



ISSUE 182 • APRIL - JUNE 2025

TIJARIS



THE MAGAZINE OF INTERNATIONAL AND INTRA-OIC TRADE AND INVESTMENT

SPECIAL REPORT

STRATEGIC PRODUCTS AND FOOD SECURITY

Strengthening Resilient Agricultural Systems in the OIC



INTERVIEW

Mrs. CANDIDE LEGUEDE

President of the Federations of Women Entrepreneurs
and Businesswomen of ECOWAS and Togo

**« The role of the Incubator is to detect,
support and bring out entrepreneurial
projects with high potential for growth
and job generation. »**

5th OIC HEALTH EXPO,
APRIL 15-19, 2025, DAKAR

UNLOCKING THE POTENTIAL
OF INTRA-OIC TRADE : STRATEGIC
AVENUES FOR DEEPENING INTEGRATION
IN THE 2025-2035 ACTION PLAN

SUCCESS STORIES
WOMEN IN AGRICULTURE :
LEADING GROWTH AMID LAND ACCESS
BARRIERS

ISSN : 2230-1933





The Islamic Centre for Development of Trade (I.C.D.T), headquartered in Casablanca, Morocco, serves as a privileged instrument for promoting trade among the Member States of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC).

Its objectives include :

- Encouraging the development of regular trade exchanges among Member States.
- Promoting investments aimed at trade development.
- Contributing to the promotion of productions from Member States and facilitating access to foreign markets.
- Promoting commercial information.
- Assisting Member States in the field of trade promotion and international trade negotiations.
- Assisting businesses and economic operators.

I.C.D.T's actions revolve around six main areas :

TRADE PROMOTION

- Encouraging contacts between businessmen from Member States.
- Promoting the products of Member States, including through regular Islamic Fairs and specialized exhibitions.
- Assisting Member States in establishing and organizing Export Promotion Centers.
- Providing advisory and expertise services to Member States in trade promotion matters.

TRADE INFORMATION

- Collecting and disseminating trade data.
- Developing remotely accessible trade databases.
- Assisting Member States in establishing Documentation Centers and Commercial Information networks.

INVESTMENT PROMOTION

- Encouraging intra-OIC investments.
- Promoting foreign investments in OIC Member States.
- Encouraging partnerships among economic operators from Member States.
- Providing advisory and expertise services to Member States, particularly in export-oriented investment promotion.

STUDIES AND RESEARCH

- Publishing an Annual Report on intra-Islamic trade.
- Conducting sectoral studies on products and markets.
- Studying ways and means to alleviate trade barriers among Member States.

TRAINING

- Organizing seminars and training programs.
- Assisting Member States in creating a pool of experts in various fields of trade development.

INTERNATIONAL TRADE NEGOTIATIONS

- Assisting Member States in trade negotiations.
- Preparing and organizing intra-OIC trade negotiations.

EDITORIAL



Cultivating the Future: Toward Shared Agricultural Sovereignty of OIC Countries

In a world grappling with climate crises, fragile supply chains, and rising food demand, agriculture has moved beyond its traditional role of production to become a strategic pillar of food security, social stability, and sustainable development. OIC member states—endowed with vast arable land, water resources, and a young workforce—are now called upon to join forces in building agricultural sovereignty rooted in cooperation, innovation in production and marketing, and investment.

A Key Sector for OIC Economies:

Agriculture plays a crucial role in the economies of OIC member states, employing over 216 million people—representing 32% of the workforce—and contributing 10.4% to GDP, more than double the global average of 4.3%. In 2024, intra-OIC trade in agricultural products reached approximately USD 200 billion, accounting for 20% of total trade. However, member countries remain largely dependent on food imports, highlighting the urgent need to strengthen local production and develop regional value chains.

The OIC-2025 Plan of Action: A Strategic Vision

Agriculture stands as a top priority in the OIC-2025 Plan of Action, seen as key to achieving food security and sustaining economic growth. The biennial Ministerial Conference on Food Security and Agricultural Development (MCF SAD) brings together policymakers, researchers, and sector stakeholders to design innovative strategies. Concrete initiatives led by OIC member states and institutions are driving the growth of agri-food sectors and fostering regional economic integration.

The Role of ICDT: A Catalyst for Cooperation

For over 30 years, the Islamic Centre for Development of Trade (ICDT) has supported the agricultural sector through agri-food

exhibitions, buyer-seller meetings, and specialized reports. From December 2 to 4, 2025, ICDT organizes the OIC Investment Forum in Africa in Bamako, Mali, under the theme “Unlocking Africa’s Investment Potential.” This strategic platform aims to attract investment and forge lasting partnerships in key sectors across the continent. The forum will highlight the importance of developing local and regional value chains, enhancing food resilience, and driving territorial transformation.

Three Priorities for Resilient Agriculture:

To strengthen agricultural sovereignty, OIC member states are encouraged to focus on three strategic pillars:

1. Harmonizing Agricultural Policies: reducing tariff and non-tariff barriers and adopting common standards to facilitate intra-OIC trade.
2. Investing in Core Infrastructure: developing logistics, agri-food processing, and research capacity to boost competitiveness.
3. Building Regional Value Chains: encouraging public-private partnerships and pool resources by leveraging institutions such as the Islamic Development Bank (IsDB) and the Islamic Organization for Food Security (IOFS).

A Call for Solidarity

Food sovereignty can only be achieved through enhanced collaboration. By leveraging shared resources, local expertise, and a common vision, OIC member states have the potential to transform agriculture into a driver of sustainable prosperity. To cultivate the future, we must act now—embracing agricultural cooperation that is bold in vision and grounded in solidarity. ■

Mrs Latifa Elbouabdellaoui
Director General, ICDT

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OIC Secretary General visited Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas



His Excellency President Mahmoud Abbas, President of the State of Palestine, received His Excellency Mr. Hissein Brahimi Taha, Secretary-General of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), on May 9, 2025. During their meeting, the Palestinian President briefed the Secretary-General on the developments regarding the Palestinian issue. He expressed appreciation for the OIC's continued support for the Palestinian cause and emphasized the importance of a unified stance on the matter.

For his part, the Secretary-General reaffirmed his support for the Palestinian cause, a core priority of the OIC, stressing the need for the Islamic Ummah and the international community to join forces to enable the Palestinian people to exercise their legitimate rights—chief among them the establishment of an independent state with Al-Quds as the capital of Palestine. ■

H.E. Mr. Hissein Brahim Taha Participates in the International Forum on Promoting Integrity in the Tourism Sector – May 10, 2025



H.E. Hissein Brahim Taha, Secretary-General of the OIC, took part in the International Forum on Promoting Integrity in the Tourism Sector, held on May 6–7, 2025, on Lankanfinolhu Island in the Maldives. The event was organized by the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and the Republic of Maldives, in collaboration with the OIC General Secretariat.

The Forum, which saw broad participation from OIC Member States, was honored by the presence of the Vice President of the Republic of Maldives. It also brought together more than

190 officials and experts from 50 countries, representing government agencies as well as regional and international organizations engaged in combating corruption and promoting integrity in the tourism sector.

In his speech, the Secretary General expressed his gratitude and appreciation to the Control and Anti-Corruption Commission of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and the Anti-Corruption Commission of the Republic of Maldives for their contribution to the OIC's efforts to promote integrity in the tourism sector.

H.E. Dr. Nasser bin Ahmed Aba Al-Khail, Undersecretary for International Cooperation, stressed the importance of the Mecca Convention on Law Enforcement Cooperation and called on member states to sign and ratify it promptly, so that it can enter into force and produce the desired results.

This Forum provided an unprecedented opportunity to broaden partnerships, strengthen integration between member states and contribute to the establishment of tourism systems based on trust and transparency between all stakeholders in the tourism sector in OIC countries. ■

Empowering women: OIC and UN Women sign new Memorandum of Understanding



The Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) and the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women), reaffirming their shared commitment to women's rights and gender equality, signed a new Memorandum of Understanding on the sidelines of the 69th session of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW), held at the United Nations Headquarters in New York. The agreement aims to advance the empowerment of women across the Islamic world.

On this occasion, H.E. Ambassador Hameed A. Opoloyeru, Permanent Observer of the OIC to the United Nations, underlined the importance of the renewed collaboration between the two institutions

and indicated that this protocol is a new milestone in the inter-institutional cooperation between the OIC and UN Women. According to His Excellency Opoloyeru, the signing clearly demonstrates the shared commitment of the two institutions to the advancement of women's rights and well-being worldwide. His Excellency further underscored the OIC's strong interest in the cause of women and its recent initiatives in this field, notably the creation of the Organization for the Development of Women (ODF) in Cairo. All these efforts reflect the OIC's commitment to promoting women's participation in the economy, establishing their leadership in our countries and protecting them from gender-related challenges.

Dr. Sima Bahous, Executive Director of UN Women, welcomed the signing of the protocol, noting that the partnership between UN Women and the OIC is grounded in a shared vision of empowering women in all aspects of life. She emphasized that the agreement provides a robust framework for strategic initiatives focused on women's economic empowerment, leadership development, and the protection of their rights—both in OIC Member States and around the world.

Dr. Bahous concluded by commending the OIC's efforts to advance the status of women in the Islamic world and reaffirmed UN Women's commitment to supporting these initiatives through its expertise, resources, and advocacy efforts. ■



OIC Organizes a Workshop on Water Use Management for Agriculture in Rabat

THE ORGANISATION OF ISLAMIC COOPERATION (OIC), IN COLLABORATION WITH RELEVANT OIC INSTITUTIONS, ORGANIZED A WORKSHOP ON WATER USE MANAGEMENT FOR AGRICULTURE IN OIC MEMBER STATES, HELD FROM 26 TO 28 MAY 2025 AT THE HEADQUARTERS OF ICESCO IN RABAT.

Bringing together representatives from over 20 Member States, the present workshop seeks to identify and address challenges related to water management and use in the agricultural sector. In his opening remarks, Mr. Abdunur Sekindi, Director General of the OIC Department of Science and Technology, emphasized that water scarcity remains a critical issue facing many OIC countries. He stressed the urgent need for collective action, active solidarity, and enhanced cooperation to tackle shared challenges. He also highlighted the importance of supporting human capital by investing in capacity-building and encouraging knowledge-sharing initiatives among Member States.

On this occasion, H.E. Dr. Abdellah Benarafa, Deputy Director

General of ICESCO, commended the OIC and its institutions for their proactive role in promoting sustainable development through collaborative initiatives. He further emphasized the need to prioritize water scarcity and praised the OIC's efforts in supporting Member States in adopting innovative solutions in this field.

The Executive Director of the Inter-Islamic Network on Water Resources Development and Management (INWRDAM) also underscored that water and agriculture form the backbone of societies in Muslim countries. However, these two sectors are under immense pressure due to climate change, resource depletion, harmful practices and habits, as well as ongoing social and political instability, all of which

continue to threaten the foundations of food and water security.

During the meeting, participants acknowledged the significant progress made by Member States in developing innovative solutions and advanced technologies for agricultural water management. They also stressed the importance of intensifying efforts to ensure long-term water sustainability and to support the development of the agricultural sector and the socio-economic advancement of Member States.

It is worth noting that the conclusions and recommendations of the Workshop will be submitted for follow-up to the upcoming Islamic Conference of Ministers Responsible for Water, scheduled to be held in Jeddah in October 2025. ■

5th OIC Health Expo, April 15–19, 2025, Dakar

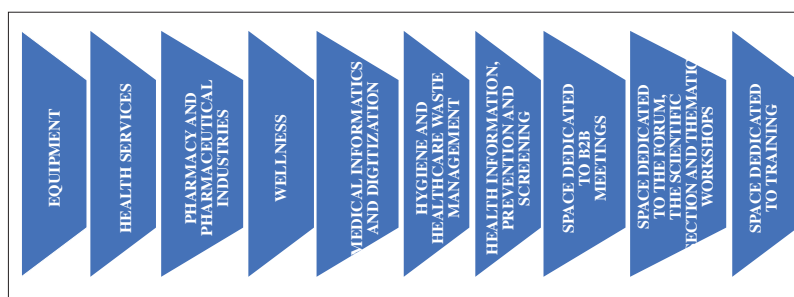
PURSUANT TO THE RELEVANT RESOLUTIONS OF THE 40TH MINISTERIAL SESSION OF THE STANDING COMMITTEE FOR ECONOMIC AND COMMERCIAL COOPERATION OF THE ORGANIZATION OF ISLAMIC COOPERATION (COM-CEC), HELD IN NOVEMBER 2024 IN ISTANBUL - REPUBLIC OF TÜRKIYE, ICDT ORGANIZED, UNDER THE AEGIS OF THE MINISTRY OF HEALTH AND SOCIAL ACTION OF THE REPUBLIC OF SENEGAL, THE 5TH EDITION OF THE HEALTH FAIR OF THE OIC MEMBER STATES, FROM APRIL 15 TO 19, 2025 AT THE CICES EXHIBITION CENTRE IN DAKAR, IN COLLABORATION WITH THE INTERNATIONAL FOREIGN TRADE CENTRE OF SENEGAL (CICES). THE EVENT WAS ORGANIZED IN CONJUNCTION WITH THE 10TH EDITION OF THE INTERNATIONAL HEALTH AND MEDICAL EQUIPMENT EXHIBITION IN DAKAR (SISDAK), UNDER THE THEME "HEALTH: A VECTOR FOR ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT IN OIC COUNTRIES". THE KINGDOMS OF MOROCCO AND SAUDI ARABIA WERE THE GUEST OF HONOR AND SPECIAL GUEST RESPECTIVELY.

The event brought together a wide range of sectors, from the pharmaceutical industry to healthcare service providers, nutrition and dietetics specialists, suppliers of medical and surgical equipment, care and wellness centers, and medical training establishments. This exhibition proved to be a genuine platform for exchanges and business opportunities for all stakeholders in the health sector from OIC Member States.

Furthermore, the Expo served as a catalyst for business relations and commercial synergies, facilitating the conclusion of significant contracts and the establishment of strategic partnerships between the various economic operators present. This networking dynamic contributed to strengthening intra-OIC trade relations in the healthcare and related services sector.

The exhibition focused on the following areas:

The 5th edition of the OIC Member States Health Expo recorded the participation of 40 countries



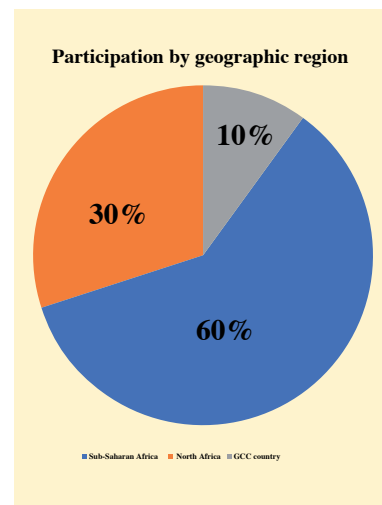
as exhibitors and visitors from OIC Member States, representing 70% of OIC countries. This figure far exceeds the initial target of 25 countries set as a key performance indicator (KPI) for member state participation.

The following non-member states were present: China, France and Spain. ICDT and BADEA sponsored the participation of women entrepreneurs from Benin, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, The Gambia, Guinea Conakry, Mauritania, Mali, Niger, Senegal, Chad and Togo.

The exhibition was also attended by the OIC General Secretariat and the Standards and Metrology Institute for Islamic Countries (SMIIC).

Opening ceremony:

On Tuesday, April 15, 2025, the Minister of Health and Social Action, Dr. Ibrahima Sy, inaugurated the exhibition in the pre-



sence of the representative of His Excellency the Secretary General of the OIC, the Director General of ICDT, Their Excellencies the Ambassadors of the Kingdom of Morocco and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, and the diplomatic corps accredited to Dakar.

In his opening speech, the Minister emphasized the crucial importance of health as a pillar of socioeconomic development, stressing that the exhibition represents an outstanding opportunity for scientific exchange and exposure for health professionals from Senegal and OIC member countries.

In line with the vision of His Excellency Mr. Bassirou Diomaye Diakharr Faye President of the Republic of Senegal and National Transformation Agenda Senegal 2050, this exhibition combined with the 10th edition of SISDAK 2025 highlighted national priorities such as universal health coverage, digitization of the healthcare system, development of the local pharmaceutical industry and reinforcement of social protection.

On this occasion, other notable speakers included:

- H.E Mrs. Latifa El Bouabdellaoui, Director General of ICDT;
- His Excellency Mr. Hassan Naciri, Ambassador of the Kingdom of Morocco accredited to Senegal;
- Mr. Abdunur Sekindi, Representative of His Excellency the Secretary General of the OIC and Director General of the Science & Technology Department at the OIC General Secretariat;
- Mr. Justin Correa, Director General of CICES.

Following the opening ceremony—which was widely covered by local and international media from the sub-region and featured cultural and folklore demonstrations—



the distinguished guests visited the pavilions and stands of the participating countries. They had the opportunity to take a closer look at the latest developments in pharmaceutical production and medical equipment across OIC countries.

Side events:

ICDT organized the following activities on the sidelines of the exhibition:

- High-level forum on investment in the healthcare sector:

This forum was organized in collaboration with the World Health Organization, Senegal's National Agency for the Promotion of Investment and Major Works (APIX-S.A.) and Senegal's Ministry of Health and Social Action (MSAS).

It was structured around the following two thematic panels:

- Access to Pharmaceutical Markets in Africa

This panel, dedicated to the key issue of access to pharmaceutical markets in Africa, was organized in collaboration with the International Trade Centre (ITC – Geneva). It featured the following interventions:

- **Halal certification of pharmaceutical and cosmetic products:**

The panel, organized in partnership with the Standards and Metrology Institute for Islamic Countries (SMIIC), the Senegalese Standards Association (ASN) and Halal - Senegal, brought together

Panel 1 :

Promotion and development of the health sector in OIC countries



WHO strategies for health sector development in Africa

Panelist: Representative of the WHO Regional Office for Africa

Development strategies for the health sector in Senegal

Panelist: Mr Serigne Mbaye - Secretary General of the Senegalese Ministry of Health and Social Action (MSAS)

Access to health services in Africa

Panelist: Pr Raja Aghzadi

Health sector in OIC countries

Panelist: Mrs. Latifa El Bouabdellaoui - General Director of the Islamic Centre for Development of Trade (ICDT)

Access to health services in Africa

Panelist: Mr Aser Minoungou Executive Director of the African Association of Essential Drug Purchasing Centres (ACAME)



Dr. Mamoudou Bocar Sall, DDG of ICDT

M. Arno Bonnet, Consultant to ITC Genova

Dr. Ndèye Soukeye Thiam Nguerre, Sales and Marketing Manager MASAS

Dr. Mouhamadou Sow, Director General of Teranga Pharma S.A.

Panel 2 :

Investment opportunities in Africa's healthcare sector



Financing healthcare projects

Panelist: Mr Cedrick Montetcho, Director of Business Development - Arab Bank for Economic Development in Africa (BADEA)

Investment opportunities in Senegal's healthcare sector

Panelist: Mr. Mamadou Lamine BA, Special Advisor to the CEO of the National Agency for the Promotion of Investment and Major Works in Senegal (APIX)

Financing healthcare projects in Senegal

Panelist: Mr. Alioune KEBE, Director of Corporate Banking - CBAO Senegal (Attijariwafa Bank Group). (ACAME)

Presentation of initiatives to promote public investment in Africa

Panelist: representative of the WHO Regional Office for Africa

ICDT Programs to promote private sector investment in the healthcare sector

Mrs. Latifa El Bouabdellaoui Director General of the Islamic Centre for Development of Trade (ICDT)



Dr. Mamoudou Bacar Sall, DDG of ICDT

M. Yasin Zulfikaroglu, Expert from SMIIC

M. Rafi-udin Shikoh, DG of DinarStandard

M. Dénéba Diouf, Associate Director of Halal Senegal

Dr. Moussa Diallo, Director of pharmaceutical inspection, Market Monitoring and Vigilance

M. Assane Bengue, head of the conforme assessment program, Senegalese Association for Standardization ASN

industry experts and professionals to discuss the challenges and opportunities of Halal certification in the pharmaceutical and cosmetics sectors:

Other thematic conferences and presentations were also held on the sidelines of the exhibition, covering the following topics in particular:

- Managing healthcare infrastructure projects;
- The digitization of healthcare, artificial intelligence, the benefits of digital hospitals and telemedicine for equitable access to care Pharmacovigilance;
- “One Health” and “health in all policies” for the transformation of healthcare policies and disease prevention.

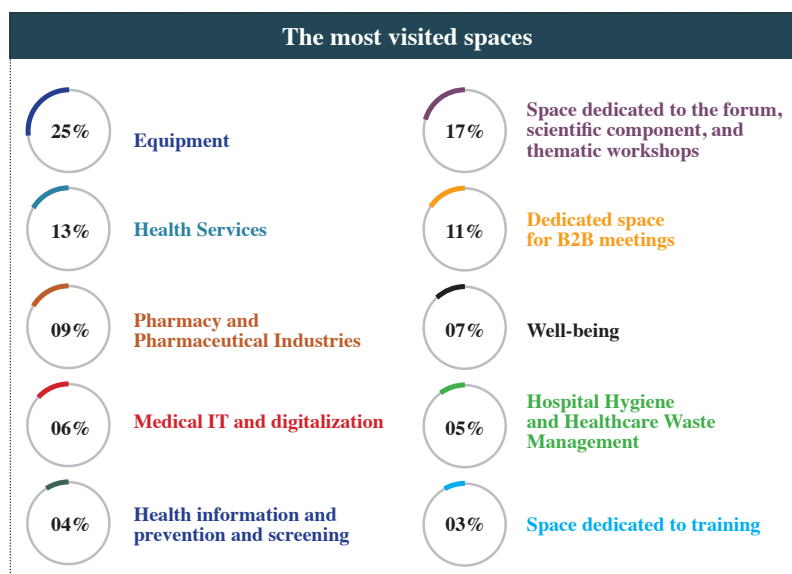
B2B meetings also took place between various stakeholders in the healthcare, medical equipment and pharmaceutical sectors.

In addition, screening and prevention days were organized on the initiative of MSAS in collaboration with a collective of professional and humanitarian associations and organizations operating in the health sector. These days raise public awareness of the main health issues and the means of prevention available.

Assessment:

The exhibition area covered a net surface area of 4,600 m², welcoming some 150 companies and almost 12,000 healthcare professionals and visitors from OIC member states, in search of business opportunities and partnerships.

Exchanges were rich and fruitful, with the organization of eight scientific panels, over one hundred oral communications, as well as exhibitions presented by 150 companies, institutions and services. The stands showcased cutting-edge



40
OIC countries

1 200
Healthcare professionals
and visitors

4 600 m²
Exhibition space

technologies, innovative digital solutions, the latest medical equipment and the expertise of OIC member countries.

For five intense days, Dakar was a hub of scientific excellence, healthcare innovation and international dialogue. Under the theme “Health, a vector for economic development in OIC countries”, the event brought together experts from a wide range of backgrounds to share their knowledge and experience, and demonstrate their commitment to public health.

Besides, the 2025 edition stood out for its spirit of solidarity: over 10,000 free consultations were offered to the population in several medical specialties, accompanied

by screening, awareness-raising and health education campaigns. The community village, a much-appreciated novelty, brilliantly illustrated the fundamental role of local players in strengthening the resilience of healthcare systems.

Closing ceremony:

The event concluded on April 19, 2025, with a gala dinner held under the patronage of His Excellency, the Senegalese Minister of Health. On this occasion, the Minister presided over an awards ceremony recognizing the organizers and sponsors whose support was instrumental to the Exhibition's outstanding success.

The Islamic Centre for Development of Trade (ICDT) was awarded the Special Partner prize, in recognition of its exemplary commitment and significant contribution to the staging of this leading international event.

On this occasion, His Excellency the Minister of Health and Social Action expressed his deep gratitude to Professor Amadou Gallo DIOP, the emblematic figure of this year's event, whose unwavering commitment to the advance-



EXHIBITION STANDS



ment of neuroscience in Africa is widely recognized and admired. He also paid tribute to the outstanding dedication of all healthcare professionals in Senegal. In addition, he extended his sincere thanks to the Islamic Centre for Development of

Trade (ICDT), the CICES, as well as all technical partners and sponsors who contributed to the success of this year's edition. Although the exhibition has come to an end, it has opened up new horizons for cooperation, investment and the

transformation of healthcare systems in OIC countries. It is a steppingstone towards greater health sovereignty, enhanced innovation and a renewed commitment to the well-being of the people of the Islamic Ummah.

An opinion survey conducted among participants revealed a general sense of satisfaction with the organization of the Exhibition and the provision of all necessary facilities by the organizers.

Participants were particularly pleased to see that the exhibition was supported by thematic seminars related to the health sector, and by B2B meetings between businessmen to forge business relations, cooperation and partnerships between OIC Member States.

Meetings on the sidelines of the Exhibition:

- The Director General of ICDT signed a partnership agreement for the organization of the OIC Africa Investment Forum, scheduled for December 2-4, 2025, in Bamako, with the Ministry of Industry and Trade of the Republic of Mali, represented by HE Mr. Boubacar Biro DIALLO, Ambassador of the Republic of Mali accredited to the republic Senegal.





- The Director General of the Centre held a working meeting with women entrepreneurs from the participating countries (Senegal, Benin, Chad, Cameroon, Mauritania, Niger, Guinea, Togo, Mali, and The Gambia). These entrepreneurs are primarily active in the cosmetics sector. Their participation in the event was sponsored by the Centre. During the meeting, the Director General reaffirmed the Centre's commitment to facilitating their involvement in future activities and supporting them in the processes of certification, promotion, and marketing of their products.

For their part, the entrepreneurs expressed their gratitude to the Centre for the measures taken to facilitate their participation and for its willingness to support them internationally, thereby contributing to the access of their products to markets in OIC member countries.

- The Director General of ICDT was invited to participate in the launch of the Mango campaign in Senegal on April 16, 2025. On that occasion, she expressed the Centre's readiness to assist Senegalese mango producers and exporters in accessing the mar-

kets of OIC countries, in particular Morocco, through access to the ephyto digital platform and participation in the training programmes on the certification of agri-food products and in the agro-industry trade fair.

- On April 16, 2025, the Director General met with Ms. Marie Rose Faye, Director General of Senegal's SME Development and Support Agency (ADPME), to discuss ways and means of strengthening cooperation between SMEs in OIC countries, and to plan the organization of the African SME Forum in Senegal in 2026. ■

Virtual Workshop on Developing Relevant Marketing Strategy for the Destination of Senegal , 6-7 May 2025

As part of Dakar's designation as an OIC tourism city for the year 2025, the Islamic Centre for Development of Trade (ICDT) and the Statistical, Economic and Social Research and Training Centre for Islamic Countries (SESRIC), in collaboration with the Senegalese Tourism Promotion Agency, organized a virtual workshop on May 6 and 7, 2025. The aim of the workshop was to develop an effective marketing strategy to promote Senegal as a destination.

The event focused on supporting Senegal's tourism policy and brought together over 80 participants, including government officials, decision-makers, players from the tourism private sector, as well as representatives and experts from UN Tourism, Uzbekistan, Türkiye, Uganda and Malaysia. During the workshop, participants learned about UN Tourism's role in tourism development in Africa,



best practices in tourism marketing strategies, the current state of the sector in Senegal, and current public policies. The experience of the city of Khiva, named OIC Tourism City 2024, was also presented, along with best practices adopted by other OIC member countries.

In conclusion, participants expressed their gratitude to the organizers for this enriching initiative. They also emphasized the need for stronger support, particularly in investment and training, with special attention given to family tourism, culinary tourism, and ecotourism. ■

Strengthening Efforts to Facilitate Transport in Landlocked OIC Member Countries, 29-30 April 2025

ICDT and SESRIC jointly organized a webinar on "Strengthening Efforts to Facilitate Transport in Landlocked OIC Member Countries" from 29 to 30 April 2025. The objective of this training is to raise awareness among landlocked OIC member countries on the impor-

tance of strengthening regional cooperation and road transport infrastructure, as a means of facilitating trade and promoting sustainable and inclusive development.

The meeting brought together 87 participants from OIC member countries (Uganda, Morocco,

Afghanistan, Libya, Guyana, Jordan, Côte d'Ivoire, Iraq, Iran, Qatar, Cameroon, Pakistan, Egypt, Togo, Niger, Tunisia, Türkiye, Azerbaijan, Nigeria, Burkina Faso, Gambia, Guinea-Bissau, Palestine, Somalia, Bangladesh, Oman, Saudi Arabia), in addition to representatives from



the Turkish Ministry of Commerce, SESRIC and ICDT.

On this occasion, Dr. Mamoudou Bocar Sall, Deputy Director General of ICDT, and Dr. Atilla Karaman, Director of SESRIC's Training and Technical Coopera-

tion Department, emphasized the need to improve transport infrastructure, streamline administrative procedures, and enhance cooperation between landlocked and neighboring countries, with the aim of strengthening their positioning in

regional and international markets. Discussions focused on the challenges and obstacles associated with transport in landlocked countries, and on the representation of landlocked countries on the international transport scene. ■

14th Annual Abu Dhabi Investment Meeting (AIM2025)

THE DIRECTOR GENERAL OF ICDT TOOK PART IN THE 14TH ANNUAL INVESTMENT MEETING (AIM2025) ORGANIZED FROM APRIL 7 TO 9, 2025 IN ABU DHABI, UNDER THE THEME: "MAPPING THE FUTURE OF GLOBAL INVESTMENT: THE NEW WAVE OF A GLOBALIZED INVESTMENT LANDSCAPE- TOWARDS A NEW BALANCED WORLD STRUCTURE".

The aim of the meeting was to exchange successful experiences in regional investment and integration, promote SMEs and develop intra- and inter-regional investment projects.

In his opening speech, H.E. Dr. Thani Bin Ahmed Al Zeyoudi, Minister of State, Minister of Foreign Trade and Chairman of AIM, emphasized the readiness of the Emirates to cooperate with all

countries of the world in the field of trade and investment. He also stressed the importance of developing cooperation in the fields of industry, technology, innovation and investment, as a guarantee of the liberalization of national economic sectors. This was followed by panels on topical issues such as foreign direct investment, foreign trade, productivity and digitization, cities of the future, the digital economy, financing the future, the

start-up competition and exhibition and entrepreneurship, in addition to the distribution of prizes for the best IPAs.

On this occasion, the Director General of ICDT took part as a speaker in the panel titled "Globalization of the Future: Balancing Local and Global Dynamics and the Impact of Foreign Direct Investment on World Trade." She addressed the current uncertainties facing the global economy,

including the disruption of global value chains, geopolitical tensions, and their impact on the decline of international trade and cross-regional investment. She underscored the growing importance of regional integration and national innovation—driven by the digital economy—as key levers to stimulate intra- and inter-regional trade and investment flows.

The Director General also spoke in a second panel discussion focused on “Developing Regional Investment Strategies for the Benefit of Investors.” In this context, she shared ICDT’s experience in promoting both national and regional investments through initiatives such as the ICDT Invest Days and regional investment forums. She also highlighted the Centre’s role in publishing country investment profiles and facilitating investor connections via its digital platform.

On the sidelines of AIM 2025, the Director General of ICDT held a productive meeting with Ms. Nan Li Collins, Director of the Investment and Enterprise Division at UNCTAD. During their discussions, both parties praised the strong bilateral cooperation between their institutions in the field of investment and agreed on UNCTAD’s participation in the OIC Investment Forum in Africa, which will be jointly organized by the ICDT and the Malian authorities in Bamako from 2 to 4 December 2025. ICDT also confirmed its participation in the World Investment Forum, scheduled to take place in Vietnam in October 2025. UNCTAD further committed to supporting OIC member states’ Investment Promotion Agencies (IPAs) in the implementation of bilateral and regional investment agreements, as well as in the development and updating of country investment profiles.



In addition, on April 8, ICDT, in collaboration with the World Economic Forum, organized a breakfast debate on the WTO Investment Facilitation Agreement. The event brought together over 40 representatives from OIC member states’ ministries of investment, national IPAs, international organizations, and consulting firms. On this occasion, the Director General of ICDT reaffirmed the Centre’s commitment to strengthening the technical capacities of IPAs to support the effective implementation of the Agreement.

Finally, the Director General held a bilateral meeting with a UK-based NGO working in the field of food security to explore potential areas of collaboration with the Centre. ■

Regional Webinar on the Presentation of the 2024 Edition of the Agricultural Commodity Market Outlook for the OIC Arab Group Countries – 8 May 2025



The Islamic Centre for Development of Trade (ICDT), in collaboration with the FAO Regional Office for the Near East and North Africa (RNE), organized a regional webinar on Thursday, 8 May 2025. This meeting was dedicated to the presentation of the FAO's report on the state of international agricultural commodity markets. On this occasion, the Centre presented an overview of food trade regulations in OIC Arab member countries, with a particular focus on the role of trade in securing

food supply for the region and on ways to strengthen the resilience of agri-food value chains to trade-related shocks.

The event brought together representatives from ministries responsible for Trade, Investment, and Agriculture, as well as officials from Chambers of Commerce, Industry, Services, and Agriculture, and Trade and Investment Promotion Agencies of the OIC Arab member states. ■



Trade and Investment Promotion in the Spotlight at the 42nd Ordinary Session of the ICDT Board of Directors



THE IMPORTANCE OF REDOUBLING COLLECTIVE EFFORTS TO ACHIEVE THE AMBITIOUS TARGET OF 25% INTRA-OIC TRADE BY THE END OF 2025, SET BY THE OIC PROGRAMME OF ACTION.

The Islamic Centre for Development of Trade (ICDT) held the 42nd ordinary session of its Board of Directors with the participation of member states including the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, the People's Republic of Bangladesh, the Republic of Cameroon, the State of Kuwait, the Kingdom of Morocco, Malaysia, the Republic of Mali, the Republic of Uganda, and the Republic of Türkiye.

In her speech, the Director General of ICDT highlighted that the value of trade has risen from 205 billion dollars in 2014 to 1,004 billion dollars in 2024, achieving a growth rate of around 80%, noting that this volume represents 20.4% of total

Intra-OIC trade. She also noted that 30 member states have managed to exceed 25% of Intra-OIC Trade, providing a strong incentive to continue efforts and strengthen the diversification and development of trade between member states.

For his part, Mr. Jakhongir Khasanov, representative of the OIC General Secretariat, emphasized the importance of intensifying collective efforts to achieve the ambitious target of 25% intra-OIC trade by the end of 2025, as set by the OIC program of action. He also highlighted the essential role played by ICDT in supporting this momentum, noting that continued dialogue on the matter is critical to defining the Organization's future contributions in light of emerging global trade challenges. Mr. Mohamed Maoukil, Head of the

Department of Trade Relations with Arab, Islamic, and African Regions at the Ministry of Industry and Trade of Morocco, underscored the need to strengthen cooperation and work together to address the challenges posed by trade tensions and geopolitical conflicts worldwide. In this regard, he noted that since 2023, Morocco has been among the countries making an effective contribution to the development of intra-OIC trade.

Following the discussions and deliberations, the members of the board commended the efforts of the Director General of ICDT and her team for their dedication to enhancing the quality of the Centre's services and for their commitment to achieving its strategic objectives. ■

SPECIAL REPORT

**STRATEGIC PRODUCTS
AND FOOD SECURITY**



Strengthening Resilient Agricultural Systems in the OIC

IN A RAPIDLY CHANGING WORLD, WHERE GEOPOLITICAL TENSIONS, SUPPLY CHAIN DISRUPTIONS, AND ECOLOGICAL TRANSITIONS ARE REDEFINING ECONOMIC PRIORITIES, STRATEGIC PRODUCTS ARE EMERGING AS PILLARS OF SOVEREIGNTY AND RESILIENCE. WHETHER IT BE STAPLE FOODS, ESSENTIAL MEDICINES, ENERGY SOURCES, OR CRITICAL TECHNOLOGIES, THESE GOODS OCCUPY A CENTRAL PLACE IN NATIONAL STRATEGIES FOR DEVELOPMENT, SECURITY, AND STABILITY.

In a rapidly changing world, where geopolitical tensions, supply chain disruptions, and ecological transitions are redefining economic priorities, strategic products are emerging as pillars of sovereignty and resilience. Whether it be staple foods, essential medicines, energy sources, or critical technologies, these goods occupy a central place in national strategies for development, security, and stability.

For the member countries of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), which bring together more than 1.9 billion people across four continents, the potential for integration around these strategic sectors is immense. There are many complementarities: abundant natural resources, diversified agricultural basins, a dynamic youth population, and strong industrial ambitions.

However, despite these assets, intra-OIC trade in these sectors remains modest, and cross-border investment is struggling to take shape. Faced with excessive dependence on extra-OIC imports, there is an urgent need to rethink value chains and mobilize investment around products that will shape the future of nations.

As such, we aim to provide a cross-cutting overview of trade and investment dynamics surrounding strategic products in the OIC area, with a particular focus on the agricultural sector. Actually, we expect to highlight concrete opportunities, underscore current imbalances, and propose courses of action for more integrated, sustainable, and sovereign development.

Indeed, “strategic products” are those whose production, processing, and availability have a direct impact on economic sovereignty,



« STRATEGIC PRODUCTS HAVE A DIRECT IMPACT ON ECONOMIC SOVEREIGNTY, SOCIAL STABILITY, AND RESILIENCE TO CRISES »

social stability, and resilience to crises. While this concept covers many sectors—energy, health, technology—agriculture occupies a special place in OIC member countries.

With a rapidly growing young population and accelerated urbanization, food demand in the OIC region is expected to increase by more than 70% by 2035. However, many OIC countries remain heavily dependent on agricultural imports, particularly for cereals, oilseeds, and processed products. Strategic agricultural products in this context fall into several categories. First, staple food crops such as wheat, rice, corn, cassava, and sorghum are essential

for ensuring food security. Next are high-value products such as dates, nuts, vegetable oils, and citrus fruits, which offer significant economic potential. At the same time, essential inputs such as seeds, fertilizers, and irrigation technologies are indispensable for supporting agricultural production.

Another key aspect is halal and organic certified products, for which growing demand on the global market is a lever for exports.

The strategic nature of these products can be explained by several factors. First, they play a crucial role in food security by



guaranteeing supplies for populations. In addition, their export potential, particularly to Islamic and global markets, opens up significant economic opportunities. Furthermore, these products have the capacity to generate local jobs, particularly in rural areas, and thus contribute to poverty reduction. Finally, their integration into sustainable agricultural systems helps to strengthen climate resilience, which is essential in the face of current environmental challenges.

Investing in strategic agricultural products is therefore not just a development issue: it is an economic, social, and geopolitical imperative for the OIC. This involves structuring complete supply chains, from production to processing, certification, and distribution.

The OIC region brings together complementary agricultural economies, ranging from export powerhouses such as Kazakhstan and Turkey to technological

hubs such as Morocco, as well as demographic giants in transition such as Indonesia and Nigeria. This potential, which remains largely untapped, provides fertile ground for the implementation of a shared food sovereignty strategy.

Concentrated but unevenly valued production

Turkey, Indonesia, and Pakistan stand out as the main agricultural producers in the OIC region, with annual production exceeding respectively \$95 billion, \$87 billion, and \$72 billion. It amounts to the fact that they are benefiting from favorable agro-climatic conditions, an abundant labor force.

However, despite this production capacity, agricultural exports remain limited, mainly due to challenges related to processing, certification, market access, and logistics. Indeed, Pakistan, for example, exports only a fraction of its production, while Nigeria, has agricultural potential that remains non exploited.

Chronic dependence on imports

Saudi Arabia, like other Gulf countries, illustrates the heavy dependence on agricultural imports. With more than \$25 billion in annual imports, it is nevertheless investing heavily in food sovereignty projects (vertical farms, land acquisition abroad, agro-industrial partnerships). Nigeria, despite its significant land and water potential, still imports USD 20 billion worth of food products, a sign of the low value placed on local agricultural chains.

Intra-OIC trade still marginal
Agricultural trade between OIC member countries accounts

Country	Agricultural Profile	Strengths	Challenges
Türkiye	Top agricultural producer in the OIC	Crop diversity (wheat, fruits, vegetables), major exporter to EU & MENA, strong infrastructure	Climate vulnerability, reliance on imported fertilizers
Indonesia	Tropical agricultural giant	Massive production of rice, palm oil, coffee, tea. Large domestic market	Land pressure, deforestation, low mechanization
Pakistan	Key South Asian agricultural player	Rice, wheat, cotton, sugarcane. Large rural workforce. Gulf exports	Inefficient irrigation, growing food insecurity
Nigeria	High potential, underexploited	Abundant arable land, large rural population	Low yields, import dependency, security concerns
Kazakhstan	Eurasian grain powerhouse	Major wheat producer & exporter, favorable large-scale climate conditions	Logistics bottlenecks, climate volatility
Morocco	Model of sustainable diversification	Citrus, olives, berries. Modernization (Green Morocco Plan, Generation Green), strong export orientation	Water stress, rain-dependence, smallholder vulnerability
Egypt	Nile Valley-based agriculture	Vegetables, rice, cotton, sugar. Advanced irrigation knowledge	Nile water dependency, demographic pressure, land fragmentation
Iran	Diversified agriculture	Wheat, pistachios, dried fruits. Technical expertise, agro-climate variety	Economic sanctions, water scarcity, outdated equipment
Malaysia	Export-oriented industrial agriculture	Palm oil, rubber, tropical fruits. Well-structured value chains	Monoculture reliance, environmental concerns
Bangladesh	Intensive farming on limited land	Rice, vegetables, freshwater fish. Resilience in wetland conditions	Land scarcity, flood vulnerability

MAIN DRIVERS OF INTRA-OIC AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTION

for only a small portion of total trade. Agricultural products are still mainly exported to markets outside the OIC, particularly the European Union, China, and the United States. This reality reveals a lack of regional integration and an absence of common standards, particularly in the areas of phytosanitary, customs, and logistics.

National Efforts to Strengthen Food Security Across the OIC

After that strategic importance of trade in agricultural products has been highlighted and after providing an overview of the major agricultural powers, it is essential to examine the concrete measures which have been implemented by member countries to address such challenges and it appears that several OIC countries have launched ambitious and targeted strategies to strengthen their food sovereignty, modernize their agriculture, diversify their sources of supply, and promote agri-food innovation.



After highlighting the strategic importance of agricultural product trade and providing an overview of the main agricultural powers, it is essential to examine the concrete measures implemented by member countries to address these challenges. It appears

that several OIC countries have launched ambitious and targeted strategies aimed at strengthening their food sovereignty, modernizing their agriculture, diversifying their sources of supply, and promoting agri-food innovation.



Qatar, which has prioritized food sovereignty since the early 2000s, adopted a national strategy in 2018 focused on boosting local production, securing trade routes, establishing strategic reserves, and optimizing distribution channels. By the end of 2023, the country was already 100% self-sufficient in fresh poultry, 70% in dates, 75% in fish, and 46% in five basic vegetables. A new 2024 strategy now focuses on sustainability, technology, and agricultural innovation.

As a major supplier of wheat and flour to many OIC member states, Kazakhstan plays a central role in regional food security. Ranked among the world's ten largest wheat exporters, with nearly 9 million tons exported each year, it is also behind the creation of the IOFS (Islamic Organization for Food Security), thereby strengthening its leadership in this area.

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia has invested heavily in agricultural technologies, desalination projects, and smart greenhouses. In September 2023, it announced that it had achieved total self-sufficiency in dates, fresh dairy

products, and eggs for consumption. Other key sectors (potatoes, fish, red meat, tomatoes, carrots, etc.) also recorded production exceeding local demand. The Agricultural Development Fund has released USD 400 million to support small farms. Moreover, two subsidiaries of the sovereign wealth fund (PIF) have launched a joint venture with Brazilian giant BRF to boost halal meat production and acquired 10.7% of the group's capital.

Ranked 41st in the Global Food Security Index, Malaysia has committed to promote sustainable agriculture based on agroecology, organic production, and strict food quality and safety regulations. The National Agrofood Policy 2.0 (2021–2030), with a budget of USD 700 million, aims to develop a competitive, resilient, and technologically advanced agri-food sector.

How Fertilizer-Producing OIC Nations Can Secure Food and Economic Sovereignty

Fertilizer-producing countries such as Morocco, Egypt, Jordan, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, and In-

donesia, play a strategic role in creating sustainable agricultural value chains within the OIC. By producing the fertilizers needed for agriculture, these countries are able to strengthen the competitiveness of the Organization's agricultural systems and promote regional food security.

Morocco, for example, with its vast phosphate reserves, is one of the world's largest fertilizer producers. This enables it to play a key role in supplying fertilizer at competitive prices. This role is not limited to the supply of products: it opens up opportunities for regional integration by creating agricultural value chains where each link—from fertilizer production to harvest—is optimized for collective food security.

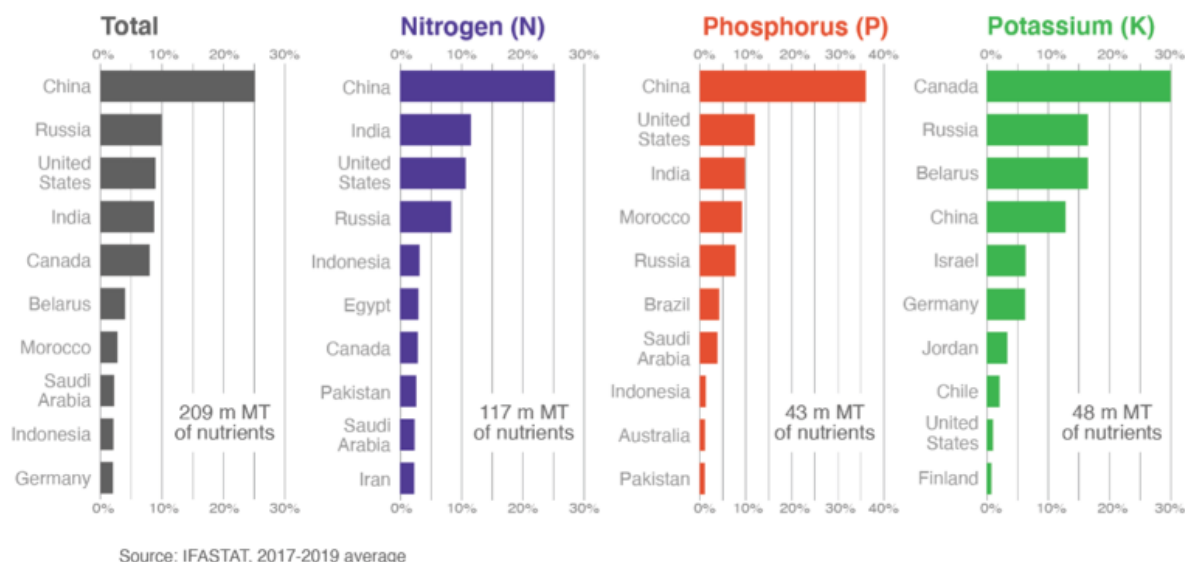
Egypt and Jordan, with their strong industrial capacities, are also positioning themselves as producers of potash-based fertilizers and other essential nutrients. This strengthened partnership enables OIC countries to build resilient agricultural networks, where local fertilizers are used strategically to improve agricultural yields.

Saudi Arabia and Pakistan, meanwhile, produce nitrogen fertilizers, which are essential for many cereal and industrial crops. Their ability to produce these fertilizers on a large scale thanks to abundant energy resources helps strengthen food self-sufficiency within the OIC and reduce dependence on imports. Pakistan, which is a major producer of rice, wheat, and sugarcane, may benefit from this local production to ensure its food security and support other OIC countries.

In short, the local production of fertilizers by these member countries creates a dynamic of strategic cooperation within the



TOP FERTILIZER EXPORTERS IN THE WORLD



OIC, where each nation plays a complementary role in building interconnected agricultural value chains. This cooperation shall strengthen the resilience of agricultural systems in the face of global economic and climate crises. By combining the resources and skills of these countries, the OIC can create strong agricultural networks that support not only food security, but also the economic competitiveness of its members on a global scale.

To conclude, in order to fully harness the potential of these strategic products, it is imperative that OIC member countries adopt a strengthened collective approach. The pooling of efforts, the sharing of expertise, and joint investments in strategic sectors, particularly fertilizer production and the development of agricultural infrastructure, are crucial for building a sustainable and competitive future. Collective action within the OIC

can truly transform these challenges into opportunities, thus paving the way towards shared food security, enhanced economic sovereignty, and environmentally sustainable agricultural development. The time has come to create strong regional synergies, strengthen cooperation among nations, and build together a future where agriculture, as a driver of growth and prosperity, is both resilient and sustainable.■

▷ INTERVIEW

Mrs. Candide LEGUEDE

PRESIDENT OF THE FEDERATIONS OF WOMEN ENTREPRENEURS
AND BUSINESSWOMEN OF ECOWAS AND TOGO

❶ As President of the Federations of Women Entrepreneurs and Businesswomen of ECOWAS and Togo, could you tell us about your Federation and its role in promoting women's entrepreneurship in Africa?

It was a pleasure to share our vision with the readers of TIJARIS Magazine. The Federation of Women Entrepreneurs and Businesswomen of ECOWAS and Togo (FEFA ECOWAS), which I am honored to lead, is a vibrant network of women entrepreneurs—dedicated leaders who are actively driving the economic transformation of Africa, particularly in West Africa.

FEFA ECOWAS/TOGO functions both as a platform for dialogue and a catalyst for action to advance women's entrepreneurship. Our mission is to contribute to the regional integration objectives of West Africa by advocating for policies that enhance the skills, capabilities, and leadership of women entrepreneurs and business professionals. At the same time, we strive to create a more inclusive and enabling business environment for women throughout the ECOWAS region.

❷ What are your key initiatives for this year, and what challenges do you foresee?

Our key initiatives for this year are structured around three main pillars:

- **Digitalization of Businesses:** We aim to strengthen the capacities of women-led enterprises through targeted training programs focused on digitalization. These include practical modules on digital marketing, financial management using digital tools, online communication, e-commerce, fundraising via digital platforms, and the use of technology to access export markets.

- **Access to Regional Markets:** We support our members in structuring and upgrading their businesses to fully benefit from the opportunities provided by the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA). In this context, FEFA ECOWAS has launched the Women Export Readiness program—a tailored support mechanism designed to enhance women entrepreneurs' export capacities through training, coaching, compliance with standards, and improved access to African and international markets.

- **Fundraising:** One of our strategic priorities is to facilitate access to financing for women entrepreneurs, particularly those operating in high-potential but often underfunded sectors. To this end, FEFA ECOWAS has signed a partnership agreement with Bank of Africa to pilot a Bank-Incubator initiative. This innovative program connects women entrepreneurs with the banking system through structured pathways of capacity building, financial coaching, business formalization, and credit-readiness preparation. The initiative reduces risk for banks while significantly increasing the chances of financial inclusion and access to funding for the women supported.

❸ You are also known as the National Coordinator of INNOV'UP Togo, the country's first startup incubator. Could you share more about its mission and its impact on promoting entrepreneurship among women and youth in Togo?

As Founding President, I am also responsible for the National Coordination of "INNOV'UP", the Togo Businesswomen's Entrepreneurial Center, the very first women's business incubator in Togo. The role of the Incubator is to detect, support



and develop entrepreneurial projects with high growth and job creation potential. Our work involves fostering and providing customized follow-up for women's businesses at all levels (from the idea to the creation of the business and its development, including support in structuring viable business models, drawing up business plans, training, mentoring, networking and fundraising. Awareness campaigns in schools and universities to spark the entrepreneurial spirit among young people, along with innovation com-

petitions and hackathons that allow them to showcase their potential and gain structured entrepreneurial experience, are also key components of our programs.

4 In your opinion, which areas of cooperation should be further strengthened between your Federation and OIC institutions, particularly the ICDT?

Several areas of cooperation should be reinforced to accelerate collaboration between FEFA ECOWAS/

TOGO and the OIC, particularly with the Islamic Centre for Development of Trade (ICDT):

- Access to markets and export opportunities;
- Financing and investment support;
- Capacity building and skills development;
- Exchange and networking platforms;
- Joint advocacy for the economic empowerment of women. ■



By Professor El Hassane HZAINE

Unlocking the Potential of Intra-OIC Trade : Strategic Avenues for Deepening Integration in the 2025–2035 Action Plan

ECONOMIC AND TRADE INTEGRATION WITHIN THE ORGANIZATION OF ISLAMIC COOPERATION (OIC) IS A LONG-STANDING GOAL. IT SEEKS TO STRENGTHEN SOLIDARITY AMONG MEMBER STATES AND STIMULATE MUTUAL DEVELOPMENT.

It seeks to strengthen solidarity among member states and stimulate mutual development. In fact, the System of Trade Preferences among the OIC Member States (OIC GST), the idea of which dates back to 1984, is at the heart of this ambition. As the OIC looks ahead to its next ten-year action plan (2025-2035), it is relevant to analyze the progress made, the persistent challenges, and the lessons to be learned from integration efforts to guide future strategies

Between 2005 and 2015, the first Ten-Year Plan, adopted by the Makkah Al Mukaramah Summit in 2005, aimed to almost double the share of intra-OIC trade, from 11% to about 20%. The objective has been partially achieved, reflecting regional integration efforts but also structural and geopolitical limits hindering further cooperation.

The second plan (2016–2025), adopted at the OIC Summit in Istanbul in 2016, aimed to increase this share to 25%. As the deadline approaches, progress remains modest, and the goal is only partially achieved. The third plan (2025–2035) currently being adopted

TARGET EVOLUTION OF INTRA-OIC TRADE:			
Period	Ten-year plan	Intra-OIC Trade (estimated)	Target achieved?
2005–2015	Foreground	11% → ~20%	Partially achieved
2016–2025	Second Plan	20% → ~25%	Partially achieved
2025–2035	Third Plan	25% → 30%	Target in progress

would envisage setting a target of 30%. Its success will depend on strengthened political will, improved connectivity infrastructure, as well as further harmonization of trade policies among members.

State of play of Intra-OIC Trade:

Recent figures show an encouraging increase in intra-OIC trade since in 2024, the net value of intra-OIC trade reached about USD 500 billion, up significantly from 2023, an increase of 13.56%. The share of intra-OIC trade in the total foreign trade of Member States also increased from 19.16% in 2023 to 20.36% in 2024. This growth is attributed to the recovery of the global economy from COVID 19, the diversification of Member States' economies, the increase in local

production and the strengthening of regional cooperation.

The main players in intra-OIC trade in 2024 are in pole position the United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia, Türkiye, Malaysia, Indonesia, Egypt, Oman, Pakistan, Iran and Nigeria. Together, these countries account for about 71% of intra-OIC trade. In 2024, a total of 30 OIC Member States achieved a share of 25% of their intra-OIC trade. The objective of the Ten-Year Plan of Action (2016-2025) was to increase the share of intra-OIC trade to 25% by 2025.

Despite this progress, trade among OIC countries is still far from meeting expectations when considering the potential of the Member States in terms of natural and human resources.

Persistent Challenges and Obstacles:

Several major obstacles that hinder the expansion of intra-OIC trade:

- Lack of complementarities between countries and limited or undiversified export supply. The production and export structures of most OIC economies are oriented towards commodities (minerals, raw materials), the demand for which is mainly external.
- Lack of competitiveness of the exports of several countries, which are not adapted to international norms and standards.
- Transport and logistics barriers: weak maritime connectivity, inadequate infrastructure, and complex administrative procedures (customs, banking, ports). The high cost of doing business is a direct consequence of these infrastructural shortcomings and cumbersome procedures.
- Non-tariff barriers and erosion of tariff preferences: The proliferation of regional trade agreements (RTAs) with non-OIC countries has weakened the tariff advantage among member states. Moreover, persistent practices — such as roadblocks, multiple checkpoints, and inconsistent administrative procedures — continue to pose significant barriers to trade.
- Weaknesses in the banking and financial system: the absence of a robust banking network — including import-export banks (Exim banks) and export credit insurance agencies — limits access to trade finance. This situation particularly affects small and medium-sized exporting enterprises.
- Trade information gap: the lack of reliable data on markets, products, and business opportunities hinders the ability of economic operators to identify and tap into the potential of intra-OIC trade.

Lessons and Prerequisites for a New Target (2025-2035)

Regional integration initiatives within the OIC have not brought significant improvements to intra-regional and intra-OIC trade despite decades of experimentation. To achieve a new ambitious target for intra-OIC trade by 2035, a set of prerequisites and conditions are required.

These lessons are crucial for the development of the 2025-2035 action plan:

- Establishing an OIC Free Trade Area (FTA) by eliminating tariff and non-tariff barriers. The implementation of a full FTA among the members of the TPS- OIC /PRE-TAS Protocol could increase intra-OIC trade by USD about 100-180 billion USD according to different scenarios, thus making it easy to exceed the current figure of 20% and likely to achieve the new target.
- Revitalize Regional Economic Groupings (REGs) within the OIC (such as GAFTA, ECOWAS, AfCFTA) to strengthen intra-REG trade.
- Improve and build bridges between REGs within the OIC to develop inter-regional trade (e.g. CCG/CEO, GAFTA/ECOWAS).
- Strengthen investment in priority sectors with high trade potential (products and services). A preliminary list of several non-traditional non-hydrocarbon and minerals products has been identified by the ICDT and the IsDB (in particular, cotton, blue economy products, hides and skins, wood and by products, rice, dates, meat, vegetable oils, green energy, motor vehicles, construction materials, pharmaceutical products, plastics, etc.)
- Mitigate obstacles related to transport and logistics by investing massively in transport, logistics and communication infrastructure and equipment (establishment of economic corridors roads, airports,

ports, highways). Increasing maritime connectivity by creating regional shipping companies and developing synergies among Islamic shipowners are also recommended.

- Streamline foreign trade procedures through a trade facilitation program aimed at reducing export costs. Digitization projects (e-phyto, electronic health certificate, eTIR, eCMR) are envisaged, particularly for countries in sub-Saharan Africa and Central Asia.
- Strengthen trade finance and export credit insurance mechanisms. The IsDB Group is invited to set a financing target, for example, to finance 10-20% of intra-OIC trade by 2035. The promotion of bilateral and multilateral payment agreements is also considered important.

Outlook for 2025-2035: Negotiations and Impact Assessment:

As part of the continuous improvement of the system, new negotiations are underway under the chairmanship of COMCEC. In this vein, Türkiye proposed a strategy and work program to negotiate three new Protocols: one on trade in goods (improving PRETAS), one on services and investment facilitation, and one on trade facilitation.

Negotiations for these new protocols are expected to take place mainly in 2025, with a negotiation phase on the concession lists for the goods scheduled for 2026. The guiding principles include inclusiveness, ratification of the Framework Agreement as the only prerequisite for accession to the new protocols, maintaining a balance of concessions, taking into account the needs of least developed countries, and integrating the UN Sustainable Development Goals. The Protocols are expected

to enter into force three months after their ratification by 10 Member States.

An analysis using the GTAP V 12 beta and CEPII models assessed the potential impact of enhanced integration scenarios; The following scenarios were assessed:

1. FTA Plus: Elimination of tariffs and reduction of non-tariff measures.

Potential: USD 613 billion (intra-OIC share: 25.0%).

2. Deep Integration: Further reductions in NTMs.

Potential: USD 675 billion (intra-OIC share: 27.5%).

3. Expansion of the OIC Trade Preferential System to New Members: Inclusion of new members and liberalization of services. Potential: USD 795 billion (intra-OIC share: 31.8%).

These scenarios indicate a significant potential for trade creation (+\$113 billion to +\$295 billion), stimulated in particular by the abolition of tariffs and the reduction of logistics and transactions costs. However, they also lead to some trade diversion, mainly to the detriment of the EU China and to some extent Brazil. The analysis identifies winners (sub-Saharan Africa, Southeast Asia, Europe and the Caucasus in terms of GDP growth and job creation) and losers (some sectors in the EU, Brazil).

The results of the simulation show that all regions analyzed have a positive net gain in trade, with trade creation consistently outpacing diversion. Sub-Saharan Africa recorded the highest gain (+USD 32 billion), followed by Europe and the Caucasus (+USD 31 billion), indicating a strong capacity to reorient their trade. West Asia and North Africa also have solid net balances (+28 and +26 billion), sug-

Scenario	Intra-OIC Share	Value (\$Bn)	Net creation (\$bn)	Trade diversion (\$bn)
FTA Plus	25,0 %	613	+113	-25
Deep Integration	27,5 %	675	+175	-32
Expansion	31,8 %	795	+295	-45

gesting good integration or diversification of their trading partners. In contrast, Southeast Asia has the smallest net gain (+\$24 billion), due to a relatively large diversion from trade creation. Central Asia, although more modest in volume, also benefited significantly (+20 billion).

The strategic recommendations resulting from this analysis to maximize gains and mitigate losses include the establishment of a fund to compensate for losers, massive investments in logistics infrastructure (ports, corridors) As well as the integration of viability criteria into project planning.

This analysis based on the GTAP model demonstrates that further

trade integration among OIC members can generate significant economic gains, particularly in terms of welfare, employment and sectoral development. The results also show that trade creation generally exceeds trade diversion, indicating that these gains reflect a genuine improvement in economic efficiency.

However, to achieve the target set by the New Ten-Year Program 2025–2035 – to increase intra-EU trade to 30% of total trade by 2035 – it is necessary to move from theoretical simulations to concrete policy actions, supported by enhanced regional cooperation.

The Action Plan to boost Intra-OIC trade should be based on

REGION	EMPLOYMENT GAIN (FINAL SCENARIO)	WELFARE GAIN
Sub-Saharan Africa	+4,8 %	+4,1 %
Central Asia	+4,2 %	+3,7 %
Western Asia	+3,0 %	+3,4 %

CREATION VS. TRADE DIVERSION BY REGION (USD BILLIONS)			
REGION	TRADE CREATION	TRADE DIVERSION	NET GAIN
Southeast Asia	+30 billion	-6 billion	+24 billion
Western Asia	+35 billion	-7 billion	+28 billion
Central Asia	+25 billion	-5 billion	+20 billion
North Africa	+32 billion	-6 billion	+26 billion
Sub-Saharan Africa	+40 billion	-8 billion	+32 billion
Europe and the Caucasus	+38 billion	-7 billion	+31 billion

GTAP vs CEPII Benchmarking		
Aspect	GTAP v12 Beta	CEPII (MAcMap)
Trade Creation	+\$295 billion (scenario 3)	+\$260 billion (HS6 targeted sectors)
Trade diversion	-\$45 billion (EU, China, Brazil)	-\$50 milliard (detours via third countries)
Employment Impact	+5,8 %	-2,1 %

an integrated approach, combining institutional reforms, trade modernization and capacity building. The launch of a new round of negotiations under the SPC-OIC Agreement aims to establish deeper and more inclusive trade agreements. At the same time, the «Fast Truck» approach, based on voluntary membership, allows the readiest countries to move forward more quickly, promoting differentiated but concrete progress. The finalization of a free trade agreement (OIC-FTA) would be a key step in improving trade fluidity and boosting regional integration.

The operational key priorities aim to reduce barriers to trade while creating new opportunities. The gradual liberalization of services, the targeted reduction of non-tariff measures (NTMs), and the improvement of logistics infrastructure will reduce transaction and transport costs. The use of appropriate financing mechanisms, including through regional funds and Islamic finance, is essential to support SMEs. Finally, technical capacity building and the development of intra-OIC e-commerce offer promising levers to further integrate young people, startups and digital economies into the regional dynamic.

The path towards further trade integration has been gradual. The General Agreement on Economic, Technical and Trade Cooperation,

adopted in 1980, laid the foundation for economic cooperation among the OIC member States. The Islamic Centre for the Development of Trade (ICDT) was commissioned to prepare a draft agreement for the TPS-OIC in 1984. After several expert meetings and sessions of the COM-CEC (OIC Standing Committee for Economic and Trade Cooperation), the OIC TPS Framework Agreement and its Annex on Rules of Origin were adopted in 1988. The entry into force of the Framework Agreement required ratification by ten Member States, a quorum reached at the end of 2002.

The Trade Negotiation Committee (TNC) was established in 2003. The first negotiations, held between 2004 and 2005, resulted in the preparation of the Protocol on the Preferential Tariff Regime for the OIC-GST (PRE-TAS), adopted by the COMCEC. A second round of negotiations (2006-2007) finalized the OIC TPS Rules of Origin. The entry into force of PRE-TAS (2010) and the Rules of Origin (2011) also required ratification by ten Member States. To make the system operational, ten Member States had to ratify the three TPS-OIC agreements and submit their respective Schedules of Concessions, which was achieved by the end of 2014. The system only came into force in July 2022.

Conclusion :

The target of 30% intra-OIC trade by 2035 is ambitious but achievable. It requires strong political cooperation, commitment from the productive sectors, and a shared vision of inclusive economic development.

The results presented here show that such a goal could sustainably transform Muslim economies, create jobs, and build resilience to external shocks. Trade integration within the OIC has made significant progress with the effective implementation of the OIC TPS and the achievement (or proximity) of the target of 25% intra-OIC share. However, persistent structural and logistical headwinds continue to limit the full growth potential.

Lessons learned from past efforts and forward-looking analyses underscore that achieving a more ambitious intra-OIC trade target for the period 2025-2035 will require resolute action. Transforming the OIC-TPS into a genuine Free Trade Area, investing heavily in transport infrastructure and logistics, streamlining trade procedures, strengthening export financing and credit insurance, and boosting investment in key sectors are essential prerequisites.

The ongoing negotiations for new Protocols on Goods, Services/Investment and Trade Facilitation are crucial steps in this direction. If the obstacles are properly addressed and the recommended strategies are implemented in an inclusive and sustainable manner, the OIC's trade integration has the potential, according to some analyses, to increase intra-bloc trade to nearly USD 800 billion and significantly increase its share, thereby contributing substantially to economic growth and solidarity among Member States in the next decade. ■

Women's Entrepreneurship in Africa: Success Stories

Women in Agriculture: Leading Growth Amid Land Access Barriers

IN BURKINA FASO, WOMEN PLAY A CRUCIAL ROLE IN AGRICULTURAL DEVELOPMENT, CONTRIBUTING SIGNIFICANTLY TO FOOD PRODUCTION AND HOUSEHOLD INCOME.

THEY REPRESENT A LARGE PORTION OF THE ACTIVE WORKFORCE IN THIS SECTOR AND CARRY OUT A SUBSTANTIAL SHARE OF AGRICULTURAL WORK. ALTHOUGH ACCESS TO LAND REMAINS A MAJOR CHALLENGE, THEIR CONTRIBUTION IS ESSENTIAL TO FOOD SECURITY, WEALTH CREATION, AND POVERTY REDUCTION. NONETHELESS, WOMEN LIKE MADAME FATIMATA BADOLO/SABA AND MANY OTHERS HAVE DISTINGUISHED THEMSELVES BY CREATING THEIR OWN BUSINESSES.

Female-led agricultural enterprises are key contributors to a society's economic progress. Unfortunately, sociocultural barriers continue to hinder this development. This is especially evident in Burkina Faso, where women constitute 52% of the population and 83% of them are engaged in agriculture, contributing 60% of the country's agricultural output, according to 2016 data from the Ministry for the Promotion of Women.

Besides, agricultural production is, above all, the main source of income for farmers, enabling them to meet basic social needs such as healthcare, education, and food security. The contribution of women's labor in the agricultural sector is undeniable.

Women Driving Local Development

Fatimata Badolo/Saba, the founder and CEO of SAFAS, has poured her heart, courage, and personality into the company in pursuit of her goals.

In Dori, in the Sahel region, Madame Fatimata Badolo/Saba, founder and CEO of SAFAS (Savoir-



Faire de la Sahélienne), embodies a generation of women who refuse to be passive. She has made the processing of non-timber forest products (NTFPs) her driving mission. A visionary leader, she has committed her business to a quality-focused approach. As a result, in 2024, 37 SAFAS products were certified with Burkina Faso's national certification mark, NBF (Normes du Burkina Faso), awarded by ABNORM (Burkinabè Agency for Standardization, Metrology, and Quality), as proof of conformity with Burkinabe regulations.

But this success did not come easily. "In a country where sociocultural constraints make it difficult for women to access land, I had to fight to acquire one and a half hectares to establish a production and processing center for NTFPs," she confides. Her story reflects the daily struggle faced by women entrepreneurs as they work to overcome land ownership barriers. Over the years, the founder of SAFAS has built a solid reputation, crowned by the award for Best Young Entrepreneur of the Sahel in 2020 and a special mention from AFP/SMEs



in 2024 for her resilience and innovation.

SAFAS currently employs 7 permanent staff, including one registered with social security CNSS, and more than 30 seasonal workers.

Prospects for structural change

For these women entrepreneurs, the future lies in capacity building and investment. “I want to develop a communication strategy and acquire high-performance production equipment,” says Fatimata Badolo/Saba, whose ambition is to expand SAFAS’s impact both nationally and internationally. At Miel Reine d’Abeille, demand for honey exceeds supply. “My goal is to multiply my beehives to fully meet my clients’ needs,” says Awa Kafando, who hopes to benefit from upcoming project calls to support her growth.

Burkinabe women engaged in agricultural entrepreneurship possess both vision and determination.



They actively contribute to food security, job creation, and the enhancement of local resources. However, for their full potential to be realized, it is essential to remove barriers to land access and control

by establishing a supportive legal and economic environment. Only then can rural women’s entrepreneurship truly serve as a driver of sustainable development in Burkina Faso. ■

Key Recommendations to OIC Countries on Investor-State Dispute Settlement Mechanism

THIS DOCUMENT OUTLINES KEY ISSUES AND CONSIDERATIONS FOR OIC MEMBER STATES REGARDING POTENTIAL REFORMS TO THE INVESTOR -STATE DISPUTE SETTLEMENT (ISDS) SYSTEM, AS WILL BE DISCUSSED IN THE UPCOMING SESSIONS OF THE UNITED NATIONS COMMISSION ON INTERNATIONAL TRADE LAW (UNCITRAL) WORKING GROUP-III (WG-III), STARTING WITH ITS 51ST SESSION TO BE HELD IN NEW YORK THIS APRIL. THIS PAPER IS WRITTEN KEEPING IN MIND THE PREVIOUS NEGOTIATIONS AND DISCUSSIONS AT THE WG - III MEETINGS, AND THE INTERGOVERNMENTAL EXPERT GROUP MEETINGS OF THE OIC WHICH WERE HELD TO DELIBERATE THE CREATION OF A NEW INVESTOR - STATE DISPUTE RESOLUTION MECHANISM FOR OIC MEMBER STATES.

By M. Usman Piracha,
Managing Partner at Pirachas (International law firm), Pakistan

The report highlights key issues such as statutes of limitations, amicable settlement mechanisms, the assessment of damages and compensation, as well as the proposal to establish a Multilateral Investment Court. It also offers concrete guidance and strategies for developing countries, particularly those that are members of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), to help them promote reforms that balance investment protection with legal certainty and economic fairness. The objective is to ensure that any evolution of the ISDS framework takes into account the specific priorities and concerns of OIC member states.

1- Limitation Period and Amicable Settlement

The Swiss Arbitration Association (ASA) has raised several concerns regarding the interplay between the statute of limitations, amicable settlement mechanisms, and the exhaustion of local remedies. In particular, it highlighted the lack of clarity surrounding whether an invitation to engage in an amicable settlement can suspend the statute of limitations. If a suspension does occur, uncertainty remains as to when the limitation period resumes: is it upon the actual conclusion of the amicable procedure, the formal declaration of its failure, or

another triggering event? This ambiguity poses legal risks for the parties involved and underscores the need for clarification within the framework of the proposed reforms. Moreover, if the limitation period does not pause during friendly settlement efforts, parties may feel forced to abandon these discussions prematurely to avoid losing their right to resolve. There is also ambiguity in the draft provisions regarding whether the initiation of local remedies pauses the limitation period. This uncertainty allows investors to prematurely break off local remedies in favor of initiating arbitration within the limitation period.

OIC countries are recommended to advocate for clarification regarding whether the limitation period is paused during friendly settlement or local remedy processes, and if so, when it will summary. Additionally, advocating for the exclusion of pre-resolution steps from the limitation period will allow investors to engage in pre-arbitration efforts in good faith without the risk of losing their right to seek other dispute resolution avenues.

2 - Assessment of Damages and Compensation

Several proposals by WG - III on damages have sparked discussions and concerns which include the use of speculative valuation methods (eg, Discounted Cash Flow), the ambiguity of terms such as « reasonable interest », the potential for inflated claims to influence tribunal decisions, the absence of limits on monetary damages, and the vagueness of causation principles.

Damages in ISDS have become a significant concern for developing countries, particularly host states, due to the unpredictable outcomes and excessive awards by tribunals. OIC states like Pakistan and Nigeria have faced high-value ISDS cases (Tethyan Copper v. Islamic Republic of Pakistan and The Federal Republic of Nigeria v. Process & Industrial Developments Limited). In both cases, awards were to the tune of billions of dollars - which Pakistan settled out of court, and Nigeria successfully overturned. These cases have highlighted the difficulties developing countries face in managing the quantum of damages; especially with the discretion courts hold to award compound interest, which leads to exponential increases in debt over time.



To address these concerns, developing countries should advocate for limits on the use of speculative valuation methods, such as DCF, and require clear guidelines for their application - backed by substantial evidence and a direct link between the breach and the damages. The World Bank suggests that DCF should only be used when a record of profitability exists. Furthermore, clear and predictable rules should be set for determining interest rates, as well as for the allocation of costs. Monetary damages should not be excessive, and damages should in most cases, only be awarded if there is a direct link to the wrongful act.

3 - Multilateral Investment Court (MIC)

The proposal for a Multilateral Investment Court (MIC) under WG - III offers a structural alternative to the current ISDS system.

While some developed economies, including the European Union, strongly advocate for its adoption, OIC Member States are advised to approach the MIC proposal with deposit. The focus being on anything reforms needing to balance efficiency with respect for sovereignty, accessibility, and equitable representation.

The IMT's extended jurisdiction over investment disputes raises concerns, as it could excessively restrict national policy-making. States may hesitate to adopt the MIC due to fears of unpredictable rulings that could undermine their judicial sovereignty. Additionally, reliance on state-appointed judges - while potentially reducing investor bias, could result in politicization, or in some cases, disproportionately favor respondent states. This risk is composed by the challenge of judges interpreting diverse treat-

ties language consistently, which could perpetuate legal uncertainty.

However, the MIC could address several long-standing issues in ISDS that disproportionately affect developing nations and OIC Member States alike. For instance, published decisions of the MIC would promote transparency and accountability. Its appellate mechanism and permanent structure could also provide more consistent interpretations of treaty provisions, reducing the unpredictability currently associated with ISDS.

Developing countries, especially those in the OIC block are recommended to push for greater diversity in judge selection to ensure balanced decision-making. The selection process should reflect a diverse pool of jurisdictions, representing both developed and developing nations' perspectives. This diversity would ensure that the court's rulings accurately reflect the legal and economic realities of developing nations, particularly regarding issues such as fair and equitable treatment.

A phased approach to MIC adoption could allow states to opt into specific dispute categories or treaties, preserving flexibility while ensuring gradual implementation. As old-generation Bilateral Investment Treaties (BITs) phase out, developing countries increasingly rely on International Investment Agreements (IIAs), with domestic legal remedies serving as a potential avenue for dispute resolution. However, the capacity to negotiate these agreements remains limited, particularly for developing countries in the OIC or otherwise. This disparity is further highlighted by the divide between the US and

EU approaches to the MIC, as well as the differing negotiation capacities of developing nations.

While the MIC presents both opportunities and challenges, it remains in need of significance potential reform. It could address key issues such as transparency, consistency, and excessive damages, if structured and implemented with careful consideration. For countries like Pakistan, the MIC would need to be adapted to ensure cost efficiency, fairness, and respect for sovereignty.

4 - Additional Recommendations

To improve the effectiveness of reforms to the Investor-State Dispute Settlement (ISDS) mechanism, OIC member states could consider the following avenues:

- **Incorporating Multi-Tiered Dispute Resolution Clauses :**

Encouraging the inclusion of multi-tiered alternative dispute resolution clauses in investment agreements could promote friendly settlements before arbitra-





tion. This approach would reduce the burden on arbitration mechanisms and foster a culture of dialogue and cooperation.

• **Establishing a Roster of Qualified Arbitrators and Mediators :**

A roster of qualified mediators for investor -state disputes, specifically catering to the needs of OIC countries, could be developed . The author proposed the creation of a variety (including from varying legal jurisdictions of both developed and developing nations) roster or list of

qualified arbitrators specifically for investor -state disputes, when negotiating for Pakistan at WG - III meetings. Such a roster would include mediators with expertise in international investment law and Islamic mediation (Sulh), ensuring access to skilled negotiators who are sensitive to the legal and economic contexts of Muslim and Muslim Majority nations.

• **Promoting Capacity -Building and Training Programs :**

Establishing training programs for government officials and

legal practitioners in mediation techniques would enhance their ability to engage in friendly relations settlements , improving dispute resolution outcomes . The work of institutions like the Islamic Center for Development of Trade (IcDT) and the Islamic Development Bank (IsDB) warrants recognition, greater support and encouragement.

• **Facilitating Experience Sharing Among States :**

Encouraging states to share best practices and experiences regarding friendly settlements can create a collaborative environment for resolving disputes. Regular forums or workshops organized by UNCITRAL would be an effective way to foster this exchange of knowledge - an initiative the OIC may pursue in parallel also .

• **Integrating Public Interest Considerations , including Sustainable Development Goals :**

OIC countries may advocate for the inclusion of public interest considerations , such as the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), in ISDS settlements. Highlighting the necessity of incorporating such considerations and goals into settlements - which also align with OIC resolutions on sustainability development (ICO Program of Action 2025) would ensure that negotiated outcomes at the WG-III resonate with broader societal goals; increasing legitimacy and acceptance, particularly in resource-rich areas.

By considering thesis recommendations , nations, especially those that are Members of the OIC, can contribute to the reform process and ensure that any changes to ISDS best reflect their interests and development goals. ■

Gitex Africa Morocco 2025

GITEX AFRICA MOROCCO 2025, HELD FOR THE THIRD YEAR IN A ROW UNDER THE HIGH PATRONAGE OF HIS MAJESTY KING MOHAMMED VI, BROUGHT TOGETHER TOP LEADERS FROM ACROSS THE AFRICAN AND GLOBAL DIGITAL ECOSYSTEM FROM APRIL 14 TO 16, 2025, IN MARRAKECH. LAUNCHED BY THE MINISTRY OF DIGITAL TRANSITION AND ADMINISTRATION REFORM OF THE KINGDOM OF MOROCCO (MTNRA), IN COLLABORATION WITH THE DIGITAL DEVELOPMENT AGENCY (ADD), THE EVENT HAS BECOME, OVER THE PAST FEW YEARS, A FLAGSHIP PLATFORM FOR TECHNOLOGICAL INNOVATION IN AFRICA.



More than just a hub for investment, GITEX Africa Morocco acts as a powerful driver of innovation and technological progress, playing a vital role in accelerating the continent's digital transformation and economic development.

Building on the success of the previous two editions, GITEX Africa Morocco 2025 reached a new milestone by bringing together government representatives, regulatory bodies, and leaders from the tech industry to discuss critical topics such as AI governance, digital regulations, and public policies that will shape the future of innovation across the continent. With the participation of 52,000 visitors—a 16% increase from last

year—and the participation of 740 startups, the event fully met the expectations of both attendees and organizers, successfully achieving its goals as a major continental gathering dedicated to technology and innovation. This edition stood out for its wide range of sector-specific conferences, innovative initiatives, forums, and networking opportunities, all designed to foster synergy between governments, investors, entrepreneurs, and digital leaders. Special emphasis was placed on public digital infrastructure in Africa, the development of AI ecosystems, and the latest technological breakthroughs, further asserting the continent's role as a key player in the global digital landscape.

Among the highlights of GITEX Africa Morocco 2025 was the signing of several agreements and memorandums of understanding between the Ministry and various public and private stakeholders across different innovation sectors. These signings underscored Morocco's vast potential in the digital domain. In addition, 200 Moroccan startups were supported by the Ministry to fully benefit from investment opportunities and to forge new business partnerships. The event also marked the launch of the SheWins Africa program, led by the International Finance Corporation (IFC), aimed at promoting inclusive economic development and enabling women entrepreneurs to access funding and global networks. It is worth noting that the African continent is already attracting over \$5 billion in venture capital investment, and the emergence of highly skilled tech talent is reinforcing this promising trajectory.

Over time, Morocco has established itself as a digital destination, thanks to its advanced infrastructure, a business-friendly environment, and a clear political commitment to supporting innovation and enhancing its positioning both continentally and globally. Through this event, the Kingdom reaffirms its ambition to become a leading digital hub in Africa, while encouraging the continent to fully embrace the global digital revolution. ■



Africa CEO Forum 2025 Concludes with Major Agreements and Calls for Public-Private Partnerships

LAUNCHED IN 2012, THE AFRICA CEO FORUM BRINGS TOGETHER PUBLIC AND PRIVATE SECTOR DECISION-MAKERS EACH YEAR FOR HIGH-LEVEL DISCUSSIONS THROUGH PANELS, NEGOTIATIONS, EXCHANGES, AND WORKSHOPS. THIS YEAR, THE 12TH EDITION WELCOMED 2,800 PARTICIPANTS, INCLUDING BUSINESS LEADERS, INVESTORS, AND POLICYMAKERS FROM 90 COUNTRIES, FOR TWO DAYS OF STRATEGIC DIALOGUE AND HIGH-IMPACT DEAL-MAKING.

Held under the theme “Can a New Public-Private Deal Reshape the Continent’s Future?”, the forum focused on strengthening economic governance, optimizing public policy, and accelerating the implementation of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA). The forum’s agenda underscored the importance of structured and strategic collaboration between governments and the private sector to unlock Africa’s economic potential in the face of global uncertainty and mounting debt pressures.

On this occasion, H.E. President Alassane Ouattara of Côte d’Ivoire

called on public and private decision-makers to jointly design concrete, ambitious, and context-specific solutions aimed at fostering the emergence of the next generation of African champions. Mr. Makhtar Diop, Managing Director of the International Finance Corporation (IFC), noted that the Forum offers Africa a unique opportunity to make the private sector a driving force for sovereignty, innovation, and growth.

One of the Forum’s highlights was the presidential panel, which brought together several heads of state, including Alassane Ouattara (Côte d’Ivoire), Bassirou Diomaye

Faye (Senegal), Cyril Ramaphosa (South Africa), Mohamed Ould Ghazouani (Mauritania), and Paul Kagame (Rwanda). On that occasion, the presidents discussed the importance of promoting public-private partnerships and their crucial role in the continent’s development and economic integration.

This Forum also served as a platform to discuss digital transformation, youth employment, and industrialization. It led to the signing of major agreements worth over 200 million dollars, spanning key sectors such as artificial intelligence, connectivity, energy, and real estate. ■



FOHAM 2025

THE MOROCCAN INSTITUTE FOR STANDARDIZATION (IMANOR) ORGANIZED THE 7TH EDITION OF THE MOROCCO HALAL FORUM (FOHAM) ON JUNE 19, 2025, UNDER THE JOINT AUSPICES OF THE MINISTRY OF INDUSTRY AND TRADE AND THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE, MARITIME FISHERIES, RURAL DEVELOPMENT, AND WATER AND FORESTS, IN COLLABORATION WITH INSTITUTIONAL AND PROFESSIONAL PARTNERS. THE FORUM WAS HELD UNDER THE THEME: «NATIONAL HALAL ECOSYSTEM: A CATALYST FOR GROWTH AND INTERNATIONAL INTEGRATION.»

This high-level event, which brought together more than 150 participants from Morocco and abroad, aimed to serve as a platform for dialogue and reflection, while consolidating Morocco's achievements and reaffirming its regional leadership in the field of Halal certification. The forum featured a series of conferences

and a panel discussion focused on two main topics: the global Halal market and the criteria for accessing it, and the importance of structuring a national Halal ecosystem as a catalyst for expanding Morocco's exports to international Halal markets and integrating into global Halal value chains.

On this occasion, strengthening a national Halal ecosystem—combined with Morocco's strong potential in Halal production—was at the heart of the discussions. The aim was to unite various stakeholders around shared objectives, consolidate Morocco's achievements in this field, and enable Moroccan businesses to



better position themselves in the global Halal market, which is offering increasing opportunities.

During the Forum's opening, the Centre reaffirmed the key role of the Halal sector worldwide, particularly within the OIC region, and called on participating countries and institutions—in-

cluding the Islamic Development Bank (IsDB), BADEA, and SMIIC—to intensify their investment and cooperation efforts so that Islamic countries can fully benefit from the high potential of this growing sector.

During this high-level meeting, testimonials were also shared

by international organizations operating in the Halal sector, highlighting the challenges and opportunities related to Halal certification. On their part, Moroccan operators discussed the difficulties they face in their daily work as well as in the process of certifying their products. ■

► Strategic Alliances Fuel Egypt's Tourism Boom on the Mediterranean Coast



The tourism sector in Egypt is a vital source of income. The Mediterranean coastline, stretching from Alexandria to Marsa Matruh, is one of Egypt's most attractive areas for tourism development. The region offers pristine beaches, clear waters, and rich historical and cultural significance, making it an ideal location for luxury tourism investments. Moreover, the number of inbound tourists to Egypt from January to May 2025 grew by 26% compared to the same period last year, accompanied by a notable increase in tourism spending according to the Egyptian Minister of Tourism and Antiquities. At this regard, Qatar and Egypt mark a significant milestone in the relationship between the two nations through the signature of a \$3.5 billion tourism project giving new impetus to a larger strategy to strengthen the bilateral ties between the two countries, particularly in the economic sphere. Under the terms of

the anticipated deal, Qatar would provide \$1 billion to Egypt immediately after the agreement is signed, with the remaining balance delivered over the next 12 months.

This financial support is expected to help Egypt kickstart its development plans, particularly in the tourism and real estate sectors, which are seen as crucial for the country's long-term economic growth. Under the terms of the anticipated deal, Qatar would provide \$1 billion to Egypt immediately after the agreement is signed, with the remaining balance delivered over the next 12 months. This financial support is expected to foster Egypt's launch of its development plans, particularly in the tourism and real estate sectors, which are considered essential for the country's long-term economic growth. Discussions concerning this investment follow a \$35 billion agreement with the United Arab

Emirates (UAE), which is also making a significant contribution to Egypt's economic recovery. The UAE's investment focuses primarily on the development of Egypt's Mediterranean coastline, particularly in the Ras El-Hekma region. The Mediterranean coastline is becoming a real magnet for luxury tourism and real estate development, and Egypt is capitalizing on this dynamic through leading partnerships. The recently announced landmark \$3.5 billion deal with Qatar (ahead of the UAE's multi-billion-dollar investment of \$35 billion) is an indicator of growing international confidence in Egypt's long-term economic vision and direction. As tourism figures exceed expectations and infrastructure development plans evolve, Egypt is positioning itself not only as a leading destination, yet as a gateway for investment.

Source: Travel and tour world; Egypt Today

► Pakistan Banking on Blue Economy to Emerge as Regional Maritime Power

At the opening ceremony of the second Pakistan International Maritime Expo and Conference (PI-MEC)-2025, the prime minister laid out the vision for transforming Pakistan into a regional maritime powerhouse, declaring the «blue economy» as Pakistan's «new economic frontier». With over 1,000 kilometers of coastline and a position at the crossroads of vital sea lanes, Pakistan has all the assets to make the most of this blue economy. Coastal trade already brings in nearly \$7 billion a year and a long-term plan will be implemented to grow this sector into a \$100 billion economic force by 2047.

As said by Maritime Affairs Minister Muhammad Junaid Anwar Chaudhry, the oceans are not just water bodies, they are economic lifelines. Pakistan must position itself as a regional maritime hub. These will increasingly be tapped for tourism, renewable energy, aquaculture, and extraction of valuable resources like hydrocarbons and minerals. In this regard, Pakistan and Uzbekistan have agreed on June 19th, to form a joint working group to deepening maritime cooperation, with a focus creating a robust trans-regional trade architecture connecting Central Asia to the Arabian Sea. A landmark proposal was made to develop a trade corridor, linking Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan's dry ports with Pakistan's seaports via road and rail networks.

This initiative, potentially unlocking over \$20 billion in trade, would serve as a strategic artery for landlocked Central Asian economies, accelerating the growth of the Pakistani economy.



This initiative, which could unlock more than 20 billion dollars in trade, would serve as a strategic lifeline for the landlocked economies of Central Asia by accelerating their access to maritime routes. Joint ventures in the seafood sector—particularly in fisheries production—are also set to be launched, along with the allocation of an off-dock terminal dedicated to Uzbekistan's commercial operations in Pakistan. The country is

laying the groundwork for deeper economic integration and a sustainable maritime future by investing in ocean industries and forging bold regional alliances, especially with Central Asia. Pakistan's economic recovery may well be fueled by the blue economy.

Source: The Express Tribune, Islamabad Post.

► South Korea and Morocco Seek to Launch Rapid Negotiations Toward an Economic Partnership Agreement



On April 8th, 2025, the top trade officials of South Korea and Morocco discussed ways to launch negotiations for a bilateral economic partnership agreement (EPA) in the near future as part of efforts to boost the countries' cooperation in

trade and investment according to the South Korea's Ministry of Trade, Industry and Energy. The countries agreed to push for an EPA during the Korea-Africa Summit, held last year, to strengthen their collaboration on supply chains, digital

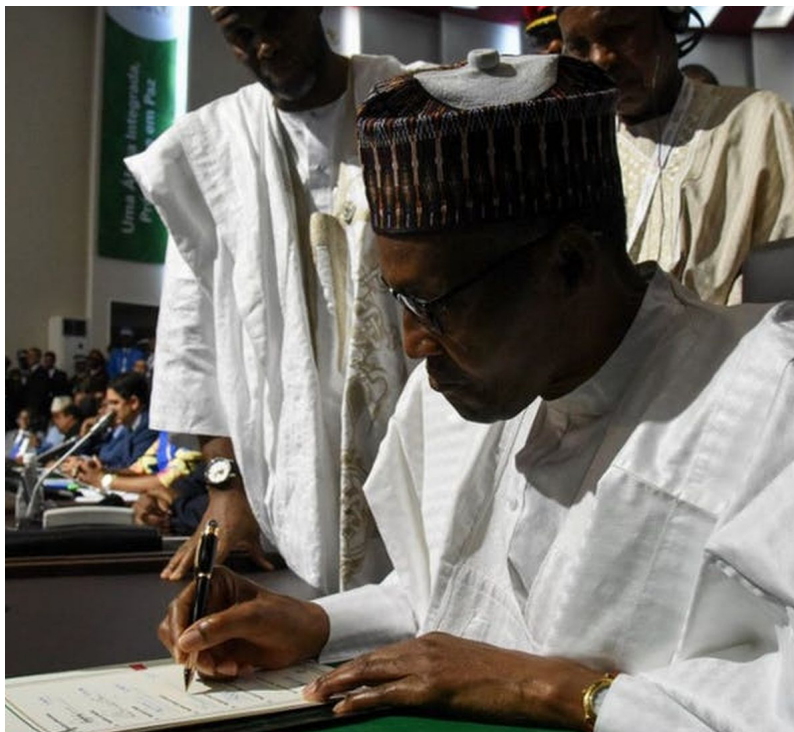
industry and a broader range of other trade issues. Prior to signing the EPA, the two countries can also strike a trade and investment promotion framework to swiftly promote cooperation.

Source: Yonhap

► Nigeria signs AfCFTA tariffs

On 15th April, 2025, Nigeria has gazetted its Provisional Schedule of Tariff Concessions (PSTCs) under the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA), marking a major milestone in the country's commitment to regional integration and trade facilitation across Africa. The move enhances regulatory transparency and provides businesses with clear guidelines on import duty concessions. The gazetting signals Nigeria's readiness to implement the AfCFTA Agreement fully.

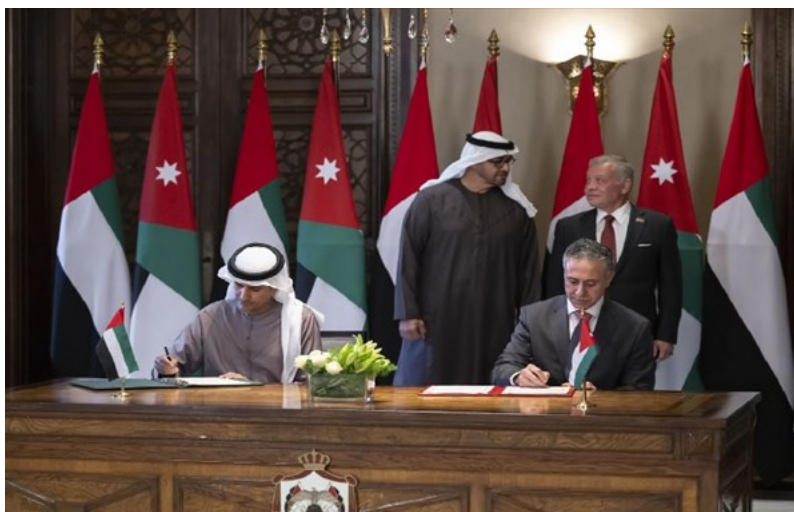
Source: Yonhap



► UAE-Jordan Cepa came into effect

The comprehensive economic partnership agreement between the UAE and Jordan came into effect on May 14th, 2025, with the deal expected to boost bilateral trade between the nations to more than \$8 billion by 2032. The Cepa with Jordan follows the signing of agreements between the two countries for a \$2.3 billion railway investment project to link the port of Aqaba with the mining regions of Al Shidiya and Ghor es-Safi.

Source: The National





OIC AND ICDT AGENDA

▶ **ICDT INVEST DAYS - MORONI**

26-29 August 2025 • Moroni, Comoros

▶ **Workshop on TIR /eTIR and CMR/eCMR of the OIC African Member States**

16-17 September 2025 • Casablanca, Morocco

▶ **5th CONSULTATIVE FORUM OF THE REGIONAL COOPERATION ORGANIZATIONS (RCOS) IN THE OIC REGION**

02-03 October 2025 • Istanbul, Türkiye

▶ **WORKSHOP ON THE ROLE OF CREDIT INFORMATION IN SUPPORTING TRADE AND INVESTMENT DECISIONS**

20-22 October 2025 • Casablanca, Morocco

▶ **OIC TOURISM FAIR / AFRICA TOURISM EXPO**

23-25 October 2025 • Kampala, Uganda

▶ **42ND SESSION OF COMCEC**

01-04 November 2025 • Istanbul, Türkiye

▶ **HALAL EXPO & WORLD HALAL SUMMIT**

26-29 November 2025 • Istanbul, Türkiye

▶ **OIC INVESTMENT FORUM IN AFRICA**

02-04 December 2025 • Bamako, Mali

▶ **9TH ACMOI**

10-11 December 2025 • Jeddah, Saudi Arabia

▶ **OIC Invest Days N'Djamena**

16-17 December 2025, • N'Djaména, Tchad



OIC INVESTMENT FORUM IN AFRICA

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منظمة التعاون الإسلامي
OIC-OCI

The Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) is the second largest inter-governmental organization after the United Nations, comprising 57 member states spread across 4 continents. The Organization serves as the voice of the Muslim world, safeguarding and protecting its interests in the spirit of promoting international peace and harmony among the world's diverse peoples.

The Islamic Summit, the Council of Foreign Ministers, and the General Secretariat are the main organs of the OIC. The Organization also includes three permanent thematic committees: the Committee on Science and Technology, the Committee on Economy and Trade, the Committee on Communication and Culture, as well as the Al-Quds Committee. Furthermore, the Organization has specialized institutions operating under its umbrella, such as the Islamic Development Bank (IDB) and the Islamic Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (ISESCO). These thematic committees, subsidiary bodies, and affiliated institutions of the Organization play a vital and complementary role by working in various domains.

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