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For Immediate Release

Post Events Report – The Istanbul Conference and Masterclasses 18-19 November 2019 09:30-16:00, Hilton Istanbul Kozyatağı Hotel and Conference Centre

Gateway Global LLP, a leading multidisciplinary consultancy dedicated to the Islamic economy and its local partner Istanbul Islamic Finance Consultancy Ltd hosted their second annual gathering at the Hilton Istanbul Kozyatağı Hotel and Conference Centre on 18 November 2019. The Istanbul Conference and Masterclasses were led by experts and thought leaders from business, banking and finance, public and third sector organisations, and academia from across the world.

Building on last year's success, The Istanbul Conference engaged nearly 200 participants and 30 experts. Ashley Freeman, CEO of Gateway Global described The Conference as "a momentous day for the global Islamic economy," whilst Mustafa Enes Savaş, CEO of local partners Istanbul Islamic Finance Consultancy claimed the event was now the *premier* Islamic social economy conference in Turkey!

The Istanbul Conference engaged wide range of subjects, with the dialogue focusing on halal trade, social and impact investment, the role of participatory financiers, infrastructure, and the disruption caused by technology. The Conference heard valuable contributions from the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, Precept Finance, DDCAP, Türkiye Finans, Aktif Bank, Katılım Emeklilik, Central Bank of Oman, Capital Markets Authority of Kenya, BTCTurk, Architech, Roberts Moghul & Partners, Izwan & Partners, and Sabahattin Zaim and Ibn Haldun Universities respectively.

Dr Jemilah Mahmood, Under Secretary for Partnerships at IFRC tweeted "Loved being there [because of the gender balance]" and thanked the Gateway Global-IIFC team for the opportunity to share humanitarian and development challenges saying "What a humbling experience to be in the company of experts in finance," calling for greater collaboration to overcome the grandest challenges. Reflecting on challenges, Sultan Choudhury, Chairman of Precept Finance said "There are huge roles for fintech and waqf institutions to play in advancing Islamic finance and social inclusion. Part of the challenge is making the enterprise profitable and this is where technology can change the game." David Testa, Executive Director of DDCAP responded "Natural limitations in aligning Islamic finance to sustainability exist when Gulf countries, who provide majority of investment, are oil and gas based, and are still developing their wider financial infrastructure."

In his concluding remarks, Ashley Freeman said "What distinguishes this conference from others is the open expression and integration of faith, ethics, and the common good in discourse relating to business, finance, and investment. This was an inclusive conversation: 50% of our speakers were female and the last component of the conversation was an open space, a *shura*, perhaps the first ever, for stakeholders to offer their feedback and dialogue with expert practitioners."

The Istanbul Conference's successes also included:

- Launch of *Friends of Gateway* programme, which received an overwhelming response from participants who keenly completed their registration forms. More information on the programme can be requested by sending an email to info@gatewayllp.com.
- Startup Pitch by iE5 – a 'Dragon's Den' style competition of which *Urban Agricult* was announced to be the winning entry by fintech experts from the leading Islamic economy accelerator, iE5.

- The Launch of 5&Co - a financial literacy programme grounded in the Islamic ethos, launched by Gateway's Head of Philanthropy, Muna Al Mannai, Gateway's lead in education and development Saeeda Ahmed, and Aminath Sarahath.
- The launch of iKSAR, a *Qard-hasan* based Islamic microfinance programme lead by Mücahit Özdemir and Hakan Aslan from the Research Centre for Islamic Economics and Finance at Sakarya University, Turkey.

The Istanbul Masterclasses led by industry and sector experts was convened on 19 November 2019. The Masterclasses built on discourse from The Conference, adding substance and context, and explored practical solutions and theological positions. The Masterclasses were a resounding success, with over 170 places sold; with some Masterclasses being oversubscribed. Attendees who completed 7 or more Masterclasses were presented with a Gateway Global & IIFC *Islamic Finance and Economy Foundation Course Certificate*.

Shaista Mukadam from Birmingham City University commented, "The Masterclasses offer an opportunity to coach our stakeholders about the Islamic economy and its prospects and challenges, and are another opportunity for our experts to understand Islamic economic communities and markets through the lens of diverse stakeholders." Dr. Asif Zaman from Cardiff Metropolitan University enthusiastically said, "The Masterclasses presented an excellent insight into the regional nuances and practical challenges that exist in realising the global vision of the Islamic economy, diving deep into the heart of the key issues and provided practical solutions."

Gateway Global ended the events by calling its Annual General Meeting to discuss observations from The Istanbul Conference and Masterclasses, as well as feedback from the *shura*. On the basis of what was witnessed in Istanbul between 18-19 November 2019, Mustafa Enes Savaş's remarks were proven to be true!

Gateway Global and IIFC greatly appreciate the support of their partners, without whom the Conference and Masterclasses would not have been possible:

- DDCAP
- Al Hamad Legal Group
- Al Baraka Turk
- Roberts Moghul & Partners
- Cordoba Capital
- iE5
- AAOIFI
- Eiger Trading Advisors
- Islamicmarkets.com
- Bahrain EDB
- Savaş & Savaş

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Note for Editors:

Gateway Global is a global professional services firm underpinned by ethical-Islamic values, with more than 55 consultants in 22 countries. For more information, please visit: www.gatewayllp.com.

IIFC is a comprehensive professional services firm headquartered in Istanbul and provides a range of services across 4 key business disciplines, For more information, please visit www.iifconsultancy.com.