



REPORT ON

WORKSHOP ON:

**“FACILITATING TRADE: IDENTIFYING NON-TARIFF
BARRIERS AMONG THE OIC MEMBER STATES”**

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**REPORT ON
WORKSHOP ON “FACILITATING TRADE:
IDENTIFYING NON-TARIFF BARRIERS AMONG
THE OIC MEMBER STATES**

Rabat, 24-25 October 2017

I/ Context:

Within the framework of the implementation of the COMCEC-ICDT Project entitled: “Project Cycle Management/PCM” funded by the two Institutions on Facilitating Trade: identifying Non-Trade Barriers to Trade among the OIC Member States” (2016-ICDT-247) 2016-2017, the COMCEC Coordination Office (CCO) and the Islamic Centre for Development of Trade (ICDT) organized in collaboration with the Ministry in Charge of Foreign Trade of the Kingdom of Morocco, a workshop on “**Facilitating Trade: Identifying NTBs among the OIC Member States**” in Rabat- Kingdom of Morocco on 24-25 October 2017.

This meeting was opened by H.E Dr. Yousef A. AL-OTHAIMEEN, Secretary General of OIC and the effective presence of The Secretary of State in Charge of Foreign Trade Mrs. Rkia DERHAM and the Representative of the COMCEC Coordination Office.

II/ Objectives:

The main objectives of this workshop are as follows:

- To identify and analyse non-tariff barriers to Trade and their impact on Trade of the OIC Member Countries;
- To contribute to the gradual dismantling of non-tariff barriers to trade between the OIC Member States;
- To formulate recommendations and measures to reduce the impact of these NTMs in order to boost intra-OIC trade;
- To contribute to the attainment of the OIC strategic objective targeting to reach 25% on intra-OIC Trade share by the year 2025 under the framework TYPOA 2016-2025.

III/ Participants:

The following countries and Institutions participated in this workshop:

- Countries: Azerbaijan, Bahrain, Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Guinea, The Gambia, Jordan, Mali, Morocco, Lebanon, Niger, Senegal, Pakistan, Togo, Turkey, Indonesia, Malaysia, Iran, Iraq, Kuwait, Oman, Yemen, Gabon, Mauritania, Brunei and Tunisia.
- Institutions: OIC General Secretariat, COMCEC Coordination Office, ISESCO, IDB Group (Rabat Office), ICDT, UNCTAD, WTO, ITC, UNECA (Rabat Regional Office) and Bayt AlMal AlQuds.

(Annex 1: List of participants)

IV/ Proceedings:

After the recitation of Verses from the Holy Qur’an, H.E. Dr. Dr. Yousef A. AL-OTHAIMEEN, The Secretary General of OIC, took the floor and expressed His gratitude and deepest thanks to the Government and People of the Kingdom of Morocco under the wise leadership of the King of Morocco, May God Glorify Him for His full support to the OIC Institutions and Member States economies and societies.

H.E. expressed also His gratitude to the organizers namely COMCEC Coordination Office and ICDT for organizing this important workshop which is one of the umbrella action of the OIC. Non-Tariff barriers hampering intra-OIC trade development are composed mainly of Technical Barriers to Trade (SPS, Quality standards, red tapes, subsidies,) need to be dismantled progressively by governments with the view of reaching other OIC Member States markets.

H.E. mentioned that the present workshop aims to identify the non-tariff barriers that impede the progress of intra-OIC trade exchanges, as well as to pinpoint ways and means to contribute to the removal of measures that conflict with regional and international agreements in this field, and to make suggestions for the evolvement of mechanisms for intra-OIC consultations in order to do away with such practices.

Consequently, this workshop will also contribute to ensure better coordinated stands among the OIC Member States in the face of the escalating use of non-tariff barriers on the part of the industrial countries, in a drive to curb this phenomenon and facilitate the access of the OIC Member States' exports to the countries concerned.

H.E. underlined the important role assumed by the ICDT and COMCEC in activating the Trade Preferential System among the OIC Member States and in the establishment of the Single Window paradigm. He drawn kind attention to participants of the fact that quite a few Member States are bound by other regional trade agreements that hamper their accession to the Intra-Islamic trade preferential scheme, and this entails a need for the ICDT and COMCEC to tweak their efforts in their quest for a solution to this challenge, in cooperation with the OIC General Secretariat.

H.E. mentioned that ICDT should prepare a detailed report explaining reasons behind low level of intra OIC trade, existing barriers and challenges to intra OIC trade and suggest practical solutions to promote intra OIC trade.

Accordingly, there seems to be an imperative need to convene a meeting at the highest level among the Islamic States before the Eleventh session of the WTO Ministerial conference due to be held in Buenos Aires in December 2017, with a view of preparing a common ground for the defence of our Member States' economic and trade interests.

The Secretary of State in Charge of Foreign Trade of Morocco made a speech focusing on efforts made by the Kingdom to facilitate trade among its partners particularly OIC Member States by signing many trade agreements in this sector. She urged Member States to develop policies which allow private sector to ease their business.

The Representative of the COMCEC Coordination Office underlined in his statement that the COMCEC is ready to accompany Member States to enhance their trade and economic cooperation through the COMCEC Project Funding and Working Group mechanisms. He congratulated ICDT and the Government of Morocco for all efforts done to ensure the success of this event.

V/ Axes of the workshop:

The following axes were developed by different experts:

Panel I: Overview of the current situation of the NTMs/NTBs worldwide (WTO, UNCTAD, ITC, UNECA)

Panel II: NTMs and NTBs in the OIC Member States and impact on intra-OIC Trade (ICDT, COMCEC)

Panel III: National experiences on NTMs/NTBs (Morocco, Tunisia, Senegal, Guinea,

Togo, Niger, Mali, Indonesia, Lebanon, Jordan, Malaysia, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia and Egypt.)

VI/ Main recommendations:

After fruitful discussions, participants agreed on the following recommendations:

1. Explanation of non-tariff measures and their roles to foreign trade operators. This explanation could be done through several means and in different forms, and mainly:
 - Training of foreign trade operators in NTMs to explain their usefulness and how to comply with them. This training would benefit from being provided at sectoral level.
 - Professional associations could also supplement and reinforce this training by publishing explanatory guides on the application of the different NTMs in the context of their profession or industry.
 - Chambers of Commerce, as well as trade associations could, in addition to training, can provide foreign trade operators with helpdesks, if possible by country or at least by region.
 - Update the portals of the main OIC relevant bodies, and in particular ICDT, to enable operators in member countries to have timely access in the three official languages to the required information on NTMs in different countries.
2. Convene a meeting at the highest level among the Islamic States before the Eleventh session of the WTO Ministerial conference due to be held in Buenos Aires in December 2017, with a view to prepare a common ground for the defence of our Member States' economic and trade interests.
3. Create an observatory of NTMs at the ICDT portal to record the grievances of foreign trade operators of the OIC countries and to keep the list up-to-date.
4. Harmonize the application of NTMs by the OIC countries. The goal of such harmonization is to have the same understanding of the scope of these NTMs and to standardize the application of the mechanisms that affect them.
5. Accelerate the process of accession of member countries to the TPS-OIC Framework Agreement and its protocols as well as to the WTO Agreement on Trade Facilitation, including the provisions on the single window of foreign trade.
6. Encourage member countries wishing to enter into trade preference agreements to include the harmonization of NTMs and the offsetting of their negative impact as well as that of POs, in their negotiations with other parties.
7. Update national regulations to keep pace with the changing international business environment.
8. Customs services are encouraged to set up watch keeping units to monitor the emergence of new products and to include them in their customs nomenclature. Similarly, they must update their product price database in order to apply the corresponding duties and taxes and avoid disputes from operators.
9. Coordinate and harmonize customs procedures at the level of the OIC countries and standardize the requested documents at least at intra-OIC trade level.
10. It is highly recommended to consider the possibility of reducing the number of documents for the passage of goods through customs.
11. Customs services are encouraged to generalize and systematize the digitization of their services to facilitate the majority of customs operations.
12. Encourage the conclusion of mutual recognition agreements of tests and analyses carried out in the OIC countries in order to reduce customs clearance times and subsequent costs.

13. Publish the main recommendations of this workshop in shape pamphlet to be disseminated to the OIC Member States through the OIC General Secretariat.
14. Exchange of data on NTMs between Member Countries and Rules of Origin.
15. Share interactive NTMs data among Member Countries and publishing from national bulletin NTM information and feeding the ICDT's website in collaboration UNCTAD, WTO and ITC.
16. Include in the NTBs portal of ICDT some information about NTMs published by the relevant OIC Ministers in charge of foreign trade.
17. Develop logistical infrastructure related to trade and analysis laboratories of products relating to certification and conformity requirement in OIC Member States.
18. Request ICDT to organise bilateral meetings of OIC Member States in order to identify the obstacles to trade among Member States.
19. Request ICDT to propose projects within the framework of COMCEC Project Funding for financing in collaboration with Member Countries.
20. Enforcing articles 7 and 15 of the TPS/OIC Agreements and the internal rules relating to NTBs.
21. There are lessons to be learned from some successful global and regional approaches to tackle the challenges including transparency initiatives and regulatory cooperation such as:
 - The Tripartite NTBs mechanism;
 - The EU Trade Helpdesk;
 - ALADI effort on regulatory cooperation and good practices;
 - ASEAN Solutions for Investments, Services and Trade (ASSIST);
 - MERCOSUR decisions on identifying NTMs and establishing an action plan to deal with them.

VII/ Motion of thanks:

At the end of the workshop, participants extended their deepest thanks and gratitude to the Government of His Majesty MOHAMED THE SIXTH, King of Morocco, MAY GOD ASSIST HIM for the unstinted care he bestows on the OIC and the activities of the Islamic Centre for Development of Trade and for His continued support to strengthen Intra-OIC cooperation and commitment to the Joint Islamic Action.

The Participants also conveyed their deepest thanks to His Excellency Dr. Yousef bin Ahmad AL-OTHAIMEEN, the Secretary General of the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation for his continuous support to promote trade and investment cooperation among OIC Member States and achieving goals of the Ten-Year Programme of Action OIC-2025.

They also expressed their gratitude to H.E. Mr Mehmet Metin EKER, Director General of COMCEC Coordination Office and to H.E. Dr. El Hassane HZAINI, Director General of ICDT and their staff for the preparatory work, facilities and assistance which were provided to ensure the success of this workshop.

Done in Rabat, 25 October 2017