



Statement by

Mr. Anasse Aissami

Acting Chief Operations Officer

At the 20th Ministerial Conference of the Central Asian Region
Economic Cooperation (CAREC)

Connectivity, Cooperation, and Resilience in a Digital Era

17th November 2021

Excellencies,

Ladies and gentlemen

Assalamu Alaikum Warahmatullahi Wabarakatuh

I would like to thank you very much on behalf of the IsDB Management for the kind invitation to participate in the 20th Ministerial Conference of the CAREC Meeting, which will provide us a great opportunity to discuss our joint efforts, projects and programs within the implementation of the CAREC Strategy 2030, to facilitate the recovery period of our common member-countries in the region in the post pandemic period.

The proposed discussion and endorsement of the CAREC Health Strategy 2030 and CAREC Digital Strategy 2030 are timely measures to streamline the efforts of the financial partners toward strengthening of the health systems of the countries to mitigate regional health risks and build resilient national health systems and promoting digital technologies in the region. I believe this gathering is an opportunity to think together and come up with practical solutions.

Ladies and gentlemen

Given the serious economic impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the global economy and on our member countries, the Islamic Development Bank Group launched the 'Strategic Preparedness and Response Program' (SPRP) aimed at helping its member countries mitigate the impact of the Pandemic.

While the IsDB Group has initially committed US\$2.3 billion in 2020 to address the short-medium- and long-term needs of its member countries, the exact amount of its SPRP assistance has now exceeded US\$ 4.7 bln¹. The Strategic Preparedness and Response Program' is being implemented under the 'Respond, Restore, and Restart' tracks, namely the "3Rs".

One of the many lessons drawn from this global pandemic is that working together is the only way out. Regional Cooperation and Integration can play a crucial role in guiding and leveraging national efforts in the fight against the COVID-19 pandemic, and for laying the ground for the recovery phase.

Ladies and gentlemen

I am pleased to inform you that the IsDB Group will further enhance its focus on regional cooperation and integration. Since its inception, the Islamic Development Bank has been promoting cooperation among its member countries. For more than three decades, great efforts have been put in place to support intra-trade among its member countries,

¹ Source: Ninth Progress Report to BED on the IsDB Group Strategic Preparedness and Response Program For COVID-19 Pandemic

at the level of institutions and multilateral agreements, and to provide financing to support regional infrastructure projects as well as production capacity related to trade in its member countries.

In this regard, the Bank is increasingly supporting the regional corridor approach for its member countries, convinced that transport corridors are one of the direct ways to support economic integration, which is important for the growth prospects of countries, especially those that are landlocked. The corridors provide also a sub-regional framework to organize cooperation and collaboration between different countries and public and private sector stakeholders in the provision of trade facilitation and logistics infrastructure and services.

Ladies and gentlemen

Based on the Bank's Regional Cooperation and Integration policy and strategy, we follow an "open regionalism" approach by which we aim to achieve compatibility between regional trade arrangements and the global trading system. We support the building of economic platforms and the establishment of new trade links between different regions.

IsDB's approach in the promotion of global and regional connectivity has two interlinked and mutually supportive elements. The first is the development of regional corridors while the second is aligning physical connectivity with "soft" aspects of regional integration.

Regarding hard infrastructure connectivity, the priority is given to the connection of landlocked economies to international ports and trade networks, which is very relevant for Central Asian economies. Within the infrastructure development in the region, I would like to avail this opportunity to appreciate the leading role of the Asian Development Bank in promoting the regional cooperation and integration among our common member countries in the Central Asian Region and its neighbouring regions. I am pleased to inform that IsDB completed major infrastructure projects in Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyz Republic and in other common member countries beyond the Central Asian Region. The IsDB co-financing contribution to our joint projects was approximately US\$ 250 million per year on average in the last six years.

Besides regional transport projects, IsDB also supports a number of regional energy projects as part of its regional integration efforts.

Regarding the soft aspects, IsDB has initiated commercialization studies on the regional corridor projects to promote trade and reduce transportation costs. Furthermore, IsDB is developing a Geographic Information System (GIS) based database of regional

infrastructure networks to identify missing cross-border infrastructure links based on data-driven analysis.

Through our homegrown South-South Cooperation mechanism called Reverse Linkage, we are bringing the private sector on board, tapping into its vast financial resources, high-quality technical expertise and agility in project implementation. Our member countries possess active and socially responsible private sector institutions willing to boost the positive impact of development activities that can improve the quality of human life and achieve sustainable development goals.

Ladies and gentlemen

In conclusion, it is clear that the post-COVID-19 era requires strategic partnerships and stronger cooperation and integration. There is a need to become more proactive and adapt ourselves in order to address global challenges and transform them into opportunities for a prosperous future for all humanity.

The Islamic Development Bank stands ready to work hand-in-hand with all the key stakeholders to achieve sustainable development goals and ensure no one is left behind.

Thank you for your audience.