



Islamic Organization for Food Security  
l'Organisation Islamique pour la Sécurité Alimentaire  
المنظمة الإسلامية للأمن الغذائي



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## THE ISLAMIC ORGANISATION FOR FOOD SECURITY UNFOLDS ITS STRATEGY TO ADDRESS FOOD SECURITY CRISIS IN THE WAKE OF COVID-19 PANDEMIC

### PRESS STATEMENT

The Islamic Organisation for Food Security (IOFS) has been following with great concern the devastating effects of COVID-19 pandemic on the socio-economic welfare of the teeming populations of OIC member states, in all spheres including support for lives and livelihood during this emergency period and beyond. As a specialized institution of Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), our most urgent pre-occupation is to address the enormous challenges posed by the global pandemic to food security within the OIC region.

There is no doubt that the far-reaching implications of the near-total restriction on movement of persons as a protective measure against coronavirus and the attendant disruption of all economic activities would have untold effect on the availability of food products, owing to the potential supply chain disruption. Given the vulnerability of our member states to any global food supply shocks, it is most incumbent to adopt a concerted regional effort to mitigate the effects of food shortages, which may lead to hunger and food crisis in our member states.

Given the current statistics showing that more than 64.5 mln people in OIC member states suffered acute hunger in 2017 and considering the fact that the annual food deficit within OIC amounted to US\$67 bln in 2018, the region is gravely concerned by the imminent danger of any novel food crisis at this very period. It is to this end that the IOFS has continued to fast-track its various initiatives aimed at promoting agrifood trade financing and investment, development of strategic commodities along the food supply chain, cross-border logistics, and indeed providing urgent food aid and palliatives in the wake of the current humanitarian emergency.

In view of the foregoing and based on the mandate as per its Statute, I have addressed a Memorandum to all member states on the following actions in the immediate&medium terms.

On the national level, IOFS supports the current national actions of member states to cushion the effect to social confinement due to COVID-19, through providing palliatives, food aid, conditional cash transfer, job security and free volunteer programmes to assist poor and vulnerable segments of the populations. We commend and encourage the actions of OIC member states over utilization of national strategic food reserves and providing food aid shipments to fellow member states, which are in dire need of emergency food supplies.

Accordingly, IOFS commends and supports actions of those member states, which heeded the various appeals of the international community by allowing free flow of food commodities across national borders. Similarly, we support and commend the on-going national campaigns towards eradication of food waste and price hikes as well as encouragement of household and community actions on urban and school gardening, nutrition security and food safety. To this end, IOFS underscores the role of private

sector and commends the financial contributions made by philanthropists in contributing to Government efforts on palliatives and social intervention initiatives. In addition to ongoing programmes on Food safety and Halal Food Sector development, IOFS undertakes to accelerate the take-off of the Islamic Food Processing Association (IFPA) as a B2B mechanism for addressing post-harvest losses through increased collaboration within the downstream food supply sub-sector.

On the intra-OIC level, IOFS undertakes to pursue implementation of the various OIC agreements on free trade and investment promotion and commend the funding commitment made by International Islamic Trade Finance Corporation (ITFC) to the tune of US\$850 million for trade financing during this emergency period. Similarly, we laud the declared financial commitment made by other OIC financial institutions, namely Islamic Solidarity Fund (ISF) and Islamic Development Bank (IsDB) and commits to interface with the latter on the utilisation of these funds, incl. US\$730 million pledged by IsDB for financing recovery efforts vs. COVID-19.

On pest control and trans-boundary animal diseases, IOFS would take urgent measures in concert with relevant corporate and state stakeholders to combat the menace of locust invasion, which has adversely affected food production in many countries within the region.

As a sustainable strategy to addressing perennial food shortages due to crop failure and related problems, IOFS is vigorously pursuing the creation of the OIC Regional Food Security Reserve, while encouraging the expansion of various national food security reserves via PPP schemes.

On research and development, IOFS shall develop its Food Balance Database, while mainstreaming science, technology and innovation through the development of a regional mechanism for conservation and sharing of plant and animal genetic resources for food and agriculture, in collaboration with FAO and COMSTECH.

In the medium term, it is expected that IOFS implementation of the OIC Programme of Action for Development of Strategic Agricultural Commodities (Rice, Wheat and Cassava, incl. Palm Oil) shall scale-up the respective capacities of member states to ensure relative food sufficiency, income generation and increased Balance of Payment equilibrium.

To this end, IOFS commends the gracious efforts of member states to host the meetings of Centers of Excellence on strategic commodities in Kazakhstan, the Workshop on National Gene Banks in UAE, and the Roundtable on Water Management for Agriculture in KSA during 2020.

While commending the timely interventions by G20, UN and WB Group on free trans-border food trade, including their pledged financial commitments, IOFS undertakes to continue to interface with the world body on the implementation of the various rescue projects, aimed at addressing the consequences of this global pandemic in the food sector.

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