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Committee for Economic and Commercial Cooperation
Platform for Providing Food Security to Poverty Stricken States

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Platform for Providing Food Security to Poverty Stricken States

Food is the basic necessity of living. It is related to healthy nutrition, which is required for the sustainable future progress of the nations. Food security is the demand of the day due to the hefty socio-economic problem of the globalized world where the rise and fall in dollar unleash ups and downs in the stock exchanges market of the nations. Similarly, a single protest triggers a mass demonstration of same intuition in surrounding nations (as the case of Arab spring). Presently the globalized world is on the verge of facing serious challenge of water crisis and food insecurity. Strive for food and the demands for means of food production is increasing day by day, without the proportionate rise in food supply (Abdelhady & Hdeel, 2012). Rising population putting sheer pressure on food demand, increasing purchasing power on hand creating price volatility, and such oscillation is expected to multiply the imbalance in global food supply and demand. The Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations (FAO) also prescient about the future bleak of food insecurity and says, “in order to feed a population of more than 9 billion [the projected world population in 2050] and free the world from hunger, global food production must nearly double by 2050.” Albeit, the world’s governments have taken note and are acting independently and multilaterally. They have devoted resources to assess the food insecurity threat, and have taken steps to solve the issue of food insecurity among masses but still the issue of food insecurity and poverty has not been contained.

The Muslim countries are nearer to experience food insecurity; even some of the Muslim nations are having the glimpses of this serious problem. Most of the Muslim majority countries are rippling through the food insecurity. Food insecurity is also not a new but frequently rising phenomenon since the last decade. The Global Recession of 2008 can be
considered as the beginning of this defection since then the quest for food security has become serious throe. Most of the countries during this period witnessed the extreme prices in food which continued till the year 2011 (Kubursi, 2012). Even the 2011’s Arab countries protests are significant in this regard since the question of food insecurity was voiced during protests. The paranoid about rising food prices became one of the factors for generating demonstration in some nations. The peoples were raged by the price hike in foods. For instance, price of bread, the cheapest source of food for the poverty stricken people roused to 37% (Zurayk, 2011). Current situation is seemingly more volatile. Each of the Muslim countries is appended with rising food price of with different parameters/ intensity. The status food inflation is found surprisingly hiking in most of the developed Muslim countries; those are also even the member of G20. For instance, according to recent records, in Turkey food inflation is about 27.70% in September 2018 while in Saudi Arabia it is 6.60% by September (Trading Economics, 2018).

But it is to be noted that the geographical composition, environmental changes, rising population, land degradation, conflicts and civil war are the key aspects contributing to food insecurity in the Muslim majority states. The lowest Percentage of Arable land in most of the oil producing Arab countries is also the notable factor. Countries as Oman, Djibouti, UAE, Kuwait, and Brunei have the lowest percentage of arable land between 0.1-0.9 percent (The Global Economy, 2015). The OIC member countries must keep in consideration about the effects of rising global warming and rapid increase of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere severely changing the climate and affecting our harvests by decreasing the amount of nutrient in food crops. This factor may further weaken agriculture sector of countries. This will definitely cause malnutrition among the poverty stricken masses as the researches delineate
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about this paradox. (Dunne, 2018).

Poverty is a factor of hunger, more poverty means more hunger. With the advent of the new millennium, the excess of poverty remains pervasive. Poverty is an upshot of the complex socio-economic and political structure of distinct country. Some of the OIC member countries are least developed and have low-income. At times, these complexities are now coupled with civil war and terrorist attacks worsening the poverty condition in member states. The FAO report mentions that the food security relies upon three pillar ‘Availability, access and utilization whereas the most formidable pillar is stability the fourth pillar’. Stability rests upon consistent maintenance of all three pillars. Unfortunately conflict ‘undermines all these pillars in many and often interlinked, ways’ (FAO, 2018, p.iii). Similarly, the conflicts emasculated all pillar of food security and impoverish most of the Muslim countries. The report released by ICP (International Comparison Program) in 2017 estimated an intimidation of severe food insecurity in war-torn Yemen. Syria is also not away from this situation. Both impoverished countries are at high risk of famine. Civil wars are affecting crops and livestock of war torn regions. Syria is said to lose more than 16 billion $ of its crops and other nourishment assets. Yemen had not been stabilized after the 2008 global recession; the current conflict tightly squeezed the country’s already limited food security which now has risen to 20% more since June 2016 with over 60% population. It would not be wrong to say that hunger is being used as war weapon. The situation of Yemen is also inimical with regard to malnutrition which is also related to food insecurity, millions of people in Yemen starving and children are serious victim of severe malnutrition (Al Jazeera, 2018).

Like in Yemen, the situation is severely strident in all conflicting areas. According to 2017 FAO report ‘the Republic of Syria is required 50% food aid, the war left Iraq with the 9%
need of food, in Libya 6% and in Yemen 50% food assistance is demanded with the decline of GDP of these countries’ (Conflict causing spikes in food insecurity in the Near East and North Africa, 2017).

The OIC state must assist these states by restricting food waste, and spreading awareness to stop food waste. FAO’s latest report on food loss and waste has stated that about 1.3 billion tons of food are lost or wasted every year, which amounts to roughly one third of all the food produced for human consumption. According to the report, food losses occur as a result of inefficiencies in food production and processing operations that diminish supplies. Food waste, by contrast, is when retailers and consumers throw edible food in the trash. Consumers in rich nations waste a combined 222 million tons a year, according to the report. That’s almost as much as all the food produced in sub-Saharan Africa (Shikoh Rafi-uddin, n.d.). The OIC states must consider upon this.

This committee is aimed to provide a platform to review the prevailing problems and analyses a best way out to deal with the rising global phenomenon of food insecurity. The COMCEC under the agenda of providing food security to poverty stricken states will examine the economic conditions of these states and will make an attempt to bail out the masses of the areas facing food insecurity. By curbing the issue of poverty, instability and food security, Muslim countries can play a better role in development of masses in all terms whether they are related to health, society, economy or education. A healthy and well nutrition mind is important in order to make people able to work efficiently towards the development of their countries and collectively for this whole world. All the possible measures should be taken under the COMCEC in order to curb and eradicate the problems regarding economics, commerce and finance from the Muslim World.
References:


Further Readings:


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Towards OIC Common Market and Promotion of Economic Integration

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Committee for Economic and Commercial Cooperation

The Organization of Islamic Cooperation was founded as an intergovernmental organization to deal with the inevitable issues facing the Islamic Community in the late 1960s. Soon after its foundation, the importance of economic cooperation to foster a common Islamic stance was recognized by the member countries; hence issues related to economic cooperation were incorporated into the OIC meetings. To oversee and coordinate all OIC-wise economic activities, a standing committee called Committee for economic and commercial cooperation, COMCEC, was established in 1981 by the Third Islamic Summit Conference held in Jeddah. It became operational in 1984 at the Fourth Islamic Summit Conference held in Casablanca, Kingdom of Morocco. H.E. Recep Tayyip ERDOĞAN is the President of the Republic of Turkey and the Chairman of the COMCEC. The committee is mandated to follow up the implementation of resolution in the economic and trade fields. It is also responsible for exploring possible means of strengthening cooperation among the member states and prepares programs and proposals capable of improving capacities in these areas.

COMCEC has turned into an instrument of economic and commercial cooperation and activities among OIC states. COMCEC has also worked on different lawful understandings and set up statutes like ‘Framework Agreement on Trade Preferential System’ aiming to identify the legitimate conditions to facilitate the economic agents in order to increase the flow between intra-OIC trade and transactions. It has also set up the ‘Statute of Standards and Metrology Institute for the Islamic Countries’ in order to bring solutions to the problem of lack of common standards among the Member States. (COMCEC, n.d.)

COMCEC Strategy:

COMCEC's vision is to build a prosperous Islamic Ummah based on solidarity and interdependence, enhanced mobility and good governance. COMCEC's mission is to provide a platform to produce and spread knowledge, share experiences and best-practices, develop a common language/understanding, and approximate policies in cooperation areas to address and find solutions to the economic and social challenges faced by the Islamic Ummah. (The COMCEC Strategy, 2012, p. 7)

In order to materialize the objectives of the Strategy, COMCEC will produce analytical studies and reports, conduct research, organize capacity-building programs, seminars, training courses and study visits. The Strategy has six areas of cooperation: Trade, Transport and Communications, Tourism, Agriculture, Poverty reduction, and Finance. In the Strategy, each cooperation area has a strategic objective, followed by a brief outlook of the sector at the OIC-level, sub-cooperation areas, and expected outcomes in that particular sub-area.

Enhancing mobility, strengthening solidarity, and improving governance are the core principles upon which the strategy of COMCEC is built. These principles also address some of the most fundamental and persistent problems of the Islamic world and guide the COMCEC activities in the cooperation areas. (The COMCEC Strategy, 2012, p. 8)
Towards OIC Common Market and Promotion of Economic Integration: The Right Path for Unity and a More Powerful Muslim world:

Before OIC, the concept of economic integration, cooperation and unity was put forward by European Coal and Steel Community in 1952. This broadened the horizons of economic integration and cooperation among member states and gave an idea to build a common market for barrier-free trade followed by some treaty rules (Encyclopedia Britannica, 1998).

The idea of Economic integration and Common Market of OIC countries was first raised at the second Islamic Summit Conference in Lahore in 1974 which opened the ways for the establishment of Standing Committee on Economic and Commercial Cooperation.

Due to numerous barriers, mobility among Islamic countries has generally been below the desired level. Accordingly, existing complementarities and economic cooperation potential in the Islamic world remain largely unexploited, adversely affecting the economic performance of many member countries (The COMCEC Strategy, 2012, p. 8). Despite the fact that most OIC states are oil rich or natural gas-rich, few of the states are near to coastline and middle-income state but their total collective GDP was 6.1% (less than $4.7t) of the world’s total output and 9.2% of its total merchandise export (2013). The inefficiency of OIC members in dealing with the 2008 financial crisis was fairly exhibited as their lack of economic cooperation. Lack of solidarity among the member countries manifests itself in different ways. While some member countries have significant reserve surplus, some others are categorized as heavily indebted poor countries burdened with huge debts to advanced financial markets under unfavorable conditions. Similarly, whereas some of our members are relatively developed in terms of Science and technology, some others are in the early stages of technological development. Another striking fact is that we have countries that have vast natural resources, while other member countries are severely lacking them. Examples of this kind are numerous, yet the bottom line is that there is much room for enhancing solidarity among our countries, and decreasing our dependence on advanced economies.

Some 31 of the 57 member states of the Organization of Islamic Conference are classified among the least developed nations, including the countries that occupy the bottom five places on that list. Unemployment rates are double the global average, nearly one-third of the population is illiterate and women face many disadvantages. This level of backwardness and economic deprivation helps fuel a host of social ills and makes it easier for people to recruit terrorists. (Badawi, Abdullah Bin Haji Ahmed, 2007)

There are certain differences among states with the aspects of economic structure, political structure, sectarian and cultural diversity. This heterogeneity comes in the way of ICM and Economic Integration. In face of these diversities OIC is unable to utilize the fruitful outcome of Economic Integration. Multilateral trade and open market among states can open the ventures for people of member states. The cost OIC is paying as being an organization of either of war-torn countries or economically backward is despondent. OIC is losing the opportunities through which they can explore the proper functioning of ICM. OIC with the
collaboration of CECC must work on the formulation of such a policy that may promote intra OIC trade.

With a view to address structural problems, COMCEC is devoted to ensure the easier movement of goods, which is essential for expansion of trade and economic growth and welfare in the COMCEC Region. Hence, COMCEC will put efforts to liberalize trade through multilateral trade agreements aiming to reduce tariffs, and non-tariff barriers. It will also focus on trade facilitation for increasing the mobility of goods. Through strengthening solidarity among the member countries, the committee will exert efforts to develop common understanding and align policies in the areas of trade liberalization, facilitation, finance and promotion. By strengthening trade ties among its members, the committee aims to diversify the existing trade relations of the member countries, which have mainly been established with the developed economies. In addition, COMCEC will try to improve trade related institutional and human capacity of the member states by facilitating exchange of experiences and basic knowledge among them.

Creating a common market and promotion of economic integration is the most important step as well as the right path for the betterment of economic condition of Muslim countries. By taking all kinds of possible measures as well as disseminate knowledge among OIC countries about the problems of Islamic Ummah, Muslim countries can embark on the world market with unanimity in their economic performances.

References


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**Further Readings:**


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