

World Statistics Day Forum
Session II: “Data Revolution for Sustainable Development and Update of Statistics Systems”
20 October 2015 **Doha, Qatar**
Statement by H.E. Ambassador Musa KULAKLIKAYA
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Excellencies, Honourable Delegates,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Assalamu Alaikum wa Rahmatullahi wa Barakatuhu,

I would like to extend my appreciation and gratitude to H.E. Dr. Saleh Al-Nabit, Minister of Development Planning and Statistics (MDPS) of the State of Qatar, for organizing and hosting the World Statistics Day Forum.

I also would like to convey my special thanks to the Member States of the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) for exerting efforts in the adoption of the UN resolution designating 20 October 2015 as the “*World Statistics Day*”. **Issuance of this resolution firmly underlines the vital interaction between the data producers and users. The strengthening of this interaction will lead to sound policy making, efficient development planning and effective monitoring mechanisms.**

Distinguished Delegates,

The change that the current century has brought to every walks of life has also broadened the meaning of statistics from a singular noun to cover multiple semantic dimensions. As a result of this transformation, **data has become at the forefront of discussions among the international community.**

Before the start of the Millennium, the literature on the relationship between statistics and policy-making simply stated that ‘*Statistics assists governments in the formulation and evaluation of policies. In doing so, statistics describes the state of the nation and measure the performance of government*’.

Such argumentations are reflections of the historical role given to “statistics” as the “*statisticum collegium*” (*the Council of State*) has the sole purpose of analysing data about the State.

However, can we still claim the argumentations that confine the statistics to the level of State are still valid? Or do all the stakeholders at the national, regional, or international levels understand or derive the same meaning from the term ‘policy-making’? If we frankly answer these questions, we can really clarify our minds against the bombardment of terms, contexts, and notions. As a result, we can understand why statistics should be at the centre of policy formulation.

For the first question, it would be good to highlight the adoption of the United Nations Millennium Declaration in 2000. This declaration put on the shoulders of the decision-makers the eight international development goals to improve the well-being of the countries. Through the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), **the statistics produced would not only be for the State but also for the peoples of the world for the first time in history.**

Furthermore, year 2015 marks a special period. Since, by the end of this year, our countries will start a new journey that will conclude the MDGs and open the door of new Post-2015 agenda with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

The short yet to-the-point motto of the Second World Statistics Day: “**Better Data, Better Lives**”, indeed articulates that **without high quality data, the decision makers will face difficulties in planning and implementing the activities, which are expected to contribute to the welfare of their citizens.**

Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen,

The main intersection point of the MDGs and SDGs is the relationship between statistics and policy formulation. Coming back to my second question at the beginning of my speech, **we need to ensure that all stakeholders derive the same meaning when we speak of “policy-making”**. Based on the context preferred, policy-making embraces either *policy support* or *policy influence* or both. Nonetheless, the *nuances* between the *support* and *influence* of policy from the perspective of statistics are material.

The statistics has once only been the *support* required for the management of existing policies. On the other hand, the world as we know it today has proved the other way. The statistics can also be used to *influence* policies.

For instance, active usage of statistics by the *civil society* during the political negotiations for the Post-2015 influenced the reformulation of goals. This exemplifies that the interaction between data producers and users will favour the progress of societies with the involvement of all stakeholders including donor communities and international agencies.

Distinguished Delegates,

It is absolutely true that the Post-2015 development agenda will present new challenges, as well. One of the challenges is that there are still indicators to be developed to measure the progress to be recorded by the countries on the road to 2030. In the coming days, the official statisticians both from the national and international organisations will involve in the discussions to come up with innovative ideas to measure the targets with missing indicators.

The outcomes of these discussions will also set the new agenda **on how to update the statistical systems at the national, regional, and international levels** to meet the new demands and requirements. Furthermore, the **update of the official statistics systems should not only be confined to the NSOs but also cover all related departments and agencies in the National Statistical Systems (NSS)**.

From this perspective, it is essential to develop statistical capacities of the nations. Because an NSS with high statistical capacity can meet the needs of users towards good quality official statistics, which are produced by governments as a public good.

Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen,

The recent years have also witnessed the increase of methodologies to measure the statistical capacities of the developing countries. One of the most well-known measures is the **Statistical Capacity Indicator (SCI)** developed by the World Bank. The indicator assesses the capacities of National Statistical Systems (NSS). The 2014 SCI scores show that the statistical systems of the OIC member countries have widely varying capacities. However, the average of the 50 OIC member countries (63.1) lies below that of the full set of 145 countries (65.7) in 2014. I also would like to note that only 24 OIC member countries recorded overall SCI scores higher than the world average in 2014.

Distinguished Delegates,

Against this background, **the roles of the international organisations in leveraging the statistical capacities of the NSSs in their respective member countries gain importance**. In accordance with their designated mandates and resources they are provided with, the scope and depth of activities they conduct vary. From this perspective, **our Centre tries to bring about synergies by combining resources from both our member countries and international organisations to carry out capacity-building programmes**.

As some of you may already know, the **Statistical Capacity Building (StatCaB)** Programme for the NSOs of the OIC member countries is the flagship programme of SESRIC. It is a large-scale capacity development project based on a South-South cooperation approach. The StatCaB is essentially a twinning programme whereby the countries are matched according to their needs and capacities.

The StatCaB programme was initiated in early 2007 and so far, around 140 activities have been conducted. From the beneficiary side, 45 OIC member countries have benefitted until now. The activities carried out under the StatCaB Programme have been contributed by 16 OIC member countries and 12 regional and international organisations.

In addition to capacity building, SESRIC also facilitates building of platforms to enhance cooperation among the NSOs of the OIC member countries. In this regard, SESRIC organizes the annual sessions of **OIC Statistical Commission (OIC-StatCom)** since 2011.

The OIC-StatCom aims to bring about **a platform for sharing experiences and best practices on initiatives that can help OIC Member Countries become more effective and efficient in managing their statistical systems.** In these sessions, the NSOs of the OIC member countries find an opportunity to exchange views and to seek mechanisms to enhance their cooperation on statistical activities. The OIC-StatCom members also directly contribute in the multi-annual work plan of our Centre in the field of statistics by shaping the *Strategic Vision Document* of the OIC-StatCom through their feedback.

Despite being a young initiative, the OIC-StatCom has **successfully established a linkage between the mainstream international official statistical themes and the indicators specific to the OIC Member States.**

Currently, under the umbrella of the OIC-StatCom, our Centre is working with the international stakeholders on the mechanisms for the establishment of a common statistical methodology for collating, processing and disseminating Islamic Banking and Finance (IBF) statistics. Due to the magnitude of the project and the expertise required to achieve it, **the OIC-StatCom shall be a bridge between the national data producers and the international expertise agencies to come up with this methodology.** The project on IBF statistics shall also be a foundation model for the indicators on halal products and waqf statistics as found in the *Strategic Vision Document* of the OIC-StatCom.

Besides these initiatives, the OIC-StatCom actively seeks ways and means to initiate **new cooperation projects with the international organisations.** Our close cooperation with the World Health Organization (WHO) and its partners under the project titled “*Integration of Tobacco Questions for Surveys (TQS) into the National Household Surveys*” provide both financial and technical assistance to pilot countries in measuring the prevalence of tobacco consumption in our member countries.

Additionally, in its capacity as the Secretariat of OIC-StatCom, our Centre is planning to initiate the *Voices of the Hungry* project in cooperation with the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) to measure food insecurity through people’s experiences. In line with both the MDGs and SDGs, adequate food is a basic human right. In this sense, information regarding the distribution and severity of hunger and food insecurity can **contribute to building political will, designing effective policies, and targeting allocation of resources to effectively realize this basic human right.**

Besides our co-financing of these joint projects, the Standing Committee of Commercial and Economic Cooperation of the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (COMCEC) has awarded for the last two years financial support to the three projects of SESRIC in **poverty statistics and tourism statistics.**

The **poverty statistics** projects in year 2014 and 2015 yielded a technical report on the measurement of poverty in our Member Countries, training courses on poverty statistics and a Regional Workshop in Dakar, Senegal this December with the collaboration of the Islamic Development Bank (IDB) and Oxford Poverty and Human Development Initiative (OPHI).

The **tourism statistics** project in 2014 paved the way for the organisation of training courses in 6 OIC member countries. It also enabled us to have a technical cooperation linkage with the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) for the organisation of a Regional Workshop on Tourism Statistics and Tourism Satellite Accounts (TSA) in the same year. This cooperation linkage is now growing with another joint activity on TSA with the UNWTO.

All these activities have come true with the sense of ownership of our member countries and their involvement in the annual sessions of the OIC-StatCom. In this context, I encourage and call upon the NSOs of all OIC Member Countries to actively participate in upcoming Sixth Session of the OIC-StatCom to be held in the last quarter of 2016.

Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen,

Apart from the need for the update of official statistics systems in countries, the current development agenda asks for a **data revolution from the official statistics**. Official statisticians are now not only talking about censuses, household surveys, statistical yearbooks, inflation figures, export/import volumes but also about a new type of language, that once has been a jargon of the other fields. This **new language** has familiarized us with the notions of “*Big Data*”, “*Data Science*”, “*Open Data*”, “*Data Visualisation*”, “*Nowcasting*”, “*Statistical Storytelling*” and many more.

We should admit that **Big Data presents challenges to our traditional way of working in official statistics**. It will have a profound impact on how we approach data from both the scale side and “*datafication*” of life side. But then again, what are the challenges posed and opportunities availed to our institutions in the Big Data era? **There are at least five aspects we need to consider to find our ways:**

- From the *methodological* aspect, sound frameworks are required to be developed to deal with the bias in new sources;
- From the *technical* aspect, legacy technology products (both hardware and software) are required to be upgraded without intervening the business continuity;
- From the *ethical* aspect, procedures and protocols are required to be set up to ensure privacy and trustworthiness in official statistics with new data sources;
- From the *institutional* aspect, new structural NSS models are required to be established to contribute to interagency coordination and the public welfare;
- From the *human resources* aspect, new skills and capacities are required to be developed to blend statistics, data mining, and computer science to unleash the institutional potentials.

Distinguished Delegates,

Before concluding my remarks, I would like to underline that the World Statistics Day reminds us **the central role of official statistics in supporting and influencing the decision-making mechanisms**.

I would like, once again, to express my deep gratitude to the Ministry of Development Planning and Statistics (MDPS) of the State of Qatar for organizing and being host to this memorable Forum.

I wish you all the success in your deliberations and thank you for your attention.