

Outcome of the round table on:

Promoting Key Factors in Higher Education: Governance, Innovation and Employability

As part of the Seventh Islamic Conference of Ministers of Higher Education and Scientific Research held at the headquarters of the Islamic Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (ISESCO), in Rabat, Kingdom of Morocco, on 25-26 Safar 1436 A.H /18-19 December 2014, under the high patronage of His Majesty King Mohammed VI of Morocco; and in a bid to enhance the outcomes of the Conference and further elaborate on its topics, a round table on the theme of “**Promoting Key Factors in Higher Education: Governance, Innovation and Employability**” was held at ISESCO headquarters. The round table examined and discussed in detail the current status and future prospects of the key factors of higher education in the Muslim world. Speakers included Dato’ Prof Dr Asma Ismail, Director General of Higher Education, Ministry of Education, Malaysia; Dr Mamadou Ndoeye, Education International Expert, Republic of Senegal; and Dr Abdelhafid Debbarh, Secretary General of the Ministry of Higher Education, Scientific Research and Staff Training of the Kingdom of Morocco.

Discussions during this round table stressed the urgent need to give high priority to the issues pertaining to strengthening higher education systems and improving the performance of universities, the ultimate goal being to achieve excellence in higher education and make it a useful asset to the success of national development plans. Other objectives include to better address the current needs of knowledge-based economies and to strengthen science, technology and innovation capacities towards achieving sustainable economic growth.

Discussions also emphasized the need to introduce more reforms to improve governance systems in the higher education sector, upgrade professional capacities of staff in charge of university management, develop partnerships and revamp the procedures and mechanisms to best suit international standards. In addition, they underlined the necessity to facilitate transition to high-technology and push further the frontiers of research through effective linkages between research and industry, while enabling Member States to increase their competitive edge in the global market.

At the close of their discussions, participants recommended creating an innovation-friendly environment in universities and research institutions in such a way as to translate research results into innovations that can benefit society. They also

recommended setting up technology licensing offices and their own companies to foster collaboration with industries, along with strengthening coordination and synergies among university institutions, enterprises and employment offices to achieve these goals.

Emphasis was further placed on the crucial importance to align curricula with the requirements of the labour market while infusing them with relevant new knowledge and the necessary skills such as time management, confidence building, leadership, innovation, entrepreneurship and creation and management of small enterprises in order to build successful professional careers, boost job opportunities and reduce unemployment among higher education graduates in the Muslim world.