



**Standing Committee
for Economic and Commercial Cooperation
of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (COMCEC)**

**Travel Facilitation for Enhancing Mobility
In the OIC Member Countries**



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TRAVEL FACILITATION FOR ENHANCING MOBILITY IN THE OIC MEMBER COUNTRIES

The analytical study titled “Travel Facilitation for Enhancing Mobility in the OIC Member Countries” has been prepared specifically for the 5th Meeting of the COMCEC Tourism Working Group with a view to enriching the discussions.

The study is divided into four main sections. Section one addresses the trends and challenges in facilitating travel. Section two reviews the current state of travel facilitation among the OIC Member Countries, presents opportunities for improvement, and explores the potential impacts of travel facilitation. Section three presents eight case studies from the OIC Member Countries. Finally, Section four provides a number of recommendations for facilitating travel to destinations within the OIC Member Countries.

Key Findings of the Study:

The Study highlights three primary methods of facilitating travel to a destination. These are:

- Visa policy facilitation
 - Aviation development
 - Destination marketing
- Visa policy liberalisation has been proven as one of the most powerful levers in travel facilitation. However, in 2014, destinations around the world request, on average, that travellers from 54% of countries obtain a visa before entering their borders. Citizens of another 3% of countries are allowed to apply for an electronic visa (eVisa), while 16% can apply for a visa on arrival. And those from 27% of countries do not require a visa when travelling for tourism purposes.
- Destination marketing is a powerful agent of travel facilitation, driving travel demand by raising interest in global traveller markets. Destination marketing serves a fragmented tourism industry with larger scale marketing campaigns that present the brand and experience of a place to potential travellers.
- Air travel development is an increasingly vital aspect of international travel facilitation. Expanding the capacity for air travel by improving aviation infrastructure and creating new air routes between destinations plays a key role in the development of the global tourism market and is an important part of a holistic travel facilitation strategy.
- Regarding visa policy liberalization, the OIC Member Countries tend to be more restrictive than the rest of the world, despite the increasing openness of Member Countries in recent years. In 2014, OIC Member Countries require, on average, 64% of the world’s population to obtain a visa before initiating an international journey. Another 3% is allowed to apply for an eVisa while 26% is able to apply for a visa on arrival. Only 7% of the world’s population is not required to obtain a visa at all when travelling for tourism purposes.
- Visa exemptions are used by most of the OIC Member Countries but tend to affect the population of few countries.
- Compared to other regional and economic blocs around the world, OIC members have relatively few (10%) reciprocally open visa policies. Instead, they often opt to unilaterally implement facilitation measures or maintain traditional visa requirements.
- Between 1995 and 2013, the total impact (including indirect and induced effects) of growth in the Travel and Tourism (T&T) sectors of all OIC Member Countries was around 14 million jobs. That is, growth in T&T sectors lead to a cumulative 64% increase in total employment across OIC Member Countries. By 2023, the total impact of forecast growth in T&T among OIC Member Countries is expected to generate 10 million new jobs for a cumulative gain of 41%.
- The total cumulative impact (including indirect and induced effects) of T&T growth on GDP among OIC Member Countries was 334% between 1995 and 2013. Over the next ten year, gains in output across OIC members from T&T expansion would accelerate. By 2023, T&T growth among OIC members are expected to experience cumulative growth of 109% in the total impact of tourism on GDP.
- Visas serve several functions. The survey made for the OIC Member Countries stated that maintaining security and controlling a nation’s labour force are among the most important motivations for imposing a visa requirement on inbound travellers.
- Significant increases in tourist arrivals tend to follow the implementation of facilitative visa policies and processes. Case studies demonstrate that several OIC Member Countries have successfully facilitated visas through both unilateral and bilateral policy reforms in recent years.
- There is still room for improvement. The proportion of international tourists requiring a traditional visa prior to visiting an OIC destination is expected to rise slightly to 56%, on average, between 2015 and 2020 under current visa policies.
- By adopting facilitative visa policies, enhancing cooperation regarding intra-OIC travel, and effectively communicating this new openness to travellers, growth in arrivals from global markets currently requiring a traditional visa could rise significantly above current forecast over the next five years across Member Countries.

- Further, a concerted investment in destination marketing and expansion of key aviation networks are essential to the OIC travel facilitation strategy to realize the global market opportunity of greater tourism demand.
- OIC Member Countries, as a whole, would potentially gain 38 million international tourist arrivals by 2020 from improved travel facilitation, representing a 14.6% premium above baseline expectation from 2015.
- The increase in international tourist arrivals to the OIC would generate up to \$37 billion in additional international tourism receipts by 2020, for a gain of 14% above baseline expectation from 2015.
- In the OIC Member Countries, jobs directly created in the T&T sector from greater tourism receipts would approach 1.3 million by 2020, rising 5.9% over baseline expectation from 2015. Greater tourism demand would lead to an increase in total T&T employment of up to 2.1 million jobs, for a 4.2% premium over projections for current visa policies.

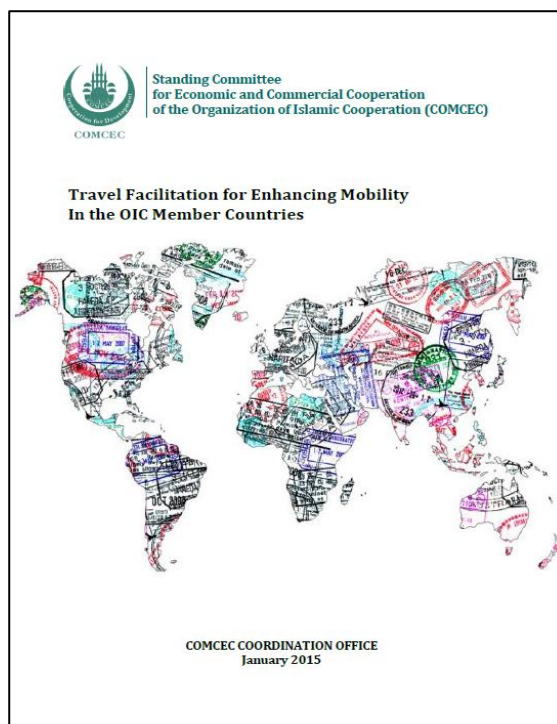
Conclusion & Recommendations

The following is a list of some important recommendations highlighted in the Study for the Member Countries to better facilitate travel:

- **Improve the communication of visa requirements to travellers** – Information on visa applications and travel procedures should be available online, provided in multiple languages, and updated daily. Live support should be available to travellers applying for entry visas through electronic communication or by phone.
- **Increase the efficiency of visa application processes** – The visa application process should be streamlined and simplified as much as possible. Travellers may be permitted to apply for visas online. Visa processing capacity may be increased online and at ports of entry. Visa application fees, identification requirements, and waiting periods for visa approval may be reduced.
- **Facilitate travel for tourists who currently require traditional visas** – Where some form of visa is required, officials may prioritize the implementation of visa on arrival and electronic visas (eVisa). Visa validity periods may be extended, limiting the need for reapplication. Visa-free travel should be granted during holidays, peak travel seasons, and special events.
- **Engage in destination marketing** – Destination marketing has been a proven method of developing and expanding a country's tourism product. Transportation infrastructure should be developed improved, connecting destinations to new markets. A destination profile which communicates the tourism offerings of each Member Country and increases awareness among prospective tourists

should be raised and effectively marketed to foster tourism demand.

- **Create new air routes and increase airline capacity** – Developing a country's aviation sector is critical to its growth as a tourism destination. Partnerships between tourism stakeholders and major airlines need to be developed in order to increase flight frequency, connections, and access to visitor markets while contributing to the destination's tourism profile. In order to accommodate greater visitor demand, airport capacity should be increased wherever possible, whether through the expansion of existing facilities or construction of new ones.



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