successful examples. On this platform, all countries should have the opportunity to present their successful cases. An IOC VET portal should be created.

**Comment (Türkiye):** The digital divide should be included as a risk when defining the challenges in reducing youth unemployment. Digital literacy should be added as an indicator in the monitoring section.

After the presentation of Dr. GÜR a set of policy recommendations were discussed by the participants and the following recommendations were formulated and accepted to be submitted to the 39<sup>th</sup> COMCEC Ministerial Session:

- Conducting a needs assessment to identify areas of improvement for addressing youth unemployment and crafting effective policies
- Developing effective active labour market policies to reduce youth unemployment and create opportunities for decent work
- Developing/improving well-designed monitoring and evaluation systems with key indicators for the effective implementation of vocational education programs
- Upgrading workforce skills and increasing employability through promoting digital skills development and digital transformation of national VET systems as well as by creating the public-private partnership
- Initiating full-fledged incentive schemes in order to encourage entrepreneurship and business management, employment assistance, and on job training
- Developing policies and initiating labour market reforms to reduce informal employment

- Developing sound policies with comprehensive strategies aiming to reduce NEET rate
- Promoting effective coordination of all the stakeholders and creating synergy for the realization of inclusive youth employment policies

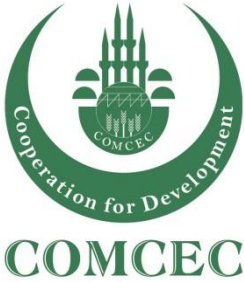
### **Closing Remarks**

The Meeting ended with closing remarks of Mrs. Juldeh CEESAY, Chairperson of the Meeting from Deputy Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Finance and Economic Affairs of the Gambia and Mr. Mehmet AKTAŞ, Director at the COMCEC Coordination Office. In her closing remarks, Ms. CEESAY conveyed her appreciations to all the presenters and participants for the fruitful deliberations made during the Meeting. Afterwards, Mr. AKTAŞ expressed his thanks and appreciation to all participants for their contributions to the discussions throughout the Meeting. The Meeting ended with vote of thanks.

After the completion of the Meeting, the participants attended a social program in a site visit format to a vocational high school namely, Cezeri Yeşil Vocational High School in Ankara. During the visit, the guests were informed about the physical features of the school building, which was constructed with environment-friendly materials and with a focus on sustainable energy consumption. Afterward, the school managers presented students' learning environment including workshops, classrooms, and library. They provided information on the major programs enabling the children to gain knowledge and build expertise in specific areas. The site visit was completed with satisfactory experience sharing and potential cooperation wishes of the member country representatives.

**ANNEXES**

**Annex I: Agenda of the Meeting**



**AGENDA**  
**THE 21<sup>ST</sup> MEETING OF THE COMCEC**  
**POVERTY ALLEVIATION WORKING GROUP**  
(October 9-10, 2023, Ankara)

***“EFFECTIVE VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING STRATEGIES TO REDUCE YOUTH UNEMPLOYMENT IN THE OIC MEMBER COUNTRIES”***

**October 9th, 2023**

Opening

1. Outlook of Poverty in the OIC Member Countries
2. Presentation of the Draft Research Report on “Effective Vocational Education and Training Strategies to Reduce Youth Unemployment in the OIC Member Countries”
3. Lessons Learnt from the Selected Case Studies and the Policy Options
4. Experiences/Perspectives of the Member States
5. Experiences/Perspectives of International Institutions
6. COMCEC Project Support Programs

**October 10th, 2023**

Policy Debate Session: Formulation of Policy Recommendations for the 39<sup>th</sup> COMCEC Ministerial Session

Closing

Site visit

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## Annex II: Programme of the Meeting



**COMCEC**

### **PROGRAMME**

#### **21<sup>ST</sup> MEETING OF THE COMCEC POVERTY ALLEVIATION WORKING GROUP**

(October 9-10, 2023, CP Ankara Hotel, Ankara, Türkiye)

*“Effective Vocational Education and Training Strategies to Reduce Youth Unemployment in the OIC Member Countries”*

#### **October 9th, 2023**

- 08.30 - 09.00** Registration
- 09.00 - 09.05** Recitation from Holy Qur’an
- 09.05 - 09.15** Opening Remarks
- 09.15 - 09.35** Outlook of Poverty in the OIC Member Countries
- Presentation : *Dr. Belgi TURAN*  
Consultant, COMCEC Coordination Office
- 09.35 - 09.45** Discussion
- 09.45 - 10.25** Presentation of the Draft Research Report
- Presentation : *Prof. Bekir GÜR*  
Consultant, Hacettepe University
- 10.25 - 10.55** Discussion
- 10.55 - 11.10** Coffee Break
- 11.10 - 11.50** Lessons Learnt from the Selected Case Studies and the Policy Options
- Presentation : *Prof. Zafer ÇELİK*  
Consultant, Ankara Yıldırım Beyazıt University
- 11.50 - 12.20** Discussion
- 12.20 - 14.00** Lunch
- 14.00 - 15.00** Experiences/Perspectives of the Member States
- *Indonesia*
  - *The Gambia*
  - *Türkiye*
- Discussion*
- 15.00 - 15.15** Coffee Break

**15.15 - 15.45 Experiences/Perspectives of International Institutions**

- *Presentation : ICYF*
- *Presentation: SESRIC*

*Discussion*

**15.45 - 16.30 Utilizing the COMCEC Project Support Programs**

- *Presentation by COMCEC Coordination Office*

*Discussion*

**October 10th, 2023**

**09.30 - 11.45 Policy Debate Session: Formulation of Policy Recommendations for the 39th COMCEC Ministerial Session on Improving Vocational Education and Reducing Youth Unemployment in the OIC Member Countries**

*A policy debate session was held to come up with a set of policy recommendations to address youth unemployment through vocational education programs in the Member Countries.*

*Discussion*

**11.45 - 12.00 Closing Remarks and Family Photo**

**12.00 - 14.00 Lunch**

**14.00 - 17.00 Site Visit**

## **Annex III: List of Participants**

### **LIST OF PARTICIPANTS**

#### **21<sup>ST</sup> MEETING OF THE POVERTY ALLEVIATION WORKING GROUP**

**(9-10 October 2023, Ankara, Türkiye)**

#### **A. MEMBER COUNTRIES OF THE OIC**

##### **REPUBLIC OF BENIN**

- Mr. HYACINTHE MONTCHO

Director of Studies and Aid Development Coordination, Ministry of Economy and Finances

##### **REPUBLIC OF CAMEROON**

- Mr. AYOUBA DAMBA

Research Officer, Ministry of Economy, Planning and Regional Development

- Mr. MOHAMADOU DIALO

Diplomat, Ministry of External Relations

##### **REPUBLIC OF THE GAMBIA**

- Ms. JULDEH CEESAY

Deputy Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Finance and Economic Affairs

- Mr. ISMAILA BAH

Expert for Tvet Education, Ministry of Finance and Economic Affairs

##### **REPUBLIC OF INDONESIA**

- Mr. RADEN RASMAN

Director of Potential and Social Resources, Ministry of Social Affairs

- Ms. MUJIASTUTI MUJIASTUTI

Trainer, Ministry of Social Affairs

##### **ISLAMIC REPUBLIC OF IRAN**

- Mr. MOJTABA TAJIK

General Director of National Youth Plans, Ministry of Sports and Youth of the Islamic Republic of Iran

##### **REPUBLIC OF IRAQ**

- Ms. RANA ZUHAIR KHAMES TOBYA

Director of the International Organizations Department, Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs

### **REPUBLIC OF KAZAKHSTAN**

- Mr. BRZHAN ALIMZHANOV

Head of the State Institution of Youth Policy Matters of Karaganda Region, State Institution Department Of Youth Policy Matters Of Karaganda Region

- Ms. AIDANA KALDYBEKOVA

Main Expert, Department of Youth Policy in Astana city

### **THE STATE OF KUWAIT**

- Ms. JAMANAH AHMAD

Foreign Relations Researcher, Ministry of Finance

### **SULTANATE OF OMAN**

- Ms. MAYA ALHAJRI

Financial Analyst, Ministry of Economy

### **REPUBLIC OF SUDAN**

- Ms. MAI EJAMI

First Secretary, Sudan Embassy Ankara

### **REPUBLIC OF TUNISIA**

- Ms. FATEN EZHENI

Deputy Director, Ministry of Social Affairs

### **TÜRKİYE CUMHURİYETİ**

- Mr. KÜRŞAD ATILLA ÖZDEMİR

Head of the Department, Ministry of Family and Social Services

- Mr. ERCAN DANSUK

Family and Social Services Specialist, Ministry of Family and Social Services,

- Ms. MERVE KARAKUŞ

Expert, Turkish Employment Agency

## **B. THE OIC SUBSIDIARY ORGANS**

### **STATISTICAL, ECONOMIC, SOCIAL RESEARCH AND TRAINING CENTER FOR ISLAMIC COUNTRIES (SESRIC)**

- Ms. ESMA DEMİRTAŞ

Project Officer, SESRIC

- Mr. MUZAMIL EDEMA

Researcher, Economic and Social Research Department

- Dr. AHMET ÖZTÜRK

Senior Researcher

## **C. AFFILIATED ORGANS OF THE OIC**

### **ISLAMIC CONFERENCE YOUTH FORUM FOR DIALOGUE AND COOPERATION (ICYF)**

- Mr. YUNUS SÖNMEZ

Director General of the Cabinet at the ICYF Secretariat, Islamic Cooperation Youth Forum

- Mr. SAMİ SERDAR

CEO of Young Business Hub, Islamic Cooperation Youth Forum

- Ms. JAVHARAT DINAASOVA

Expert, Islamic Cooperation Youth Forum

## **D. OIC SPECIALIZED INSTITUTIONS**

### **ISLAMIC SOLIDARITY FUND FOR DEVELOPMENT (IsDB)**

- Mr. MOHAMED MAHER MANNAI

Lead Economic Empowerment institution, Islamic Development Bank

## **E. CONSULTANTS**

- Dr. BELGİ TURAN

TOBB University of Economics and Technology



- Dr. BEKİR GÜR

Hacettepe University

- Dr. ZAFER ÇELİK

Yıldırım Beyazıt University

**F. COMCEC COORDINATION OFFICE**

- Mr. SELÇUK KOÇ

Acting Director General, COMCEC Coordination Office

- Mr. CAN AYGÜL

Director, COMCEC Coordination Office

- Mr. MEHMET ASLAN

Director, COMCEC Coordination Office

- Mr. MEHMET CELAETTİN AKTAŞ

Director, COMCEC Coordination Office

- Mr. MEHMET AKİF ALANBAY

Working Group Coordinator

- Ms. ÖZGÜL YÜKSEL

Logistics Coordinator

- Mr. OZAN LİF

Logistics Coordinator

- Mr. HAKAN USLU

Logistics Coordinator

- Mr. SELİM UYAR

Registration and Accommodation Coordinator