



**MUSLIM DIASPORA:
PROSPECTS AND CHALLENGES FOR GLOBAL PEACE AND
PROSPERITY**

**ADDRESS BY THE DIRECTOR GENERAL OF THE STATISTICAL,
ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL RESEARCH AND TRAINING CENTRE
FOR ISLAMIC COUNTRIES (SESRIC)**

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**Excellencies, Distinguished Delegates,
Ladies and Gentlemen,
Assalamu Alaikum wa Rahmatullahi wa Barakatuhu,**

It gives me great pleasure to welcome you all to this workshop on Muslim Diaspora. I am honoured by the presence of so many distinguished participants. Thank you for coming.



At the outset, allow me to highlight excellent cooperation between the SESRIC and the Presidency for Turks Abroad and Related Communities (YTB), which had been crucial for organizing of this event.

This year the SESRIC is marking a big milestone with strong record of achievements. It has demonstrated the capacity to successfully fulfil its mandate as a subsidiary organ of OIC, which was given to it forty years ago.



Our vision is to identify coherent solutions to emerging challenges of OIC region and the Islamic World at large, assist and facilitate joint responses and help the Member States reach their own developmental goals.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Population movements are as old as human history. People moved within and across regions due to various motivations over the throughout the history, including economic, security, social, political as well as natural reasons.



However, people's movements across regions have had a significant impact on the flow of ideas, innovation, trade and economic development. This spread of ideas and knowledge is also essential ingredient of the today's economic landscape.

Muslim communities have been an integral part of this global phenomenon. Starting with the Hijrah of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) from Makkah to Madinah, Muslim migrants have contributed to the spread of not only Islamic values and



principles but also knowledge and wisdom in wider geographies.

They thereby contributed to the economic, social and cultural richness of the places they settled. Furthermore, under the Ottoman State, for example, many non-Muslim majority regions have entered a process of development, in which cities, roads and bridges were built, craftsmanship and trade developed, libraries opened and living conditions improved. Therefore,



Muslim migrants have always motivation to contribute to the development of the societies they live in.

However, the increase in the diversity of migration in global economy has made the nature of migration more complex in all aspects. Today, there are millions of Muslims who are leaving outside of their origin country and they face enormous challenges in various aspects. However, they represent also great opportunities in many fronts. Therefore, I personally pay



great importance to better understanding these challenges and opportunities of Muslim Diaspora.

And in my opinion, this gathering is particularly timely for two reasons:

First, in the world of today, characterized by rapid communications and greater mobility of people and ideas, individuals of various societies are in closer contact with



different beliefs. The record of Islamic history has many examples of religious tolerance. However, one sad fact is that lack of space for others still exists in many parts of the world.

Second, we are witnessing that growing Muslim population is no longer a phenomenon exclusive to the MENA and Asia-Pacific regions. Over one fifth of World's Muslim population today lives in Europe, North America and Australia. Pew Research Center estimates that there were about 3.5 million of



Muslims living in the U.S. in 2017. On the other hand, according to estimates presented in the Yearbook of Muslims in Europe, estimated size of Muslim population in 2016 was around 25 million.

If we add to this number around 20 million Muslims living in Russian Federation, then Muslim population in Europe is reaching up to 45 million.



Muslims now constitute one of the largest diasporas in the world and our expectation is to see them as fully edged citizens in the host countries, with their own values and norms.

This was the basic message of the Resolution on “Safeguarding the Rights of Muslim Communities and Minorities in Non-OIC Member States”, adopted in July 2017 in Abidjan, by the 44th session of Council of Foreign Ministers of the OIC. Despite



various challenges, we believe that Muslim communities can greatly contribute to the development of the societies.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Today, in many non-OIC countries we are witnessing both the rise of exclusionary discourses directed against Muslims, but also normalization of Muslim lives, which is evident through



their integration in cultural life, political participation, legal recognition of Islamic organizations. For example, nine Mayors in United Kingdom are Muslims, including the city of London, Birmingham and Oxford.

However, despite recent growth of literature on Muslim diaspora, our knowledge on this issue remains limited and fragmented.



With the intention to fill this gap and engage more closely with the Muslim diaspora, in September 2016 the SESRIC has launched the “Global Muslim Diaspora Project” and commissioned a comprehensive study on Muslim communities living in the non-Muslim countries.

A booklet providing preliminary outcomes of this study prepared by Ankara Social Sciences University is already been distributed to you.



In general, the Global Muslim Diaspora Project is the first comprehensive effort of its kind, developed by SESRIC to analyse challenges, experiences and perceptions on a range of issues related to Muslim communities living in non-OIC countries.

As soon as the SESRIC researchers give the final shape to this report, it will be an easy-to-access source of information, which affords the political elites, policy makers and analysts the



opportunity to understand how the Muslim diaspora in selected countries views the most pressing issues which they face today.

While preparing this report, we paid attention also to thoughts of non-Muslim public opinion leaders, thus ensured their valuable contributions.

This report provides also a range of useful statistics on the Muslim diaspora, as well as insights on similarities and



differences of challenges faced by them in different countries. You will hear detailed information about the key findings from SESRIC's Global Muslim Diaspora report in the next session. Here, I would like to share with you some of my observations.

First, The Global Muslim Diaspora report reaffirms the view that the main concerns of the Muslim communities in non-Muslim countries are racism and Islamophobia, discrimination by the state, as well as discrimination by society.



At London for example, 56.1% of respondents mention racism and Islamophobia as a biggest disadvantage of living in the United Kingdom.

On the other hand, 72.7% of London respondents indicate the religious and cultural freedom as main advantage of living in the United Kingdom.



These two figures illustrate the paradoxical situation, where state guarantees cultural and religious rights of Muslim communities, but it is under the influence of Islamophobia and anti-immigrant sentiments, which are rising across the Europe.

In Berlin, for example, situation is different, where almost three-quarters of respondents (62.3% in total) indicate the welfare state and economic prosperity as the main advantages of living in Germany.



The insight that stood out for me in findings is lack of unity among diasporic Muslim communities. Majority of the interviewees do not believe to the existence of a Muslim Diaspora.

When asked to identify three major factors causing disunity among Muslims in Berlin, more than 50% of interviewees pointed out cultural and sectarian differences; 18% of them opted for lack of leadership, while 15% indicated to the lack of representation. For



65.3% of interviewees in London, a lack of leadership is main a main cause of disunity.

Only 44% of all respondents in London and 36% of them in Berlin reported to be generally or completely involved with the Muslim Community in their place of living, although their sense of belonging to Islam is significantly higher.

Ladies and Gentlemen,



We intend to continue with similar practice in the future, by including into the Global Muslim Diaspora Project other countries with significant Muslim populations.

Your comments and feedbacks will be particularly critical for assessing the success of the initial phase of the project.



Here, I would like to thank to everyone involved in the preparation of this report, particularly to the Social Sciences University of Ankara.

The SESRIC remains committed to the implementation of different activities, which we believe will help us make the necessary impact to change some of the issues negatively highlighted in the Global Muslim Diaspora report.



I hope that this meeting will provide an excellent opportunity not only to assess current state of global Muslim Diaspora, but also to exchange views, identify joint activities, thus drive the OIC cooperation and solidarity to greater heights.

Thank you for your kind attention

Wassalamu Alaykum we Rahmatullahi we Barakatuhu