

OIC

June - August 2011

Issue No. 18

JOURNAL

Issued by the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC)

New name and emblem for OIC in Astana ORGANIZATION OF ISLAMIC COOPERATION



**OIC Humanitarian Campaign
for Somalia**

Libya after Qaddafi

Somalia

- The worst drought in 60 years
- 3.7 million at risk of starvation, most of them are women and children
- Famine declared in several regions, tens of thousands have died
- 3 million are displaced in camps
- Urgently needed interventions are: food aid, water, nutrition and medicine

Contributions to the OIC Humanitarian Campaign for Somalia may be made at the following accounts:

Account Name: OIC General Secretariat
Bank: SAMBA Financial Group, Al-Andalus Street, Jeddah
Account Number: 5600758
IBAN: SA 29 4000 0000 0000 0560 0758
SWIFT: SAMBSARI

Account Name: OIC-Humanitarian Coordination Office
Somalia Bank DAHABSHIL BANK INTERNATIONAL
Place Du 27 J Uin, Djibouti
Account Number 101593 SWIFT Code DBISDJJ2
Corresponding Bank Noor Islamic Bank, Dubai-UAE SWIFT Code NISLAEAD

Turkish Lira account
Bank: Ziraat Bankası, Beşiktaş Şubesi, Istanbul
Bank Branch: code (529)
IBAN: TR 620001000 5295 745 740 15001
Account No: 57457401 5001
Opened in the name of: Islam Tarih Sanat ve Kultur Arastirma Merkezi (IRCICA)

Turkish US\$ account
Bank: Ziraat Bankası, Beşiktaş Şubesi, Istanbul
Bank Branch: code (529)
IBAN: TR 350001000 5295 745 740 15002
Account No: 57457401 5002
Opened in the name of: Islam Tarih Sanat ve Kultur Arastirma Merkezi (IRCICA)

Turkish EURO account
Bank: Ziraat Bankası, Beşiktaş Şubesi, Istanbul
Bank Branch: code (529)
IBAN: TR 08000 1000 5295 745740 15003
Account No: 57457401 5003
Opened in the name of: Islam Tarih Sanat ve Kultur Arastirma Merkezi (IRCICA)

To join the OIC Alliance to relieve Somalia:
OIC Humanitarian Affairs Department (ICHAD)
Focal Point: Mr. Saidi Kasajja, Email: kasaja@oic-oci.org
Telephone: 9665222-651-2-, Ext-1402. Fax: 9662288-651-2-.
OIC Humanitarian Coordination Office, Somalia
Focal Point: Mr. Ahmed Adam, E-Mail: info@oic-somalia.org.
Telephone: 2522800-093-. Fax: 2520400-093-.



Ekmeleddin Ihsanoglu
OIC Secretary General



Somalia...Sounding the alarm

Millions are starving in the Horn of Africa, particularly Somalia. Thousands are dying of famine, disease and war. Everyday parents hopelessly bury their young children whom they lost during their arduous journey in search of refuge for food and water.

This should not be happening in the 21st century, but shamefully it is. And it is happening in the backyard of the Muslim world.

The numbers of the dying and sick might not register in our minds. But the images we see on our television screens of the living skeletons of children, barely able to breath while their disheartened mothers desperately trying to comfort them, might jolt our conscience to act.

It is time to express our Islamic brotherhood with actions, feeling each other's pain and reaching out to help. This is what Islam demands of us. It is what our humanity expects from us.

The problem in Somalia is not simply about not enough rainfall for the crops and livestock to keep the people alive. Droughts occur and they can be anticipated. Warning alarms about this disaster were sounded early on, but they were not heeded. We need to be diligent on implementing measures for preventing shortage in food and water supply and reacting before the catastrophe takes place.

The drought could be justifiably blamed on climate change, an issue we remain unable to grasp the implications of on our future.

However, more importantly there is the problem of underdevelopment and poverty. Societies lacking adequate infrastructure, health care and economic opportunities are prone to suffer more from any disruption.

In Somalia, added to all these agonies, there is the senseless persistent civil war that defies political, economic, religious and humanitarian logic for its continuity. Bringing in and delivering humanitarian aid to the hundreds of thousands of refugees and displaced people in the camps is made more difficult by the criminal acts of the outlaws. Fighting factions should lay down their arms and sort out their differences for the sake of their children and the future of their country. Without security and safety Somalia will not prosper.

Somalis deserve a better life.

I urgently appeal to the Member States, financial institutions, humanitarian organizations, philanthropists and the international community to donate generously to meet the great humanitarian challenge facing the Somali people and call on the Somali factions to work for a better future.

Free speech vs. Incitement

There is a thin line between free speech and incitement to hate. For some, that line is a clear red line, for others it is blurry and circumstantial.

In the West, the law protects freedom of expression no matter how offensive, obscene or prejudiced it might be, unless it represents "incitement to eminent violence".

At the same time, the law also protects freedom of religion. But what happens when freedom of expression infringes upon freedom of religion through intimidation, threat and verbal abuse falling just short of clear incitement to violence?

Is there no protection for those suffering from such humiliation and threat? And how could eminent violence be anticipated and prevented? Should societies wait for a horrific attack to occur, such as the one in Norway, before realizing that there was eminent violence?

Sometimes incitement to violence is not so explicitly stated, but usually there are indications, and someone might just decide to take the next step from speech to action, and then it is too late.

This is what Muslims are sounding the alarms for. It is not to curtail freedom of expression, but to protect it from being used irresponsibly, especially by Western right wing extremists to further political objectives.

The same goes for those extremist Muslims who incite hate and violence against non-Muslims.

The OIC through sponsoring and promoting UN Human Rights Council Resolution 16/ 18 on religious intolerance is calling for open dialogue and initiatives for cultural understanding and sensitivities based on mutual respect while still protecting freedom of expression.

Maha M. Akeel

In Focus

A Roadmap for Implementing
UNHRC Resolution on
Combating Religious Intolerance

4

World Affairs

Time for Palestinian Statehood

30

The State of Southern Sudan
is born

38

Education

The First International Model of
the OIC is held in Istanbul

48

Culture

Conakry: Capital of Islamic
Culture in the African Region
for 2011

52

Science & Technology

OIC, US commit to promote
women's and girl's engagement
in science

54

Media

Islamic Broadcasting Union (IBU)
New Statutes and Organizational
Structure adopted

58

Economy

IDB urges more cooperation
among member countries

62

OIC Related Links

Subsidiary Organs

The International Islamic Fiqh Academy (IIFA) www.fiqhacademy.org
The Statistical, Economic and Social Research and Training Center for Islamic
Countries (SESERIC) www.seseric.org
The Research Center for Islamic History, Art and Culture (IRCICA) www.ircica.org
The Islamic Center for the Development of Trade (CIDC) www.icdt-oic.org
The Islamic University of Technology (UIT) www.iutoic-dhaka.edu

Specialized Institutions and Organs

The Islamic Development Bank (IDB) www.isdb.org
International Islamic News Agency (IINA)
www.islamicnews.org.sa
The Islamic States Broadcasting Organization (ISBO) www.isboo.org
The Islamic Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization in Rabat
(ISESCO)
www.isesco.org.ma

Affiliated Institutions

Islamic Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ICCI) www.icci-oic.org
Organization of Islamic Capitals and Cities (OICC) www.oicc.org
Organization of the Islamic Shipowners Association (OISA) www.oisaonline.com
World Federation of Arab Islamic International Schools (WFAIS) www.wfais.org
Islamic Conference Youth Forum for Dialogue and Cooperation (ICYF-DC)
www.icyf.com
Islamic World Academy of Sciences (IAS)
www.ias-worldwide.org

38th Session of the
Council of Foreign
Ministers in Astana



11

The end of
Qaddafi's regime



40

OIC Member States
pledge \$350 million
for Somalia



42

OIC Calendar: October – December 2011

2- 5 October: Meetings of the 7th General Assembly, Executive Board, Management Council of Islamic Solidarity Sports Federation (ISSF) – Jeddah, Saudi Arabia.

3- 6 October: 6th Ministerial Conference on Food Security and Agricultural Development – Istanbul, Turkey.

11- 12 October: Forum on Development of Agro-food Industries in OIC Countries – Kampala, Uganda.

16- 17 October: Orientation Meeting for Independent Permanent Human Rights Commission Experts – OIC Headquarters, Jeddah, Saudi Arabia.

17- 18 October: 2nd Meeting of the AoC Focal Points of the OIC Member States – ISESCO Headquarters, Rabat, Morocco.

17- 20 October: 27th Session of COMCEC – Istanbul, Turkey.

26 -27 October: 28th Session of the Board of Directors of the ICDT – Casablanca, Morocco.

23 -26 November: COMSTEC Executive Committee Meeting – Baku, Azerbaijan.

28-29 November: 7th Islamic Conference of Culture Ministers – Tlemessan, Algeria.

29 November: 13th Board of Directors Meeting of ICCI – Khartoum, Sudan.

11 December: 2nd Workshop on Private Sector Cooperation for Development of Tourism – Izmir, Turkey.

19 -20 December: 2nd Conference on Health Tourism in Islamic Countries – Mashhad, Iran.

A Roadmap for Implementing UNHRC Resolution on Combating Religious Intolerance



(L-R) US Sec. of States Clinton, OIC SG Ihsanoglu, Turkey's Foreign Minister Davutoglu at the Ministerial Meeting in Istanbul on July 15, 2011.

By Maha Akeel

Istanbul, Turkey - The Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) hosted a Ministerial Meeting at the OIC/IRCICA premises located at the historic Yildiz Palace in Istanbul on July 15, 2011, on the implementation of UN Human Rights Council Resolution 16 /18 on “Combating intolerance, negative stereotyping and stigmatization of, and discrimination, incitement to violence, and violence against persons based on religion or belief”. The meeting reaffirmed the commitment of the participants to the effective implementation of the measures set forth in UN Resolution 16 /18.

The meeting was co-chaired by the OIC Secretary General Ekmeleddin Ihsanoglu and US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton. Foreign Ministers and high-ranking officials of 28 countries - from OIC Member States and western countries -including international organizations as well as the EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs Catherine Ashton were invited to participate.

In his statement at the Meeting, OIC Secretary General Ihsanoglu underscored the importance of the Meeting as being both symbolic and substantive. He said that in addition to reflecting the requisite political will towards implementation of the Resolution, it should also put in place a process of sustained and structured engagement. The Secretary General proposed a three-pronged strategy to that end: (1) the launch of a structured process of conducting a series of events at multiple venues to build on the consensus reflected in Resolution 16 /18; (2) the process of technical engagement would yield alternatives and policy options to be subjected to the inter-governmental process – preferably at the UN Human Rights Council – to further the consensus with emphasis on implementation in a result-oriented fashion; and (3) the implementation will then be underwritten and monitored by the Human Rights Council through the available reporting mechanisms.

In her statement, Clinton said that the gathering and the shared commitment it represents, is vitally important. “It is one of these events that has great ramifications far beyond this room.” She applauded the OIC for helping pass Resolution 16 /18 at the Human Rights Council. “Together we have begun to overcome the false divide that pits religious sensitivities against freedom of expression, and we are pursuing a new approach based on concrete steps to fight intolerance wherever it occurs. Under this resolution, the international community is taking a strong stand for freedom of expression and worship, and against discrimination and violence based upon religion or belief,” said Clinton. Now is the need for implementation, she said, and that the United States intends to invite relevant experts from around the world to the first of what she hoped will be a series of meetings to discuss best practices, exchange ideas, and keep moving forward beyond the polarizing debates of the past; to build those muscles of respect and empathy and tolerance that the Secretary General referenced.

OIC, US issue joint statement on the meeting

A joint statement was issued by the Co-Chairs at the end of the meeting in which they called upon all relevant stakeholders throughout the world to take seriously the call for action set forth in resolution 16 /18, which contributes to strengthening the foundations of tolerance and respect for religious diversity as well as enhancing the promotion and protections of human rights and fundamental freedoms around the world.

The participants, resolved to go beyond mere rhetoric. They urged States to take effective measures, as set forth in Resolution 16 /18, consistent with their obligations under international human rights law, to address and combat intolerance, discrimination, and violence based on religion or belief.

The Co-Chairs of the meeting committed to working together with other interested countries and actors on

follow up and implementation of Resolution 16 /18 and to conduct further events and activities to discuss and assess implementation of the Resolution. Participants were encouraged to consider providing updates, as part of ongoing reporting to the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, on steps taken at the international level on the implementation of Resolution 16/ 18, building also on related measures in the other resolutions adopted by consensus on freedom of religion or belief and on the elimination of religious intolerance and discrimination.

Concrete follow-up

Speaking with the *OIC Journal*, Ambassador Eileen Chamberlain Donahoe, US Representative to the Human Rights Council, said that this meeting is an important signal that the international community can find common grounds towards addressing an issue that was seemingly intractable for over a decade and find a way to support freedom of religion and freedom of expression, at the same time that we come together in fighting religious intolerance.

Ambassador Donahoe stressed that “it wasn’t just going to be a landmark resolution, but there is going to be concrete follow up and this meeting was symbolic and substantive manifestation of that.”

A positive aspect of Resolution 16 /18 is that it did not pit the principle of freedom of religion against freedom of expression, said Ambassador Donahoe, rather it combined them. “We believe that through free expression we are better able to combat intolerance.”

In response to *OIC Journal* query on defining what would constitute incitement to hate, she clarified that in the US there is a single case where freedom of expression can be restricted or prohibited by the State, and that is when “incitement to eminent violence”.

In this context, she pointed out that the President, the Secretary of State and several public officials went out on a limb to publically condemn ‘Burn the Quran Day’ to show that such abominable acts are not accepted. “When you have the President, the Secretary of State and public figures jointly condemning that, it will be more effective than throwing that pastor in jail. I believe the same is true for the hateful cartoons (of the Prophet). We should all be joining together in conveying our disgust with such intolerance.”

Ambassador Zamir Akram, Permanent Representative of Pakistan on behalf of the OIC at the HRC, told the *OIC Journal* that both sides – the OIC countries and the western countries – made important concessions to each other to reach a compromise on the resolution. What is important for the OIC point of view is that it would not compromise on three things: anything against the Quran, anything against the Prophet (PBUH), and anything against Muslim community in terms of discrimination.

On the issue of criticism directed towards Muslim countries where minorities are sometimes discriminated against, Ambassador Akram agreed that some of the criticism is justified. “We as countries that subscribe to Islamic values, we must act in accordance with our religious duties which is to protect all minorities.” However, he did not think that any country in the Muslim world is deliberately discriminating against minorities.

He added that many of the Muslim countries have strong laws against religious discrimination and the Quran itself contains strong directives. The key is in implementation.

“At the same time we are asking for protection of Muslims living in the West, we must also be prepared to give the same treatment of minorities living in Muslim countries,” said Ambassador Akram.

The next step is implementation of the Resolution

Ambassador Donahoe said that three things are currently agreed on. “The US is willing to host in the fall of this year the first roll-up your sleeves hands-on meeting to discuss actions that the states can and should be taking to combat intolerance in their society.” Other follow up meetings around the world will hopefully be held. In addition, the HRC High Commissioner’s office will be taking input reporting from around the world on steps taken by the states to combat religious intolerance that are consistent with free speech and freedom of religion. Finally, at the HRC there will be a full-day gathering to highlight the work that has been done by leaders around the world to combat intolerance and discrimination.

At the meeting, the representative of UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Ambassador Ibrahim Salamah said that the true challenge now is indeed to give practical effect to this resolution.

He cautioned, “Implementing this resolution to the fullest will not be easy as some of the actions required may face opposition from political fractions or indeed certain pockets in society, and some of the measures will also surely require financial and human resources in a time of constantly competing budget priorities in all countries. However, we need to always bear in mind that the cost of non-action will always be even higher.”

He said that the High Commissioner’s Office has been undertaking numerous activities furthering some of the issues captured in resolution 16 /18 including advice on draft legislations in the sphere of racism, racial discrimination, and freedom of expression as well as training activities tailored to law enforcement officials and members of the judiciary. One particular ongoing activity focuses on the demarcation between freedom of expression and hate speech, especially in relation to religious issues, which has unfortunately come increasingly under focus and created friction among diverse communities.

Ambassador Salamah pointed to the major step in the field of human rights taken by the OIC of establishing the Independent Permanent Commission on Human Rights (IPCHR), as a principal organ of the OIC.

“I should clearly stress here that Islamic values, as mentioned in the Commission’s Statute, are not and cannot be in contradiction with internationally recognized human rights norms and standards. Indeed, since time immemorial, religions have sought to express not only the human relationship with the divine, but also the values of tolerance, compassion and solidarity that should underpin human beings’ interaction with each other,” stressed Ambassador Salamah. The High Commissioner’s Office stands ready to extend its support to the OIC and to the Commission in this new endeavor, he said.

OIC Continues Its Remaking in Astana

Dr. Isam Salim Shanti
Chief Editor



Since 2005 the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), then was called the Organization of the Islamic Conference, has embarked on a process of comprehensive change in terms of role and action in all of its fields. The 3rd Extraordinary Summit in the Holy City of Makkah Al-Mukaramah, Saudi Arabia was the virtual start by introducing an important and comprehensive document titled the Ten-Year Programme of Action with the objective of facing the challenges to all Muslims in the 21st century. Later in 2008 in Dakar, Senegal the OIC held its 11th Session of the Islamic Summit Conference under the title of Session of the Muslim Ummah in the 21st century and adopted the new Charter of OIC. These two dramatic achievements became the compass for the new vision of the OIC and a catalyst for de-traditionalizing and de-classicalization of the work of the OIC with the support of its Member States.

In Astana, the capital of Kazakhstan, the Council of Foreign Ministers (CFM) held its 38th Session in 28 June 2011 and adopted several resolutions and positions, which translate the above documents into concrete measures and actions, just like all previous CFMs since 2005. However, the CFM meeting in Astana went further by adopting several resolutions that deserve our special attention. Some of which are associated with new developments in the Muslim World. Others are associated with the new general direction of the politics of OIC in accordance with its new platform.

First, the CFM in Astana, in the presence of H.E. Nursultan Nazarbayev, President of the Republic of Kazakhstan and the Secretary General of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation H.E. Professor Ekmeleddin Ihsanoglu, witnessed the consensus of Member States to change the logo of the Organization of the Islamic Conference and its name to becoming the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC). This resolution reflected a qualitative shift in the performance of OIC and the enormous enhancement of its effectiveness as an international organization as active in diverse areas of politics, economy, culture and society.

In his opening speech, President Nazarbayev commended the OIC's key role describing it as the "United Nations of the Muslims." The President made a number of recommendations reflecting his strong belief in OIC's performance and latent capacity. He called for new economic ideas that support medium and small scale enterprises and strengthen the Islamic financial system. He also proposed increased representation of the Muslim world in the G20 to enable it to defend its positions on important global issues.

Second, the CFM meeting adopted the OIC Action Plan for more Cooperation with Central Asia. During a high-level meeting in the first day of the session, the CFM adopted the Plan, which

aims to increase cooperation and coordination between countries of Central Asia and the rest of the OIC Member States, especially in the economic, scientific research, health, and cultural fields.

Third, the CFM adopted the Statute of the Independent Permanent Human Rights Commission and elected 18 members. This represented a key development that indicates the OIC is actually involved in the defence of human rights values, principles and practice in response to the requirements of the current phase and the aspirations of the Muslim peoples.

Fourth, the CFM meeting condemned terrorism in all its forms and manifestations and reaffirmed that terrorism should never be linked to any religion, race, faith, values, culture or society. However, the CFM noted that terrorism cannot be effectively addressed purely through the security perspective or military means. It stressed that combating terrorism must be dealt with through providing proper education and better social and economic conditions for impoverished people and job opportunities for youth and would yield far better results by the eradication of its root causes.

Fifth, the CFM meeting reaffirmed the importance of increased efforts to promote inter-religious, inter-ethnic and inter-cultural dialogue within and between states in order to protect the rights of every individual, prevent conflict, foster social harmony, preserve identity and celebrate diversity.

Sixth, the CFM meeting called for tolerance and condemned Islamophobia and discrimination against Muslims. It commended the continued initiatives by the OIC Secretary General to effectively counter Islamophobia in various international fora, called upon the international community to take effective measures to combat the defamation of religions and stereotyping of people on the basis of religion, faith or race.

Seventh, the CFM meeting sent a clear message to the international community calling for the recognition of the State of Palestine within the 1967 border, with Jerusalem as its capital. This particular CFM session was important because it was held at a historic juncture since it was the latest such event to take place before the coming session of the UN General Assembly in mid September 2011, which is expected to consider the issue of recognizing the State of Palestine.

Finally, the CFM acknowledged the key role that socio-economic development plays for the stability of OIC societies. Therefore, the CFM pledged to strengthen development, reduce vulnerability and to unleash the potential of Muslim peoples and economies. It confirmed the determination to enhance trade and aid among Muslim countries, and to promote education and innovation in order to modernize Muslim societies, cope with demographic changes and create new opportunities, especially for youth and women.

It is safe to say that the dire need for economic, social and developmental workshops in the Muslim world has been more reflective in the CFM meeting in Astana. The ever-changing Muslim world especially after the outbreak of several revolutions and uprisings in some OIC member states, indicate that the real challenges for all Muslim countries are mainly economic, educational, and developmental.

The OIC has been aware of these challenges particularly since 2005 and practically began to shift its work and reorient itself with the new but different environments within the Muslim World. The coming months and years are critical for both the OIC and its Member States as there will be urgency to transform the visions and resolutions into concrete actions in order to help the OIC's World complete its process of remaking into the 21st century.

Thousands missing out on education in Gaza



Palestinian school girls look at a collapsed building next to their school in Bet Lehiya, Northern Gaza Strip. (epa).

Gaza, Palestine – Thousands of Palestinian refugee children in the Gaza Strip are unable to receive adequate education, according to UNRWA.

About 39,000 child refugees in Gaza will not attend UNRWA schools this year, since the Agency is unable to build or rebuild schools due to the Israeli blockade, damage sustained during the 23-day Israeli offensive (27 December 2008 - 18 January 2009) and population growth, UNRWA spokesperson Chris Gunness said.

Israel imposed an economic embargo on the Gaza Strip after a Hamas takeover in June 2007 and in retaliation for the firing of rockets from Gaza into Israel. Israel considers Hamas a terrorist organization and says its import restrictions on items such as cement, steel and most building materials are to prevent Hamas developing weapons or fortifications.

Israel says there is no humanitarian crisis in Gaza and most of the basic needs of the local population are met as at least 140 truckloads of aid are allowed into the Strip every day. The UN has said this is far from sufficient.

The Israeli blockade affects every aspect of human existence and remains the biggest challenge to UNRWA operations in Gaza, John Ging, director of UNRWA operations in Gaza, said. The blockade has destroyed the economy, making 80 per cent of the population dependent on UN handouts, he said.

Infrastructure is also in a state of collapse: 80 million cubic liters of untreated sewage is pumped into the Mediterranean Sea each day, and 90 per cent of the water is undrinkable by World Health Organization (WHO) standards, according to Ging.

To make matters worse, UNRWA is 25 per cent underfunded, lacking US\$100 million out of its \$500 million budget, he added. The Agency is only able to provide 40 per cent of daily caloric needs to food aid dependent refugees, while the international standard in 76 per cent.

UNRWA schools run double shifts in Gaza due to overcrowding. “We are also unable to recruit new teachers due to our budget constraints,” said Chris Gunness.

The children are impoverished, often lacking shoes. The school lacks a library and place for outdoor activities.

About 60,000 structures were damaged or destroyed during the Israeli offensive, according to Gunness, who said an improved infrastructure and education system in Gaza would only come about when the blockade is lifted and the Karni crossing is opened.

Karni, the only major commercial crossing along the Gaza-Israel border, is controlled by Israel and mostly closed, according to the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs.

There are 750,000 children living in Gaza. “On this road and under these conditions - lack of access, physical deterioration and its psychological effect - the situation will get worse,” said Ging.

More than half of UNRWA’s budget goes on education, with over 20,000 teachers educating half a million Palestinian children in the Levant countries each day; 222,000 Gazan children are enrolled in UNRWA schools.

UNRWA is responsible for providing health care and other services to about one million refugees in Gaza, 800,000 of whom receive food assistance. Seventy percent of Gaza’s 1.5 million inhabitants are registered refugees.

Source: UNRWA website

Unemployment in Gaza reaches 45% because of blockade

Gaza, Palestine – The Gaza Strip entered its fifth year of a full Israeli blockade by land, air and sea in June with unemployment at 45.2 percent, one of the highest rates in the world, said an UNRWA report.

UNRWA found that by the second half of 2010, real wages had fallen 34.5 percent since the first half of 2006, when sanctions were imposed by Israel after Hamas won a Palestinian legislative election. The full-on blockade began a year later.

“These are disturbing trends,” said UNRWA spokesman Chris Gunness, “and the refugees, who make up two-thirds of Gaza’s 1.5 million population, were the worst hit.”

“It is hard to understand the logic of a man-made policy which deliberately impoverishes so many and condemns hundreds of thousands of potentially productive people to a life of destitution,” said Gunness.

He said that if the aim of the blockade was to weaken the Hamas administration, it has failed because public employment numbers show an increase. Where it has succeeded is in punishing some of the poorest of the poor in the Middle East region, he added.

Furthermore, the high unemployment rates put increasing pressure on UNRWA, which helps 1.1 million people in Gaza. The agency said the number of “abject poor” it was assisting, those earning less than \$1.6 a day, had tripled since the blockade was imposed to 300,000 people.

East Jerusalem in 2011: A tract of land with aspiration for Capital Status



A Palestinian shepherd near the Jewish settlement of Har Homa, in the southern area of Jerusalem with the Palestinian West Bank town of Beit Sahur (epa).

Jerusalem, (dpa) - The contrast seems glaring and exciting to the feelings between the suburbs of Har Homa and Umm Tuba. The Jewish Har Homa is neat and well-organized. Planners gave careful thought to parking spaces, garbage collection points, green playgrounds and comfortable sidewalks along the streets. Yet, once leaving this Jewish cluster at the southernmost part of East Jerusalem, the sidewalks and planning simply vanish. Upon setting foot in the nearest Arab residential neighborhood, a group of children could be seen playing to the right of the clogged, shoulderless road as it passes by sprawling buildings.

The contrast persists as one drives through East Jerusalem from the south to the north. Jewish neighborhoods like Gilo, Har Homa, East Talpiot and Pisgat Ze'ev sprout between Arab quarters, starting with Sur Bahir in the south, Jabel al-Mukabar and Ras al-Amud in the middle, up to Shu'afat in the north.

To the Israelis, the Jewish areas are residential neighborhoods that form an integral part of their unrecognized capital, no different from other residential clusters in West Jerusalem. To the international community, however, these are settlements, no different from similar ones in the West Bank, because they were built within the Israeli drawn-up city limits, but beyond the 'green line' that separates Israel from the occupied territories.

Some eleven such Jewish settlements are wedged in between seventeen Arab neighborhoods or urbanized villages throughout East Jerusalem. They house about 200,000 Jewish Israelis, forty per cent of Jerusalem's total Jewish population, who live in the midst of 288,000 Palestinian Jerusalemites.

To the east of the north-south road halving East Jerusalem, Israel's grey West Bank wall is quite visible. Passing through the Arab Jabal al-Mukabar's suburb, a brand new, privately commissioned Jewish apartment complex emerges.

The construction of this complex, called Nof Zion was complemented with sidewalks that stretch no further than the building's boundaries. It is considered as one of several

settlements built by ultra-right Jews in the heart of the Arab area, brandishing the slogan 'Welcome to East Jerusalem, the Year 2011.'

In September, the Palestinians hope to gain UN recognition of their independent State based on the 1967 borders with East Jerusalem as its capital.

But a look at East Jerusalem from the ground shows the depth of complexities that shroud this area which has turned into a defragmented and complex patch of land, growing into a zone holding lesser and lesser promise for the Palestinians with every passing year as the peace process drags on.

'What is happening now will not yield any positive results,' says Eldad Brin, 37, of Ir Amim [City of Peoples], an Israeli non-profit organization which campaigns

against government policy in Jerusalem. Ir Amim tries to raise awareness about East Jerusalem's dire reality and influence voters by organizing tours to Jewish Israelis who would otherwise never set foot in Arab suburbs.

Eldad Brin sighs as he points out the neglect plaguing Arab neighborhoods. He says that this is the consequence of having more than one-third of the population without a single representative at the local council to speak up on their behalf.

Back in 1967, Palestinians living in East Jerusalem rejected Israel's offer for full-fledged citizenship. Instead, they received blue identity cards defining their status not as citizens, but as 'permanent residents.' Thus, they pay city taxes, get unemployment benefits and child support, and have the right to vote in municipal elections, though they tend to boycott local polls because, from their point of view, voting would amount to recognizing Israel's annexation of East Jerusalem.

As a result of this situation, Palestinians have no city council representation and no say in planning and construction committees in which hard-line politicians have the upper hand. They only receive a tiny slice of the budget to spend for the benefit of East Jerusalem's Arab areas.

Tough bureaucratic hurdles spurred Palestinians to build houses without permits. As a result, up to half, or at least a quarter, of all homes in Arab East Jerusalem, marked as they are by chaos and lack of planning, are illegal.

Peace activist Eldad Brin states that Israeli authorities have currently razed only about 5 per cent of all illegal homes. They try to retroactively provide housing permits. However, with the right-wing government of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu more demolitions of Arab homes have been conducted.

Eldad Brin cautions that with every additional house built by Israel settlers, the chances for the Palestinians to have a viable capital wane further.

OIC condemns Israel's aggressions on Al-Aqsa, UNESCO responds

Jeddah, Saudi Arabia – The Secretary General of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) Ekmeleddin Ihsanoglu condemned Israel's aggression on the Islamic Umayyad Caliphate Palaces adjacent to the Southern walls of Al-Aqsa Mosque and the launching of Israel's so-called Talmudic Path, picturing these palaces as Temple Mikvahs" (Temple Ritual Baths).

The Secretary General considered the acts of the Israeli occupation authorities as an aggression on the Holy Al-Aqsa Mosque and that all excavations undertaken by Israel in the occupied city of Al-Quds constitute a blatant violation of International Law and Geneva conventions prohibiting the occupying state from tampering with historical sites in the areas it occupies. He added that this aggression requires immediate action by the UNESCO, other concerned UN organs and by world states to prevent Israel from continuing these violations which represent an aggression on the sacred sites of Muslims and on their civilization and history. The Secretary General sent a letter to UNESCO Director General calling on her to take the actions necessary for the

implementation of UNESCO resolutions in order to prevent Israel from carrying out its aggressions on the Occupied Al-Quds.

In response to the letter by the OIC Secretary General regarding the projects carried out by the Israeli authorities in the vicinity of the Haram Al-Sharif in the Old City of Jerusalem, the Assistant Director General for Culture at UNESCO Francesco Bandarin sent a letter to the OIC Secretary General in which he stated that UNESCO has taken due note of OIC concern and regularly recalls to Israel its obligations in conformity with the international conventions. It also reports on this issue to its governing bodies.

Bandarin said that the Old City of Jerusalem and its Walls are inscribed on the World Heritage List since 1981 and on the List of World Heritage in Danger since 1982. Hence, it is subject of a report that is examined by the World Heritage Committee on a yearly basis. The decision adopted by the Committee in this respect at its 35th session in June 2011 includes "retaining the Old City of Jerusalem in Danger."

OIC sends medical equipment to Gaza Strip

Gaza Strip, Palestine – The Organization of Islamic Cooperation has, through the Rafah Border Crossing, sent state-of-the-art medical devices and equipment worth up to half a million dollars to supplement the project of improving ophthalmology services provided to Palestinian patients. This batch of equipment and devices is to be distributed to private hospitals and medical centers in the Strip as part of the endeavors of the OIC's Department of Humanitarian Affairs (ICHAD) and the directives of the Secretary General,

Ekmeleddin Ihsanoglu, to develop and improve the Gaza health sector.

ICHAD had, in collaboration with humanitarian partners, conducted a field study on the needs of the Gazan private hospitals and centers before actually proceeding with procurement and transportation of equipment.

This year, the OIC has funded a project to establish and equip the Eye Bank in service of the Eye Specialist Hospital in Gaza, which was opened by an OIC delegation in 2009.

Israel seize Gaza-bound French ship 'Dignity' carrying humanitarian aid

Jeddah, Saudi Arabia – The Secretary General of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), Ekmeleddin Ihsanoglu, has strongly condemned Israel for taking over the French ship 'Dignity' carrying humanitarian aid and sympathizers with the blockaded Palestinian people in the Gaza Strip. He considered the seizure of the French ship a blatant breach of international laws and customs.

The Secretary General stressed the need to continue the international sympathy campaigns with the aim of breaking the Israeli blockade imposed on the Gaza Strip, calling upon the international community to shoulder its responsibility and end this illegal and unjust Israeli blockade imposed on the Palestinian people.

Israel constructs new settlement units in the West Bank and E. Jerusalem

Jeddah, Saudi Arabia – The Secretary General of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) Ekmeleddin Ihsanoglu condemned in the strongest terms the decision of the Israeli Government to build 336 housing units in Israeli settlements erected on the lands of the West Bank and the approval to build another 277 settlement units in the "Ariel Settlement" in the West Bank. Ihsanoglu stressed that Israel's continued passing of new settlement projects is a blatant violation of international law and of the Fourth Geneva Convention.

The Secretary General also issued a vigorous condemnation of the Israeli Government's decision to authorize the construction of 930 settlement units in occupied

East Jerusalem and the endorsement for the construction of thousands of more new settlement units in East Jerusalem, also in flagrant violation of international and humanitarian law and of the Fourth Geneva Convention.

The Secretary General condemned this settlement decision as illegitimate act aimed at creating a new reality on the ground through the alteration of the demographic composition in the occupied Palestinian territories and the isolation of the city of Al-Quds/Jerusalem from its Palestinian environment. The Secretary General called upon the UN Security Council to take action and compel Israel to halt all forms of settlement and aggression against the Palestinian people and their properties.

Rules of Mideast peace game have to change

Dr. Shafer Awawdeh
Dept. of Palestine & Al-Quds, OIC



The Middle East peace process has long been viewed as the only game in town. This notion has characterized the entire scene of the political process in the Middle East in the past two decades. The course of events during the past years has revealed serious problems with the credibility of the peace process as we see it today. It thus requires a modification of the game's rules. What has become known as "September entitlement", or the Palestinian bid for UN recognition and membership, is believed to be one of the clear manifestations of the Palestinian refusal to keep playing the game according to old and 'graying' rules.

Although the Palestinian leadership tried to make it clear that the Palestinians are committed to the two-state solution and consider peace negotiations a strategic option for resolving the conflict with Israel, the United States and a number of EU countries are trying to deter the Palestinians from going the UN path. The US expressed explicit threats to veto down the Palestinian request for UN membership should it be tabled for voting at the Security Council. Financial pressures were not spared either. Consequently, several envoys were dispatched to the region in a bid to dissuade the Palestinians from going to the UN. At the same time, efforts to convince Israel to accept the Palestinian demands were in vain. The Israeli government, on the contrary, showed less interest in getting the peace process back on the track, and preferred to remain faithful to the agenda of its right-wing coalition.

Opponents of the Palestinian move argue that going to the UN is a unilateral action that would be unhelpful to the agonizing peace process. While it is patently obvious that the Palestinians' right to have a state that enjoys UN membership is unarguable, it is important to note that the Palestinian move cannot be unilateral as it involves the world's most prominent multilateral institution, i.e. the UN. If anything unilateral hampers the pursuit of peace in the Middle East, it is none other than Israel and its intransigent policies.

We should not let it fall between the cracks that the same old rules of the peace process would lead only to more negotiations

and less desirable results. At the same time, we should not fail to notice that the current peace process, with its current rules, inherits its own built-in causes of compromised reliability and failure. The quandary that this process has reached recently is just a clear manifestation of its numerous built-in handicaps.

Most political pundits now realize that the nearly two-decades-long peace process would never yield reliable and tangible outcomes as long as it is conducted according to the same rules of the game. Israel has exploited to the maximum the loopholes of the peace process. First, the lack of clear terms of reference filled successive Israeli governments with a sense of fascination with the process rather than a peace agreement. Since the kick off of the peace process in Madrid in 1991, the Palestinians have held, at all levels, hundreds of negotiation rounds with Israel without reaching tangible results. Second, the absence of binding mechanisms and clear implementation timetables encouraged Israel to waltz on agreements and commitments. Agreements and understandings reached within the peace process have not been adhered to by Israel. Third, sponsors and mediators of the peace process, obviously, have failed to exert genuine pressure on Israel to live up to its commitments. They also failed to compel Israel to refrain from taking unilateral actions harmful to peace efforts, thus sending a wrong message to Israel that the international community not only tolerates its actions, but also gives consent to its evasiveness. A good case in point is the cold shoulder that Israel gave to international calls for freezing its settlement activities in the occupied Palestinian territory. Facing no consequences for its actions, and driven by its right-wing agenda, Israel went on with grabbing Palestinian lands, building and expanding settlements and carrying out ethnic cleansing in occupied East Jerusalem, and thus putting the peace process in serious jeopardy.

The status quo, if maintained as it is, will lead not only to the erosion of the two-state solution, but also to the shrinking of the already thin and declined Palestinian public faith in the peace process. It is imperative, therefore, for the Palestinians to diversify their options. A Palestinian state recognized by the UN, whether a full UN member or as a non-member state, would definitely provide the Palestinians with more options to pursue their rights.

Therefore, the decision of the Palestinian leadership to seek the United Nations' recognition of the Palestinian state on the borders of 1967 should not generate any opposition. It should rather be understood and highly appreciated by all peace-loving countries including the sponsors of the peace process itself. The move should rather be viewed as a helpful and necessary step towards establishing peace in the Middle East, which could not be achievable without the creation of a full independent Palestine state.

38th Session of the Council of Foreign Ministers in Astana: A Historic Meeting during Historic Times



Astana, Kazakhstan - The 38th Session of the Council of Foreign Ministers (CFM) held in Astana, Kazakhstan on June 28 -30, 2011 under the theme of “Session of Peace, Cooperation and Development” will probably best be remembered for the changing of the OIC name and emblem. The Council adopted a historic resolution changing the name of the OIC from the Organization of the Islamic Conference to Organization of Islamic Cooperation. It also adopted another resolution pertaining to the new emblem.

The Council discussed a wide range of issues of interest to the Member States leading to the adoption of resolutions on various issues. However, most prominent of these resolutions is the one on establishing the Independent Permanent Human Rights Commission with its temporary Headquarters at the General Secretariat in Jeddah. The Council also elected the 18 members of the Commission for a mandate of 3 years.

The Council also adopted the Rules Governing the Observer Status at the OIC, which will permit eligible non-OIC Member States to apply for Observer Status. In addition, the Council adopted a Cooperation Agreement between the OIC and the African Union, which will allow the strengthening of cooperation between the two Organizations.

A brainstorming session was held on the sidelines of the 38th Session on the theme of “Consolidating Political Stability and Economic Development in the Muslim World”.

The participants highlighted the vital linkage between the need for the Member States to ensure political stability and socio-economic development. In this regard, they recognized the importance of accelerating the implementation by OIC Member States of the relevant provisions of the OIC Charter and the Ten- Year Program of Action dealing with the numerous challenges facing the Ummah, specially in the fields of political reform, good governance, human rights, rule of law, democracy, inclusive political participation, education reform, women and youth empowerment as well as employment and job creation, eradication of poverty and economic reform. They noted that the prevalence of conflicts, foreign occupation, injustice as well as terrorism continue to undermine stability in some parts of the Muslim world.

The participants stressed the need for the OIC Member States to demonstrate the necessary political will for collective and concerted action and cooperation, strengthen the role of the OIC in the areas of mediation, conflict prevention, conflict resolution, and post-conflict peace building. They further emphasized the importance for the Member States to sign, ratify and implement the various OIC legal instruments that seek to enhance the Joint Islamic Action, boost intra-OIC trade, regional integration, economic cooperation and further raise the visibility of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation.

President of Kazakhstan Nursultan Nazarbayev stresses on socio-economic development, peace and cooperation

Kazakhstan takes the chairmanship of the CFM in the year it is celebrating its 20th anniversary of independence, adding to the historical significance of the occasion.

In his speech at the opening of the 38th Session of the Council of Foreign Ministers, the President of Kazakhstan Nursultan Nazarbayev said that the importance of OIC for peace, cooperation and development has increased. "The organization is a unique structure that performs a role of the UN of the Islamic world uniting 57 states on four continents," he said.

The President stressed that the Ummah today is facing serious challenges in a dramatically changing world.

"The Islamic community desperately needs peace, modernization, scientific and technological development, and education. Combined economic potential of the Ummah is inexhaustible, and we need to unite efforts to develop effective mechanisms for cooperation, mutual aid, and promotion of development."

He added that it is in the implementation of effective trade and investment, technological, social and educational programs that

the Islamic solidarity should manifest itself as the main principle of the Organization.

Economic power:

The President highlighted the economic shortfall and potential of the Member States.

Average GDP

per capita at purchasing power parity in the OIC countries equals nine and a half thousand dollars, while the similar figure for European countries equals more than twenty four thousand dollars.

"There is a serious imbalance in development among the OIC countries," warned President Nazarbayev.

For example, GDP per capita between the most developed and least developed states differs by more than 100 times. OIC countries control 70 percent of global energy resources. However, they account for only 7.5 percent of global GDP and 11 percent of total volume of global trade.

"We need to increase the competitiveness of every member state of our organization separately and the Ummah as a whole," urged the President.

He proposed to develop an integrated strategy for economic development of the OIC Member States.

At the Seventh World Islamic Economic Forum that took place in Astana three weeks before, he put forward a series of concrete proposals. In particular, he offered to create a dialogue platform of the top ten Muslim economies.

Just 10 out of 57 countries of the Organization produce 80 percent of the total product of the community of Muslim states, he pointed out.

Furthermore, he advised developing a system of mutual food assistance within the OIC in the form of a Regional Fund similar to FAO, which will include the possibility of creating a pool of food in the interested states. He offered to locate the headquarters of the Fund in Kazakhstan, as a country that exports food products.

He also pointed to the importance of large-scale investments in energy. According to the International Energy Agency, till 2030, 17 trillion dollars will be required to ensure the necessary production and transportation of energy resources.

He said that Kazakhstan has put forward its candidacy to host the International exhibition "EXPO-2017" on the topic of "Energy of Future." He hoped the Member States would support his initiative and actively participate in the discussion of the proposed topic.

The President expressed his confidence that the solution for problems of Muslim countries should come from within.

"The Islamic world needs to break free from the vector of development based on raw materials to industrial and innovative development."

He proposed to develop and adopt a joint Action Plan within the OIC for investment and technological cooperation in energy sector, as well as to establish an International Centre for Innovation.

In addition, he pointed that the



creation of support system for small and medium enterprises within the OIC is a promising direction.

He proposed to establish a Special Fund for small and medium businesses under the Islamic Development Bank.

“The global economic crisis has shown that the Islamic financial and economical model is stable and viable.”

He said that one of the useful and effective products that the Ummah can offer the world is the system of Islamic financing. Kazakhstan has opened an Islamic bank.

“We are actively promoting the Islamic financing and creation of benchmarking in the area of Islamic finance instruments in the region, said the President.

He proposed that an international conference on Islamic banking takes place in Almaty, as well as to develop Almaty as a regional financial centre that is actively engaged in Islamic finance.

President Nazarbayev said that the Islamic world should enjoy its major advantage, which is the potential for demographic growth, and make it an inalienable part of stable economic development.

International experts have estimated that by the year 2030 the population of the Muslim Ummah will account for more than 2.2 billion people, which will be more than a quarter (26.4%) of the world’s population.

“The immense human resources require adequate level of education and science. The creation of intellectual elite capable of generating new ideas that would serve the renaissance of the Islamic civilization must be our common goal.”

He said that neither money, nor rich natural resources will play a defining role in achieving innovations and the development of Islamic civilization, but the intellectual environment and socio-political climate will.

OIC role:

“I believe the OIC should take an active role in elaboration of new ideas and decision making at a global level.”

The President suggested addressing the possibility of sending the OIC representatives to participate in the work of the G20 summits. This will increase the representative nature of G20 and will enable OIC Member States to make a stand for consolidated positions on key issues on the global agenda, according to the President.

He also stressed strengthening inter-regional cooperation - a good example of which is an OIC Plan of Action for cooperation with Central Asia - as a qualitative step of the development of common Muslim economic integration and interaction.

Furthermore, the President said, “It is necessary to increase activity and institutional role of our Organization in consolidating efforts of all Ummah states against global challenges.”

President Nazarbayev said that the new Charter of the OIC, adopted in Dakar in 2008, encourages modernizing the Organization in the context of overall reforming and increasing the effectiveness of its bodies.

“In particular, OIC needs an effective body – an Institute or a Centre – that will conduct deep forecasting and analytical work providing heads of state with possible scenarios and

ways of events’ development inside the Organization as well as in the world.”

Afghanistan:

Instability in Afghanistan is a matter of concern, said the President. Over the past ten years the production of Afghan heroin and drug trafficking has increased ten times.

“We should recognize that the organization itself does not fully use its capabilities to help the long-suffering Afghan people.”

Along with the stepping up of activity of the OIC special envoy for Afghanistan, he proposed the establishment of a special working group within the OIC, which would address the issues of assistance to that country.

Events in the Middle East and North Africa:

The events in the Middle East and North Africa show that the main cause of upheavals were unsolved social and economic problems of these states, said the President.

“The modernization of society, while preserving and rethinking Islamic principles - that is the way forward.”

“We stand for unity of all Muslims on the basis of enlightenment, moderation and tolerance both towards each other and towards representatives of other religions,” he added.

The more successful Muslim countries are, the more attractive the image of Islam will be throughout the world.

Relations with the West:

One of the major issues in world politics remains challenges of the Muslim world relations with the outside world, primarily with the West, pointed the President.

“The Muslim world in the eyes of Western society is associated primarily with its radical part and causes unwarranted fear, despite the fact that Islam preaches universal values of kindness, tolerance and justice.”

He said that there are two major challenges.

First, is the need to learn to confront religious fundamentalism as a political ideology.

“We must unequivocally declare that Islam has nothing to do with political violence, extremism and terrorism.”

He proposed creating a single media Islamic project.

Today there is a strong onslaught of “new media” in the Internet.

“In this respect, I suggest creating the e-ISLAM Internet resource, which would cover the activity of our Organization, stimulating the interest of the youth in religion and culture of Islam and spreading the Muslim spiritual values.”

The second challenge is to establish an open and honest dialogue between the Muslim world and the West.

Kazakhstan’s chairmanship in the OIC aims to achieve these noble goals, said the President.

At the conclusion of his speech the President said that the renaming of our Organization as the Organization of Islamic Cooperation on the Kazakh land will become a symbol of renewal, unity, and the competitiveness of the Ummah.

“I hope our Organization will participate more actively in the formation of the international agenda,” said President Nazarbayev.

He promised that Kazakhstan would do its best to enhance the prestige of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation.

Ihsanoglu reports on OIC achievements: OIC now enjoys greater visibility, become more active

In his speech to the 38th Session of the Council of Foreign Ministers, the Secretary General of the OIC presented a comprehensive report on the achievements of the Organization during the past year and pointed to the direction ahead.

The OIC has come a long way to make its impact felt not only within its Member States but internationally as well, asserted the Secretary General. Many circles at the regional and international levels have expressed their continued interest in nurturing a sustained dialogue and in opening lines of communication with the Organization.

“I can confidently say that the OIC now enjoy greater visibility at the international scene and has become more active and an indispensable actor among international institutions,” said Ihsanoglu.

The Secretary General then elaborated on the situation in the Muslim World within the context of the current international climate.

“Today, as we speak, the Muslim World is confronted with some dangerous unrest with direct impact on its stability, unity, prosperity and development. Unfortunately, the Ummah still lacks the necessary internal cohesion, strength, solidarity and capacity that are required in order to overcome these daunting challenges.”

He urged for speeding up the process of concretizing the peoples’ aspiration to good governance, the rule of law, human rights consolidation, broader political participation and dedicated national dialogue.

On the issue of **Palestine**, he said that it is our duty and firm position to support the Palestinian decision to resort to the United Nations and have its say in the solution of this protracted conflict.

Referring to the recent events in **North Africa**, the Secretary General welcomed the democratic changes in Tunisia and Egypt. On the situation in Libya, he spoke of his efforts at finding a political solution and providing humanitarian relief, and reaffirmed the strong commitment of the OIC to the sovereignty, independence, territorial integrity and national unity of Libya.

On **Afghanistan** he said the establishment of the new OIC Permanent Representative’s Office in Kabul will further enhance the role of the Organization along with other partners in contributing to the ongoing peace-building process. The OIC General Secretariat had hosted the ICG meeting on Afghanistan in its headquarters in Jeddah on 3 March 2011 and was looking forward to the Regional Conference on Afghanistan, which will be organized by Turkey later this year.

On **Iraq** the Secretary General had paid an official visit to Iraq and had important talks with the high level Iraqi officials on ways and means to strengthen the cooperation between Iraq and OIC.

He lamented on the deteriorating security and humanitarian situation in **Somalia** despite the renewed

strong engagement by the OIC and the larger international community, which produced the Djibouti Peace Agreement currently under implementation.

As for **Sub-Saharan Africa**, he reported on his successful weeklong tour in early June 2011 of seven countries - Benin, Togo, Sierra Leone, Guinea Bissau, Gambia, Senegal and Niger – which highlighted the growing interest of African leaders and decision makers to be more involved with the OIC activities and intra-OIC cooperation.

In a bid to better serve the interests of Muslims and the Muslim Ummah, Ihsanoglu talked about his efforts to develop channels of communications with the world leaders and fora where the global and important issues are taken. He spoke about his official visit to Washington DC, London, and Brussels (the EU) where he met the top officials and discussed possible ways and means to further strengthening the bilateral relations.

The Secretary General also briefed the CFM on efforts addressing issues of **Muslim minorities** and communities in the Philippines, Myanmar and Southern Thailand.

On the issue of combating **terrorism** the Secretary General reiterated the OIC position, which is that it should be dealt with through providing proper education and better social conditions for relatively backward societies to eradicate its root causes.

Economy:

In the area of economic cooperation, he highlighted the progress made in the domain of trade financing and execution of OIC poverty alleviation strategies. Very soon, the Ministers of Agriculture will be considering a comprehensive Executive Framework for Agriculture, Rural Development and Food Security in OIC Member States, which will represent the beginning of an action-oriented plan to foster economic growth and achieve poverty alleviation and socio-economic empowerment of the poor and vulnerable segments of the community. He appealed for redeeming the various pledges made on the Islamic Solidarity Fund for Development and Special Program for the Development of Africa, while requesting for new pledges to create needed impacts in this direction.

“As we seek to attain our set goals on poverty reduction, the problem of food and nutrition insecurity has continued to pose enormous constraints,” warned Ihsanoglu.

In order to address this growing phenomenon of food insecurity, a host of OIC institutions have begun to mobilize national responses for a collective intra-OIC action in this connection, said the Secretary General.

Islamophobia:

Combating Islamophobia is a matter of extreme priority for the OIC. Islamophobia represents a contemporary manifestation of racism and the phenomenon must be addressed in that context, stressed the Secretary General. *“There is an urgent need to initiate and sustain what I would like to term as ‘preventive cultural diplomacy’ geared towards*

peaceful coexistence in a globalized world characterized by diversity."

The OIC's strategy toward combating Islamophobia is essentially composed of monitoring, diplomatic and operational aspects. The Secretary General suggested looking beyond the confines of multilateral diplomacy to ensure that the call to address Islamophobia forms part of the agenda during bilateral contacts of the Member States - particularly with their interlocutors in the West.

The OIC sponsored resolution and discourse on 'defamation of religions' signifies the operational aspect of the strategy towards combating Islamophobia. Based on the outcome of a brainstorming session he organized of a panel of eminent jurists from the Muslim world, the Secretary General presented - at the 15th Session of the UN Human Rights Council - an eight point approach for action, at the national and the international levels, which found resonance with all negotiating partners and formed the basis of a new OIC sponsored resolution 16/ 18 on Combating Intolerance adopted by consensus at the 16th Session of the Human Rights Council in Geneva.

Independent Permanent Commission on Human Rights:

Ihsanoglu happily announced that the OIC is on the verge of establishing an Independent Permanent Commission on Human Rights (IPCHR). The 38th Session of CFM would adopt the statute and hold elections of the experts to the Commission.

Inspired by the vision of Moderation and Modernization, the OIC endeavors in the area of Human Rights are not restricted to the establishment of the Commission. It is working on an integrated approach aimed at mainstreaming the Human Rights perspective across the activities of the Organization. Women, children and youth are among the vulnerable sectors of the society. OIC efforts are accordingly focused on eliminating discrimination, violence and other injustices and protection of their rights, pointed out Ihsanoglu.

Science and Technology:

The General Secretariat has steadily expanded the scope of its activities in the domains of science and technology, higher education, health and environment. The important ongoing OIC projects in these fields include the Atlas of Islamic World Science and Innovation, the Mega Project on Communication satellites, preparation of a document on "Key Performance Indicators for Universities in the Islamic World", cooperative action involving international partners such as the WHO, Global Polio Eradication Initiative and Global Fund to fight diseases and epidemics, OIC-US mother and child health projects in Mali and Bangladesh and the preparation of OIC Water Vision.

The Secretary General focused on two issues.

Firstly, he invited the Member States to consider the initiation of an OIC Educational Exchange Program for students, researchers and teachers.

Secondly, he urged the Member States to focus more closely on the challenge of climate change.

The Ten-Year Program of Action:

The Secretary General then reported on the progress made in implementing the Ten-Year Program of Action (TYPOA) adopted by the 3rd Extraordinary Islamic Summit Conference held in Makkah Al-Mukarramah on 5 -7 December 2005, which set the agenda for the OIC to address the contemporary challenges facing the Muslim Ummah. While remarkable progress had been made in the implementation of TYPOA, more efforts were still needed to meet all the targets of the Program during the remaining period of five years. Recommendations concerning increased sense of ownership on the part of Member States, funding and implementation mechanisms were made and compiled in a synthesis report which the Secretary General will present to the 12th Islamic Summit Conference for consideration and guidance.

Dawa:

In the area of Dawa, the OIC have managed to bring all major Islamic institutions and Organizations under OIC unifying banner within the framework of the Joint Islamic Action in the Field of Dawa in order to enhance coordination and cooperation in the Dawa-related spheres. The OIC started to elaborate executive programs for many projects including the setting up of radio stations broadcasting on FM frequencies in the African continent and the setting up of Arabic language teaching centers.

Humanitarian work:

In the area of humanitarian action, the General Secretariat has put in significant efforts in offering relief to the victims of the natural catastrophes that hit a number of Member States and observers, including Palestine, Afghanistan, Yemen, Indonesia, Sudan, Somalia, Niger, Burkina Faso, the Comoro Islands, Guinea, Sierra Leone, Bosnia Herzegovina and Pakistan.

Legal affairs:

The Secretary General informed the Session that consensus has been attained on the draft rules governing the Observer Status at the OIC. The implementation of these rules will widen the political horizon of the OIC and enhance its weight in international relations.

"Another area of great concern is reaching an appropriate framework allowing interaction between the OIC and certain NGO's," sated the Secretary General.

The Secretary General also informed the Session that the senior officials meeting preparatory to the CFM recommended for approval of the new logo and proposed name, which reads "Organization of Islamic Cooperation".

In concluding, the Secretary General hoped that the deliberations of this historic session of the CFM would not go down in the record as mere expectations and wishful thinking of expressions of good intention. He urged for translating the words into deeds, the intentions into meaningful actions and the promises into facts of history.

"Our organization derives its power from the devotion and support of its Member States. It can be an effective instrument of peace, stability and economic development to the extent its Members want it to be. So let us back it with all our force in unshakable conviction and genuine sincerity."

The OIC changes its name to Organization of Islamic Cooperation



The OIC Secretary General Ihsanoglu, President of Kazakhstan Nazarbayev, and Foreign Minister of Kazakhstan Kazykhanov during the session of announcing the new name and emblem of the OIC

From now on the OIC will stand for Organization of Islamic Cooperation instead of the name given to the Organization when it was established over 40 years ago. This is a milestone in the history of the OIC and it is meant to reflect the reforms and developments it has achieved since its early days.

In 1969 Muslim leaders met in a historic Islamic Summit Conference and decided to establish an organization that unified their efforts towards common objectives. Consequently, in 1970 the foreign ministers met and established a General Secretariat for the Organization of the Islamic Conference as the collective voice of the Muslim world that represents its interests and defends its causes. The name chosen for the Organization reflected the occasion for its establishment.

While Al-Aqsa Mosque and Palestine remain the central issues for the Organization, its activities and role have expanded in the past 40 years to meet the demands and expectations of the Muslim world. Since 1969 the number of Member States has increased, Observer states have been accepted, and various Subsidiary, Specialized and Affiliated institutions have been created to serve the Muslim world. Furthermore, the role of

the Organization itself in the international arena has become more prominent and active.

“The key word is cooperation,” OIC Secretary General Ekmeleddin Ihsanoglu told delegates at the 38th Session of the CFM. “We need to focus on avenues of cooperation among OIC countries and the world bodies at large.”

The 38th Session of the Council of Foreign Ministers made the decision based on article 11 of the Ten-year Program of Action adopted by the 3rd Extraordinary Islamic Summit Conference held in Makkah Al Mukarramah on 7 and 8 December 2005 on “Reform the OIC through restructuring and consider changing its name, review its Charter and activities...”

Being aware of the importance of changing the name of the Organization and choosing a new name that better reflects the functions and objectives of the Organization, and recognizing the importance of preserving the acronym by which the Organization has been known throughout its long history (OIC), the CFM made this historic decision to change the name to Organization of Islamic Cooperation.

The new emblem of the OIC



In line with changing the name, it was also decided to change the emblem of the OIC to further reflect the new phase in the history of the OIC.

The decision to change the emblem was made by the 36th CFM in 2009 as part of the OIC's 40th Anniversary celebrations. Hence, an international design competition was conducted on the occasion of the 40th anniversary for selecting a new Emblem for the Organization.

The new emblem of the OIC contains three main elements that reflect its vision and mission as incorporated in its new Charter. These elements are: the Holy Ka'bah, the Globe, and the Crescent.

At the center of the design is **The Holy Ka'bah**, the focal point of the Islamic world, symbolizing its unity.

Surrounding the Holy Ka'bah is **The Globe** with the meridian lines drawn to represent the diversity of humanity in its many nations and tribes within the universal context represented by the emblem.

And **The Crescent**, symbolizing Islam, embraces the Muslim world, indicating that Islam is the guiding motive, protective and unifying force of the OIC.

OIC establishes an Independent Permanent Human Rights Commission

A landmark decision was made at the 38th Session of the Council of Foreign Ministers by adopting the draft statute of the Independent Permanent Human Rights Commission (IPHRC).

Mindful of the need to empower the OIC with a mechanism to strengthen and protect human rights in the Member States, and recalling the Ten-Year Program of Actions adopted by the 3rd Extraordinary Islamic Summit Conference held in Makkah Al Mukarammah in December 2005, which called for considering the establishment of an independent permanent commission to promote human rights in the Member States, and seeking to implement articles 5 and 15 of the Charter, which consider the Independent Permanent Commission on Human Rights as a key OIC organ, the CFM adopted the draft statute of the Independent Permanent Human Rights Commission.

It decided that the IPHRC should start its operation within the OIC General Secretariat, pending a decision on its headquarters' location to be taken at the 39th Session of the CFM, and requested the Secretary General to provide secretarial services to the IPHRC within the adopted budget of the General Secretariat.

The Session also approved the outcome of the IPHRC experts' election held during the CFM session and appointed the first IPHRC of 18 members for a three-year term; four of the 18 are women (from Afghanistan, Indonesia, Malaysia and Sudan). The members are from Egypt, Morocco, Palestine, Saudi Arabia, Sudan, and United Arab Emirates representatives of the Arab group of Member States; from Cameroon, Chad, Guinea, Nigeria, Sierra Leone, and Uganda of the African group; and from Afghanistan, Indonesia, Iran, Malaysia, Pakistan, and Turkey of the Asian group. The member from Pakistan will chair the first IPHRC.

The Statute:

Objectives of the Commission:

The Commission shall seek to advance human rights and serve the interests of the Islamic Ummah in this domain, consolidate respect for the Islamic cultures and noble values and promote inter-civilizational dialogue, consistent with the principles and objectives of the OIC Charter.

The Commission shall support the Member States' efforts to consolidate civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights.

The Commission shall cooperate with the Member States to ensure consolidation of civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights in the Member States in accordance with the OIC Charter, and to monitor observance of the human rights of Muslim communities and minorities.

The Commission shall support the Member States' efforts in terms of policies aimed at enhancing legislation and policies in favour of advancing the rights of women, the young and those with special needs, in the economic, social, political and cultural fields as well as eliminating all forms of violence and discrimination.

Mandates of the Commission:

The Commission shall carry out consultative tasks for the Council and submit recommendations to it. It shall also carry out other tasks as may be assigned to it by the Summit or the Council.

The Commission shall support the OIC's position on human rights at the international level and consolidate cooperation among the Member States in the area of human rights.

The Commission shall provide technical cooperation in the field of human rights and awareness-raising about these rights in the Member States, and offer approving Member States consultancy on human rights issues.

The Commission shall promote and support the role of Member State- accredited national institutions and civil society organizations active in the area of human rights in accordance with the OIC Charter and work procedures, in addition to enhancing cooperation between the Organization and other international and regional human rights organizations.

The Commission shall conduct studies and research on priority human rights issues, including those issues referred to it by the Council, and coordinate efforts and information exchange with Member States' working groups on human rights issues in international fora.

The Commission may cooperate with Member States, at their request, in the elaboration of human rights instruments. It may also submit recommendations on refinement of OIC human rights declarations and covenants as well as suggest ratification of human rights covenants and instruments within the OIC framework and in harmony with Islamic values and agreed international standards.

Procedural provisions

The headquarters of the Commission shall be in one of the OIC Member States and the Commission shall convene bi-annually in ordinary meetings. It may also hold extraordinary meetings at the request of any Member State or of the Secretary General with the approval of the Member States' simple majority.

Two thirds of the Commission's members shall constitute the quorum for its meetings.

The Commission adopts its recommendations by consensus and if not possible, by a two-third majority of the voting members present.

Upon the host country's consent and the approval of all its members the Commission may invite, as guests, OIC subsidiary organs and specialized and affiliated institutions relevant OIC accredited governmental and non- governmental organizations, and national human rights institution. Member States and OIC observers may also participate in the Commission's meetings as non-voting observers, in accordance with OIC standards.

The 38th CFM adopts a Resolution on Follow up and Coordination of Work on Human Rights



The 38th Session of the CFM gave the issue of Human Rights considerable importance as evidenced by the resolution it adopted on the issue.

The Resolution asserted that human rights are universal in nature and must be considered in the context of dynamic and evolving process of international norm-setting, bearing in mind the significance of national and regional particularities and various historical, cultural and religious backgrounds. It emphasized the necessity for the international community to address the human rights issue on an objective and indivisible basis, in all states, without selectivity or discrimination.

Furthermore, it called for the necessity to consider human rights in their global conception and in all their civil, political, social, economic, and cultural facets within the framework of international cooperation and solidarity.

The CFM reaffirmed the right of States to adhere to their religious, social, and cultural specificities, which constitute heritage and streams of thought that contribute towards enriching the common international conceptions of human rights. It called for the non-use of the universality of human rights as a pretext to interfere in the States' internal affairs and diminish their national sovereignty.

The CFM also recalled the rights of States, when necessary, to express reservations on the international conventions, covenants, and agreements they subscribe to, as part of their sovereign rights.

The CFM expressed its deep concern over the frequent and erroneous association of Islam with violations of human rights and the misuse of the print and audio-visual media in propagating such misconceptions, which lead to the reinforcement of prejudice and discrimination against Muslims and calls on the Member States to undertake information activities to counter these activities.

It noted with grave concern the increasing trend of Islamophobic measures in the Western countries, stresses the responsibility of those States to ensure full respect to Islam and all divine religions and the inapplicability of using freedom of expression or press as a pretext to defame religions, and calls for refrain from imposing restrictions, in any form whatsoever, on the cultural and religious rights and

freedoms of people.

It denounced media campaigns and fabrications made by some quarters in non-Member States regarding the mistreatment of non-Muslim minorities and communities in the OIC Member States under the slogan of religious freedoms and so on.

The Resolution expressed the need to pursue, as a matter of priority, a common policy aimed at preventing defamation of Islam perpetrated under the pretext and justification of the freedom of expression in particular through media and Internet.

It expressed deep concern over any activities which may be carried out by certain Governmental and Nongovernmental Organizations, supported by governments, in order to attack OIC Member States for political purposes and to further their foreign policy objectives in international forums.

It exhorted all states to take, in line with their national laws and in consonance with international human rights instruments, all appropriate measures to encourage understanding, tolerance, and respect in matters connected with freedom of religion or creed.

Moreover, it called upon Member States to continue their active coordination and cooperation in the field of human rights particularly in the relevant international forums in order to strengthen Islamic solidarity to confront any initiative that may lead to the use of human rights as a means of exercising political pressure on any Member State.

The CFM decided that the General Secretariat and the Member States shall undertake to follow up Member States' missions with the relevant international organizations, in particular, at the UN Headquarters in New York and Geneva, and to hold meetings on appropriate occasions, to consider and discuss human rights issues with a view to adopting a unified position among Member States vis-à-vis campaigns and draft resolutions that target OIC Member States at relevant international fora.

It requested the Member States to sign and ratify the Covenant on the Rights of the Child in Islam as soon as possible.

Designating 5th of August of every year as the "Islamic Human Rights and Human Dignity Day"

The Thirty-eight Session of the CFM decided to designate the 5th of August of every year as the "Islamic Human Rights and Human Dignity Day". It requested the OIC Member States and the General Secretariat to observe this auspicious day that should be taken as an opportunity to take concrete measures to reinforce human rights and move it to a higher plane of dialogue, cooperation, education and awareness raising according to Islamic teachings and values. The Islamic world will strive to realize this vision through effective and comprehensive action, in conformity with its own divine values and principles.

Approval of the New Rules Governing Observer Status

One of the important decisions made at the thirty-eighth Session of the Council of Foreign Ministers in Astana is the approval of the Rules Governing Observer Status at the OIC.

The adoption of the new rules will open the door for considering the submitted requests for observer memberships by a number of countries including Brazil, South Africa, the Philippines and Sri Lanka.

In making the decision, the Session took note of Article 4 of the amended OIC Charter containing the conditions to be fulfilled to grant Observer Status, recalled previous resolutions adopted in this regard, and took note of the increasing number of requests for Observer Status at the OIC.

The CFM was also convinced that promoting Islamic causes and achieving greater conciliation and understanding between the OIC and the non-Member States and international as well as regional organizations is a desirable goal.

The Rules:

Observer status at the OIC may be granted as set forth by Article 4 of the OIC Charter in accordance with these Rules to applicants from:

(a) Member States of the United Nations eligible for observer status under the provisions of the Charter and wishing to follow the activities of the Organization as Observers

(b) International and regional intergovernmental organizations eligible for observer status under the provisions of the Charter and wishing to follow the activities of the Organization as Observers.

The State applying for observer status shall submit the application to the Secretary General, at least 4 months before the convening of the CFM meeting, enclosing a written explanation that include:

1) Statistics as to the percentage of Muslims in its territory compared to the total population and to the adherents of other religions in this State; and

2) Information on the situation of Muslims in this State and on the adequacy of its legislation in force for the Muslim communities, ensuring them to enjoy their rights on equal basis with the adherents of other religions in this State.

The State applying for observer status shall commit to protect and promote the civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights, and fundamental freedoms of the Muslim Minorities and Communities holding its nationality on a par with all its other citizens, as provided for in related international agreements.

The application for Observer Status at the Organization shall include the applicant's commitment to and respect for the principles and objectives of the Charter, and that its conduct shall

not be in contradiction with the resolutions, the rules and regulations of the OIC.

The State applying for observer status shall settle its conflicts with any of the OIC Member States.

Upon fulfilling the conditions stipulated above, the General Secretariat shall circulate the applications for Observer Status to the Member States at least ninety days before the CFM.

The Council shall consider applications for observer status submitted through the General Secretariat, and decisions by the Council to grant observer status shall be adopted by consensus only. The Council may cancel or suspend the Observer Status by consensus only if the observer fails to meet some or all the conditions for obtaining this status. The status may be restored upon the absence of the reasons that led to the cancellation or suspension of the observer status by a decision of the Council.

Representatives from Muslim communities, institutions and personalities from non-Member States whose action, credibility or participation may help promote the objectives of the OIC Charter, Council or Meetings, may be invited to attend the meetings of the Organization as guests on ad-hoc basis after coordination with the host State.

The Secretary General shall circulate, sixty days before the meeting, for consideration by the Member States a list of the aforesaid representatives who may be invited to attend the meetings of the Organization. In the absence of any objection from any Member State, which must be communicated to the Secretariat at least 30 days prior to the meeting, the Secretary General may recommend to the host country of the meeting in question that these representatives be invited as guests on ad-hoc basis.

The Secretary General shall prepare periodic reports on the situation of Muslim minorities and communities living in the country that was granted the observer status.

These Rules shall not affect the Status of current observers at the time of their adoption. Those observers shall be governed by these new rules upon their approval by the Council.



38th CFM Brainstorming Session

Explores Ways of Enhancing Political Stability; Calls for Development and Respect for Human Rights



The brainstorming session held in the Kazakh capital, Astana, under the title ‘Promoting Political Stability and Economic Development in the Muslim World’ offered a fitting platform for debating divergent views ranging from those that support the idea of expediting reforms and lending support for the demands of youth, to those who caution against opening the gates more widely for foreign interference in the internal affairs of OIC Member States within the context of the developments unfolding across the Middle East and North Africa (MENA).

Participants in the brainstorming session that took place on 29th June 2011 on the sidelines of the 38th Session of the OIC Council of Foreign Ministers (CFM) held in Astana emphasized that the session will bear a most tangible impact on their future endeavors when it comes to promoting political stability and economic development, which constitutes the twin pillars, as OIC Secretary General, Ekmeleddin Ihsanoglu, aptly pointed out, of prosperity in any country seeking to make progress.

In his speech at the opening of the session the OIC Secretary General affirmed that there is an urgent need to cement political stability and ensure economic development. He referred to the Ten-Year Plan of Action (TYPOA) that was adopted by the 2005 Makkah Summit as offering a moral compass for OIC Member States in light of the principles and stipulations enshrined in its content and spanning the various political, economic, cultural and social fields in the Muslim world.

Ihsanoglu also pointed out that 21 out of the 57 OIC Member States rank among the Least Developed Countries (LDCs) in the world, noting that the burden is growing heavier, which entails greater efforts in the domains of economic development and political stability.

The debates at the brainstorming session were punctuated with a variety of views, some of which shed light on the need to examine the drivers of economic growth in its relation to human development as well as the eradication of poverty and unemployment. Some participants indicated the need to promote education and provide employment opportunities especially for young people who have played a major role in the changes unraveling in some MENA countries.

On a similar note, Ihsanoglu stated that the Muslim world should demonstrate a much-needed ability for self-criticism and the testing of its capabilities as a way of identifying its core vulnerabilities and strengths in order to properly and accurately assess its real potential. The Secretary General reemphasized that the TYPOA calls fundamentally for the promotion of democracy, human rights, and rule of law, as well as boosting the principle of Islamic solidarity along with joint Islamic action forward. He stressed the need to foster cooperation and trade exchange among OIC Member States.

The Kazakh Minister of Foreign Affairs, Yerzhan Kazykhanov, for his part, shed some light in his speech on the situation in the region. He pointed up the existence of significant gaps among Muslim nations in the field of cooperation, peace and development. He also stressed that conflicts in the region will have ramifications for its future, pointing his finger at religious extremism and terrorism as factors affecting the process of development in the region. He emphasized the urgent need for the OIC to play a more significant and consequential role. The Kazakh Minister also noted the importance of education, human rights, and democracy as key elements likely to contribute to the progress and advancement of nations.

Many of the delegates participating in the brainstorming session intervened in the debate, which followed the opening speeches. Some participants highlighted the need to establish political stability and enhance good governance, in addition to the need to address unemployment and economic reforms.

Participants noted that poverty leads almost inevitably to insecurity and vice versa. They confirmed that no stability is ever possible without development. They stressed at the same time the need to respect human life through respect for human rights, enforceability of law, and the expansion of political participation.

Convening the Islamic Summit biennially

The Thirty-eighth Session of the Council of Foreign Ministers, recommended to the next Islamic Summit the convening of its session biennially instead of every three years, and to initiate a process of amendment to article 8 in accordance with article 36 of the Charter, following an intergovernmental work that can be carried out by the Senior Official Meeting preparatory to the Summit. It recommended that the amendment should not come into effect before the 13th Session of the Islamic Summit.

According to article 6 of the Charter of the OIC, “The Islamic Summit is composed of Kings and Heads of State and Government of Member States and is the supreme authority of the Organization.” Article 7 of the Charter of the OIC states that: “The Islamic Summit shall deliberate, take policy decisions and provide guidance on all issues pertaining to the realization of the objectives as provided

for in the Charter and consider other issues of concern to the Member States and the Ummah.” And article 8 provides that: “The Islamic Summit shall convene every three years in one of the Member States.”

Considering the rapid changes taking place around the world due to the effects of globalization and the emergence of new issues everyday thus constituting challenges to the continuous prosperity and development of the Ummah, and recognizing the importance of accelerating the frequency of convening the meetings of the Islamic Summit biennially instead of every three years in order to increase the Organization’s capacity to respond to the challenges facing the Ummah regarding issues which emerge regularly, the CFM made its recommendation to the next Islamic Summit of the convening of its session biennially instead of every three years.

Four more Member States sign the OIC Charter

The Council welcomed the signing of the OIC Charter and other legal instruments during the Session by Guyana, Benin, Kyrgyz Republic and United Arab Emirates.

Meanwhile, having considered the signing, ratification and accession status of the agreements concluded under the OIC, and noting that the minimum number of ratifications by Member States required for the entry into force of some

of these agreements has not been reached as required by their provisions, and the importance of accelerating the ratification in order to support the role of the Organization and widen the scope of cooperation among Member States, the CFM adopted a resolution urging Member States again to sign, ratify or accede to, as soon as possible, the various agreements concluded with in the framework of the OIC.

Establishment of a Trust Fund for Somalia

The Thirty-Eight Session of the Council of Foreign Ministers decided to establish a Trust Fund for Somalia to contribute in relieving the suffering of the Somali people and contribute to peace-building, rehabilitation and development processes in the country.

Referring to the Charter of the OIC, Chapter 1, Article 1, Para 19 which provides for cooperation and coordination in humanitarian emergencies such as natural disasters and civil strife; and Chapter 15, Article 2, providing for the Organization, with the approval of the Council of Foreign Ministers, to establish special funds and endowments (waqfs) on voluntary basis as contributed by Member States, individuals and Organizations; and in view of the need for continuous support of the Islamic Ummah to Somalia to

overcome the emergency humanitarian plight and difficulties; the CFM made the decision to establish the trust fund for Somalia. The CFM called upon Member States, financial institutions, civil society and philanthropists to generously contribute to this Trust Fund for Somalia. It requested the Secretary General in coordination with the Chairman of the OIC Funds to take all necessary measures to seek more support to the Trust Fund for Somalia, including organizing a special donors’ conference for Somalia.

The OIC had previously played a positive role through its Funds in Bosnia-Herzegovina, Sierra Leone, Afghanistan, in helping these countries overcome their difficulties in the aftermath of civil strife.

Cooperation agreement between the OIC and the African Union

The Thirty-Eight Session of the Council of Foreign Ministers (CFM) approved the draft cooperation agreement between the OIC and the African Union AU).

The CFM approved the agreement based on the principles and objectives of the Charter of the OIC and the Ten-Year Program of Action, as well as the relevant resolutions adopted by the different sessions of the Islamic Summit Conference and the Council of Foreign Ministers. It also recalled the cooperation agreements, friendly relations and constructive cooperation existing between the OIC and

international and regional organizations and groupings; and to stress the importance of building, preserving and promoting close relations and fruitful cooperation between the OIC and international and regional organizations and gatherings in their joint endeavor to resolve international problems and serve their common interests.

The CFM mandated the Secretary General to take the necessary measures with the African Union for the signature of the agreement.

Two institutions accepted as affiliates of OIC

Two institutions have joined the family of affiliates of OIC. The 38th Session of the Council of Foreign Ministers (CFM) has accepted the affiliation requests from the Association of Tax Authorities in Islamic Countries (ATAIC) and the International Islamic University in Malaysia.

Recognizing the importance of tax and zakat administration in encouraging economic development, and recalling the objectives and principles of the Charter of the OIC and the Ten-Year Program of Action, which call for the strengthening of economic and commercial cooperation among OIC Member States and economic integration among these states, as well as being aware of the importance of encouraging cooperation and mutual assistance among taxation authorities and of providing a platform for the exchange of experiences and best practices among Member States, the CFM accepted the request of the Association of Tax Authorities in Islamic Countries for the status of an affiliated institution of the OIC, with its headquarters in

Sudan.

In deciding to accept the request of affiliation of the International Islamic University Malaysia to the OIC, the recalled Resolution No. 914-/C on the International Islamic University in Malaysia, adopted by the 14th session of the Islamic Conference of Foreign Ministers, which commended the establishment of the International Islamic University, and Resolutions 104-/C (I.S.) and 25-/C(I.S.) adopted by the fourteenth and fifteenth sessions of the Islamic Summit respectively, which commended the signing of the agreement establishing the University in Malaysia with the OIC and called on the ISF and other OIC Specialized Organs and Institutions to provide all moral, technical and financial assistance to the university. The CFM also recognized the contributions of the International Islamic University Malaysia towards capacity building and advancement of knowledge in the OIC Member States since its inception.

Meeting of OIC Contact Group on Jammu and Kashmir

The Contact Group on Jammu and Kashmir met on 28th June 2011 at the Ministerial level on the sidelines of the 38th Council of Foreign Ministers in Astana, Kazakhstan.

Ekmeleddin Ihsanoglu, Secretary General of the OIC, opened the meeting. In his statement, the Secretary General briefed the meeting on the recent visits of his Special Representative to Azad Jammu and Kashmir, Islamabad and Brussels. He then reaffirmed, once more, the full support of the OIC for the people of Jammu and Kashmir in their struggle for their legitimate right to self-determination. The Secretary General expressed the hope that OIC Member States would render more support in all fields to the Kashmiri people to help them in meeting their aspirations.

During the meeting, distinguished Ministers members of



the Contact Group also reiterated their continued support to the people of Jammu and Kashmir and called for peaceful resolution of the dispute. The True Representatives of the Kashmiri people also delivered statements.

The meeting concluded by taking note of the Memorandum submitted by the True Representatives of the Kashmiri people, which among other things welcomed the various confidence-

building measures taken by Pakistan regarding the issue of Jammu and Kashmir and stressed on India for a result-oriented dialogue with Pakistan. The Memorandum noted that resolution of Jammu and Kashmir dispute, in accordance with the wishes of the Kashmiri people, would open new avenues of trade and economic cooperation and synergy for socio-economic development of peoples in the region.

CFM resolution on empowering women

The 38th Session of the Council of Foreign Ministers adopted a resolution that urged the OIC Member States to provide women with better opportunities through enacting and consolidating laws that empower women and provide them with greater role in the development of Muslim society in various fields.

The resolution stated that poverty among women has to be alleviated to elevate them in the Muslim world, and called on Member States to formulate a roadmap to rectify those misperceptions concerning women.

It also called on the parliaments of the OIC Member States to pass necessary laws to combat smuggling, abuse of women, and other forms of violence against them, and

protect the victims of such cases.

The resolution urged the governments of the OIC Member States to adopt the necessary policies and programs for promoting the level of education of women and girls and also providing easy, inexpensive and equal access to higher education and ensure, through legislation, women's access to advanced technologies including ICT in order to promote their role in the decision making and development process.

It recommended to the OIC Member States to hold regional expert meetings to prepare guidelines aimed at supporting women and the family in cases of armed conflicts. It also recommended that the results of these meetings be submitted to specialized international organizations.

Ministers adopt OIC Action Plan for Cooperation with Central Asia

Ministers at the 38th Session of the Council of Foreign Ministers in Astana adopted the OIC Action Plan for Cooperation with Central Asia. During a high-level meeting in the first day of the Session, the Ministers adopted the Plan, which aims to increase cooperation and coordination between countries of Central Asia and the rest of the OIC Member States, especially in the economic, scientific research, health, and cultural fields.

Implementation of the Plan is expected to promote scientific innovation through establishing centers of excellence; job training and public-private partnership (PPP); reduce diseases such as HIV/AIDS, polio, malaria and TB; and build bridges of cultural understanding, in addition to combating human trafficking and illegal drugs trade.

The Chairman of the meeting, the Foreign Minister of Kazakhstan Yerzhan Kazykhanov, said the Plan could revive the “silk road” linking Central Asia with the East. He said that the OIC has the added value of its wide membership, which would expand the benefits of the Plan.

In his opening statement at the meeting, OIC Secretary General Ekmeleddin Ihsanoglu said that the Plan has put greater emphasis on priority projects that will ensure fruitful collaboration between the entire OIC and its Member States in Central Asia. These priority areas in agro industries, transport sector development, greater market access and public-private economic partnerships.

He said that now the Preferential Trade System

agreement between OIC Member States has entered into force, which will facilitate intra-OIC trade and investment and consequently lead to achieving one of the economic objectives of the Ten-Year Program of Action adopted at the Makkah Extraordinary Islamic Summit in 2005 of increasing intra-OIC trade to reach 20%.

Ihsanoglu urged the participants to scale up national ownership of the projects proposed by domesticating them within national priority programs.

The participants expressed their support for the Plan and several OIC organs - the Research Center for Islamic History, Art and Culture (IRCICA), the Islamic Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ICCI), the Islamic Development Bank (IDB), Islamic World Academy of Sciences (IAS), the Islamic Conference Youth Forum for Dialogue and Cooperation (ICYF-DC) and the Islamic Solidarity Sports Federation (ISSF) - also shared their eagerness to be involved in the Plan.

The Ministers agreed that in order to implement the Plan some steps have to be taken, namely, to have joint-needs assessment, bench marking, an executive committee and sufficient funding. It was agreed that the first executive committee meeting to begin working on the Plan will be held at the fourth quarter of this year and the next high-level meeting will take place on the sidelines of the 27th Session of COMCEC on October 27 -30, 2011 in Istanbul.

REVIVING THE SILK ROAD



The OIC 4th Annual Islamophobia Report: An upsurge in incidents in Europe and the USA

The Fourth Annual report of the OIC Islamophobia Observatory was distributed at the 38th CFM. It covers the period from May 2010 to April 2011. The report noted an upsurge in Islamophobia, whether emanating from the social sphere or stoked by public figures and institutionalized policies, was witnessed both in Europe and more recently in the United States. The trend manifested itself in various forms, including direct attacks and desecration of Muslim places of worship, cemeteries and other Islamic centers; a growing public perception that Muslims constituted a threat both to the culture and well being of “Western society”, and that Islamic religious symbols, particularly the headscarf, should be strictly limited, or even completely banned.

A frequency of such events was monitored by various surveys and, in the European case, led the UN Secretary General, Ban Ki-Moon and US Secretary of State, Hillary Clinton, to speak out against the dangers of intolerance and the worrying state of religious freedom in the continent.

The second chapter of the report deals with various manifestations of Islamophobia in the West. Concerning the US, the OIC Observatory noted several incidents, the most shocking and outrageous being the episode pertaining to the ‘Burning of the Holy Quran’ and fierce controversy over the ‘Ground Zero Mosque’ controversy led by right wing parties and politicians serving their own political agenda.

Other instances of Islamophobia in the US recorded in the report include the agenda of the Tea Party Movement, which openly advocated hatred against Muslims, the proposed “ban on Sharia”, which succeeded within the State of Oklahoma, and the congressional hearings on the “radicalization of the American Muslim Community” initiated by Rep. Peter King, Chairman of the US House Committee on Homeland Security. The hearings launched a debate built on prejudiced and biased premises that Muslims were potential terrorists who, in his opinion, ostensibly refused to cooperate with the Nation’s “war on terror”.

With regard to Islamophobia in Europe, various studies and surveys by recognized institutions revealed a myth that Islam promoted intolerance and that Muslim immigrants posed a threat to European national identity as well as an economic and social burden, was taking roots. Such a myth was exacerbated in many countries where leading politicians initiated an unhealthy debate predicating, in what could become a self-fulfilling prophecy, the utter failure of multiculturalism, i.e. the incapacity of Europe to harmoniously absorb and live along with Muslims.

The Observatory also noted that a key role in promoting and disseminating an Anti-Muslim culture was assumed by Western Media. For instance, studies have highlighted how often terms such as: “terrorism”, “terrorist”, “extremist”, “fanatic”, “radical” and “fundamentalist” were associated with Islam and Muslims in general. This was in line with a consistent disinformation campaign using the basic

technique of repetition in order to anchor in people’s mind, both consciously and subconsciously, the idea that Islam was a threat.

Another serious prejudice commonly suffered by Muslims was discrimination in employment. Studies and complaints received by competent bodies left no doubt that, statistically speaking, Muslims were discriminated against both in terms of equal access to job opportunity and ill treatment within their work environment.

Chapter 3 of the Report outlines positive developments with regard to combating Islamophobia. Among those were the Resolution by the Council of Europe on “Islam, Islamism and Islamophobia in Europe” and some stands by officials in Germany, UK and US against Islamophobes and Islamophobic actions.

The Chapter on the Human Rights framework presents a chronology, over the reporting period, on the operational aspect of OIC’s engagement on the issue of Islamophobia anchored firmly in international law and placing a premium on seeking consensus while according priority to multilateral diplomacy.

In the fifth chapter, the report describes various steps and actions taken by the OIC, in coordination and cooperation with relevant stakeholders, to combat Islamophobia. Such actions aimed at raising awareness, engaging in vigorous diplomatic efforts to sensitize the international community and addressing critical cases of religious intolerance while responding to Islamophobic acts or publications.

In his forward to the report, OIC Secretary General stated: “From a futuristic perspective, events during the period covered by this report clearly establish that combating incitement to hatred and violence on religious grounds must figure into the strategic calculations of the international community.”

Recommendations:

In conclusion, the report made some recommendations:

- a) Enhancing and broadening the knowledge and understanding of Islam in non-Muslim societies.
- b) Improving the dissemination of information about Muslim countries.
- c) To tackle the media misrepresentation.
- d) Ensuring swift and effective implementation of the new approach signified by the consensual adoption of HRC Resolution 1618/.
- e) Constructively engaging to bridge divergent views on the limits to the right to freedom of opinion and expression.
- f) Effectively reversing the exacerbation of Anti Muslim sentiments after 911/.
- g) Engaging with the West in order to build a political will and commitment.
- h) Reaching out to other international organizations.
- i) Encouraging Muslim community members living in western societies.

Resolutions on Science and Technology: Focus on innovation and collaboration

The 38th Session of the CFM adopted several resolutions that would boost the work of the OIC towards achieving the objectives set by the Ten-Year Program of Action.

The CFM approved the expansion in the membership of the Task Force of the OIC Vision 1441 H to include three Member States from the three OIC regions, mandated the Task Force to monitor the implementation of the Vision 1441 H and Ten Year Program of Action and agreed to transfer the Secretariat of the Task Force to the COMSTECH.

The CFM looked forward to the launching of the country report on the Atlas of Islamic World Innovation for Malaysia and requested the project managers to expedite finalization of the remaining country reports.

The Resolution on *Science and Technology matters* called upon the Member States and the OIC institutions to extend generous financial support to the project on *Atlas of Islamic World Innovation* and requested the Joint Management Team to take all necessary measures for its early completion.

It commended Saudi Arabia, Syria, Pakistan, and Iran for pledging US \$ 5 million each for the *Science, Technology and Innovation Organization (STIO)* for 2011. It welcomed the commencement of the project by STIO for the establishment of *Cellular and Molecular Therapeutics Research Unit (CAMTRU)* in Syria.

Furthermore, it commended the selection of i) International Center for Diarrheal Disease Research (ICDDR), Dhaka, Bangladesh; ii) International Center for Chemical and Biological Sciences (T-IEJ Research Institute of Chemistry), Karachi, Pakistan; iii) Department of Physics, Middle East Technical University (METU), Ankara, Turkey; iv) Institute of Advanced Studies in Basic Sciences, Zanjan, Iran and v) National Institute of Agronomy Research (INRA), Rabat, Morocco as the first five *OIC Centers of Excellence*.

On *higher education matters*, the CFM urged the OIC General Secretariat and ISESCO to finalize *'Key Performance Indicators for the Universities in the Islamic World'* and present it to the Extra-ordinary Islamic Conference of the Ministers of Higher Education and Scientific Research, to be hosted by Saudi Arabia in 2011.

On *health matters*, it requested the Steering Committee on Health to prepare *'Strategic Health Program of Action of the OIC Member States for 2012 -2022'* to be presented for adoption by the Third Islamic Conference of Health Ministers in Astana in September 2011. The CFM encouraged the OIC and the IDB to participate in the 3rd Coordination Meeting to be organized by the IAEA in November-December 2011 in Egypt in the framework of the regional project *'Supporting the Development of Comprehensive National Cancer Control Programs'* and to co-organize a Seminar for Awareness Raising on Cancer Control Program targeting high-level policy makers.

On *environment matters*, the CFM urged OIC Member States to coordinate their positions to effectively address

challenges stemming from climate change and deteriorating environmental conditions, develop environmental policies and allocate necessary human, technological and economic resources for this purpose. It requested COMSTECH in cooperation with Member States and OIC institutions to prepare blue print on *Green Technologies*.

The CFM further urged the Member States and the international community to focus their attention on Central Asia's water resources sustainability and calls upon the Governments of the Central Asian countries to resume negotiations to establish a regional water and energy consortium.

The CFM called upon Member States to increase investment and cooperation in the area of advanced and emerging technologies for addressing challenges in climate change, environmental degradation including through programs in Green Technologies and give priority to nanotechnology, ICT, food security, and biotechnology.

The issue of climate change received much attention.

The CFM took note of the concept paper on *'Climate Change Collaboration on OIC Member States'* presented by Bangladesh and the inputs of other Member States and OIC institutions on the subject. It stressed the need for urgent action and international cooperation to address climate change in accordance with the principles and provisions of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, particularly the principles of common but differentiated responsibilities and respective capabilities.

The CFM acknowledged that for many OIC countries poverty, burden of debt and illiteracy remain to be overriding issues and that those countries have difficulties to combat Climate Change while working towards their development goals; also takes into consideration the special vulnerabilities of the LDCs and Small Islands Developing States (SIDS). It further underscored the importance of reaching an agreed outcome in the UNFCCC negotiations.

Hence, it stressed the need for early operationalization of the *Green Climate Fund (GCF)* and in this regard the early launch of negotiations on the magnitude of allocations and sources of financing for the GCF. It further stressed the need to accord particular attention to adaptation to climate change and adaptation to response measures as well as transfer of technology and capacity building.

The CFM underlined the need for more in depth consideration and examination by Member States of the relevant issues to facilitate the identification of common elements and coordination of OIC positions in relation to multilateral climate change negotiations. And for this purpose it decided to establish a mechanism of regular coordination between the representatives and experts of the OIC Member States on the sidelines of climate change negotiations and such multilateral fora.

It requested the Secretariat to facilitate coordination among OIC countries on climate change-related issues, and urged the General Secretariat to propose a framework of cooperation with the UNFCCC Secretariat.

Kyrgyzstan appreciates the support of the OIC

The Foreign Minister of Kyrgyzstan, Ruslan Kazkbaev, expressed his country's appreciation to the OIC's support during a critical "transitional period".

The OIC had followed with great concern and apprehension the humanitarian situation in the Kyrgyz Republic resulting the displacement of thousands of people after the outbreak ethnic violence last year. OIC Secretary General launched in June 2010 a humanitarian appeal to the Member States, humanitarian organizations and the international community to extend their assistance.

Kazkbaev said that Kyrgyzstan received political and humanitarian support from the OIC Member States during the very important political events of last year.

"We are very appreciative of that support," he said to the *OIC Journal*.



He added: "During that transitional period we have also received financial support from the Member States and the OIC institutions."

Kazkbaev referred to the meeting in Istanbul by humanitarian organizations in the OIC Member States and institutions, which raised more than \$3 million for Kyrgyzstan.

"We are very appreciative of this. I would like to take this opportunity to wish all OIC Member States stability, prosperity and peace."

The OIC had held in Istanbul on June 29, 2010 a meeting with the participation of 15 NGOs from Member States and relevant institutions as well as representatives of UN OCHA and IFAD organizations to alleviate the humanitarian situation in Kyrgyzstan. It received pledges of around \$3.3 million in donations and in-kind.

Resolution on the humanitarian activities of the OIC: A study on the establishment of a special emergency fund

The 38th Session of the CFM adopted a resolution on the humanitarian activities of the OIC in which it commended the efforts made by the Humanitarian Affairs Department (ICHAD) to alleviate the sufferings of the needy people in different OIC Member States struck by disasters and calamities particularly in Gaza, Libya, Somalia, Niger and Yemen. It also commended the work done by the OIC Funds in Afghanistan, Bosnia Herzegovina and Sierra Leone and welcomed the convening of the 1st meeting of the OIC Council of Funds held on 17th April 2011 in Doha, Qatar and its subsequent outcome and called upon all Member States to extend more support to the Funds to enable them to accomplish their objectives.

It also renewed its support for the program implemented by the OIC Office in Banda Aceh for the tsunami orphans in Indonesia under the patronage of the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques King Abdullah Bin Abdulaziz, welcomed the decision of the UAE Red Crescent Organization to sponsor 5,000 orphans in the program and invited all Member States, their financial institutions and philanthropic donors to generously contribute to this project.

The Resolution expressed its grave concern over the serious humanitarian situation prevailing in Côte d'Ivoire and urged all Member States to positively respond to the appeal of the Secretary General of the OIC to provide the much needed humanitarian assistance to this country.

It supported the initiatives taken by the OIC General Secretariat towards Niger in its efforts to attain food self-sufficiency and requested the Member States to increase their support to this vital project; expressed concern over the massive return of Nigerien migrants from Libya following

the events which broke out there and urged the Member States to provide their support to Niger in its program aimed at receiving and reintegrating these needy people.

It also expressed its preoccupation with the deteriorating humanitarian situation in Somalia and urged the OIC General Secretariat to continue its humanitarian endeavors. It welcomed the opening of the OIC Humanitarian Coordination Unit in Mogadishu to coordinate Islamic and international humanitarian action in Somalia and requested all Member States and their civil society to generously assist in alleviating the suffering of the people.

The participants expressed deep concern over the major disasters in the Muslim world, which caused human and material losses; urged all Member States to contribute voluntarily to the efforts being made by the OIC in cases of large-scale disasters, and requested the Secretary General to prepare a comprehensive study on the establishment of a special emergency fund at the OIC and submit it to the 39th CFM.

The Ministers welcomed the great effort undertaken by the Darfur Donors Conference Follow-Up Committee to establish the Darfur Development Bank, expressed once again its gratitude to the Government of the State of Qatar for contributing US dollars 200,000,000 for the capital of the Bank and urged all Member States, financial institutions to generously contribute to the earmarked capital of US dollars 1 billion.

The CFM adopted another resolution which approved the Statute on the Responsibilities and Strategic Objectives of the OIC Humanitarian Affairs Department adopted by the 35th CFM.

Zibari: The OIC exhorted great efforts in bringing Iraqis together

Iraqi Minister of Foreign Affairs Hoshiyar Zebari said that the OIC had consistently played a positive and constructive role in supporting Iraq, particularly its efforts in uniting the Iraqi religious sects on adopting the Makkah Document.

“It is to the credit of the OIC that it exhorted great effort in bringing the Iraqi religious sects together to adopt the Makkah Document,” said Zebari to the *OIC Journal*.

He said that this Document enters the history of Iraq for its importance and vision, which called for tolerance, Islamic agreement and national Iraqi reconciliation.

He added that the OIC has always stood by Iraq in all the international gatherings in support of its security, stability and prosperity. He appreciated the visits by the Secretary General to Iraq. The most recent visit by the Secretary General was in March 2011. The Assistant Secretary General of Humanitarian Affairs also visited Baghdad in April 2011. The outcomes of those visits emphasized the strength of the relations between Iraq and the OIC.

“We look forward to hosting the next ministerial meeting in Baghdad in order to emphasize the role of Iraq in the OIC because it was one of the founding members,” said Zebari.

Iraq had submitted a request to host the 39th Session of the CFM, but the Member States voted in favor of Djibouti, which had also requested to host it. It was the first time in the history of the OIC meeting that a matter was settled by a secret ballot vote. Djibouti received the highest number of votes by a large majority.

Resolution on the situation in Iraq:

The Thirty-eighth Session of the Council of Foreign Ministers adopted a resolution on the situation in Iraq in

which it reiterated its respect for Iraq’s sovereignty, territorial integrity, political independence, and national unity; and welcomed the development achieved in the political process. It also appreciated the efforts of the Government of Iraq in improving the security situation and raising the standard of living in Iraq; and welcomed the adoption by the Security Council of resolutions 1956, 1957 and 1958 on 15 /12/ 2010 which ended the restrictions imposed on Iraq in the area disarmament, the closure of the remaining deals in the Oil for Food Program, the ending of the operation of the Iraq Development Fund as representing an important turning point on the path to restoring Iraq’s role in the international community as an effective member of the international family.

Furthermore, the Council renewed its support to reconstruction and welcomed the efforts of the Government of Iraq in this regard and reiterated the right of the Iraqi people to control and administer their natural resources. It also welcomed the decisions made by a number of States to reopen their diplomatic missions in Iraq, and called upon all States that do not have representations in Baghdad to follow suit.

Referring to the Makkah Document on the situation in Iraq adopted on 20 October 2006, the Council stressed on the need to follow up the implementation of this important document.

The Resolution invited all states to control fatwas and operate an effective mechanism to preclude action that ignites the embers of sectarian sedition and charges of disbelief that target the unity of Muslims.

The Council lauded the position of the State of the United Arab Emirates and the steps taken by the Paris Club in settling Iraq’s debts, and called on Member States to review Iraq’s debts with a view to cancelling or reducing them whenever necessary.

Moreover, it invited all Member States to cooperate and coordinate their efforts in order to combat illicit trade in and smuggling of Iraqi antiquities and to assist in returning them to Iraqi museums.

Resolution on the humanitarian situation:

The CFM expressed satisfaction with the outcome of the OIC humanitarian mission to Iraq and expressed deep concern over the critical humanitarian situation in the country mainly among the orphans, widows and people with special needs. It requested the General Secretariat to develop programs for orphans in Iraq similar to the one implemented in favor of Tsunami affected children in Indonesia and called upon all Member States, financial institutions and civil society organizations to generously contribute in this program.



Sierra Leone appeals to the OIC to hold another fund-raising meeting

The Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of Sierra Leone, Hon. Madam Ebum Jusu, expressed her country's gratitude to the OIC for its efforts in helping Sierra Leone through its fund.

"After the war we needed a lot of money for reconstruction and the OIC was one of the organizations that came to our aid," said to the *OIC Journal*.

The OIC Fund for Sierra Leone was established after the civil war there ended in 2002 and has managed to achieve some progress despite its meager resources. Tangible projects have been implemented in war-ravaged villages through the OIC Poverty Alleviation Program. The OIC has also opened an office in the capital Freetown in 2004 to follow-up on the implementation of the projects.

Jusu said that most of the projects are still in progress and there are some yet to be completed. "We have persuaded the OIC to move forward on that. We are looking forward to their continued investment in Sierra Leone so that we overcome all the problems we have."

The biggest obstacle facing Sierra Leone towards prosperity is funding.

"Funding is the main obstacle that is preventing the progress of these projects, and we have appealed to the OIC to hold another meeting to raise funds." A date has not been scheduled yet, but she hopes that it would be soon so that projects could be implemented and the country realizes the benefits of them.

She is also looking forward to better bilateral relations.

"Sierra Leone is open for business," she said.

She said that the government has discovered new areas of mining for iron ore, and the country is hoping to have partners in OIC countries who would invest in it. There are



also prospects for oil. She said that there are reports that Sierra Leone has oil, but it has not yet been determined if it is in commercial quantities. "We hope so, and that will also take us out of poverty."

An international Donors' Conference for Sierra Leone was held in London, UK in November 2009 in collaboration with the UK Department for International Development (DFID). At the conference, OIC Secretary General Ekmeleddin Ihsanoglu praised President Ernest Bai Koroma on his resolve to put Sierra Leone on the right track by upholding very high the rule of law and also seeking every opportunity to advance the well-being of his people. He appealed to all stakeholders to come forward again

and put their efforts together through private or public partnerships to afford Sierra Leone the real opportunity of developing its huge economic potential.

The objective of the conference was to ensure that there are donors who are committed and to have additional donors, specifically from members of the OIC. Statements by development partners confirmed a continued strong level of support for Sierra Leone's development agenda and that they are expecting to at least maintain aid levels, currently at \$300 million per year, and to increase them where feasible.

In June 2011, the Secretary General visited Sierra Leone during his tour of African Member States. Ihsanoglu discussed with President Koroma the best ways and means to further develop and strengthen existing ties between the OIC, its affiliated and specialized organs and Sierra Leone. The President expressed interest in the development programs of the OIC especially in the domain of agriculture, health, tourism, education, housing and infrastructure development.

Ihsanoglu holds bilateral meetings with heads of delegations

The Secretary General of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation Ekmeleddin Ihsanoglu held several bilateral meetings throughout the second day of the 38th Session of the Council of Foreign Ministers (CFM). The meetings were with heads of delegations from Member States and non-member states including Egypt, Kyrgyzstan, Morocco, Sierra Leone, Somalia and Suriname. The Secretary General also held bilateral meetings with the Foreign Minister of Australia Kevin Rudd who was accompanied by Australia's newly appointed Special Envoy to the OIC Ambassador Ahmed Fahour, and he met with UK minister without

portfolio Baroness Sayeda Warsi, and US Special Envoy to the OIC Rashad Hussein. The dignitaries appreciated the progress made in the OIC and the important agenda items of the 38th CFM. They congratulated the Secretary General on the new name and emblem of the Organization. The talks focused on supporting OIC programs and projects, mobilizing support for recognition of the Palestinian State at the UN General Assembly in September, and improving bilateral cooperation between the OIC and the respective countries.

Palestinians' Bid for Full-fledged Statehood and the Looming Veto War



The Secretary General during a visit to Gaza

By Aiman Abboushi

Let there be no doubt that the Palestinians are all too aware that September 2011 will be the 'determination month', at least for a while in the drawn-out and hardened struggle for their just cause, which has been thwarted time and again by the obdurate arrogance of the current Israeli government, and not less so by the exceptional regional and international developments that cast a heavy and foggy shadow over the prime cause in the Middle East. Concurrently, it seems that the major patrons of the peace process have welshed on the obligations they have traditionally assumed.

Sure enough, the decision to enlist recognition for a Palestinian State is in its own right a real and courageous breakthrough unraveling in the footsteps of the struggle for national identity. The 'delivery' of a newborn State will no doubt have to go through the throes of a long-term birthing process, but will not fizzle out by achievements or get aborted by frustrations that may stem from floating a formal request to recognize the State of Palestine as a full-member in the UN. The Palestinians keenly understand that the shot they will fire in the air of the corridors of the UN would not go astray; rather, it will constitute the announcement of the kick-off of a roadmap that will dot the political i's and cross the t's. It will raise the question that has remained for a long time so intractable to fathom, 'Is it time for the Palestinians to whom the international community and its four major powers recognize, verbally at least, the right to have a State, to declare indeed their own independent State, were it but on paper?!

A historical era in the making

Within this context the Organization of Islamic

Cooperation (OIC) embodies an international diplomatic and political weight buttressed by 57 States with joint OIC-UN membership. As such, the OIC provides a moral backing for the Palestinian Authority which has come a long way in garnering the support of the international community for its legitimate demands, which seem to be locked up in a futile confrontation with a desensitized Israeli government that is more unmovable than the land-grabbing Separation Wall that does not just cut off huge chunks of the occupied West Bank, but worse confines it away from the rest of Palestinian territories.

As formal international recognition for an eventual independent Palestinian State to which Israel would unlikely provide any means of viability, legal recognition in itself gives a much-needed respite from the strenuous and mostly futile rounds of negotiations amid the intrusive policies enacted by Israel and the willed indifference of the world's powers that bear the brunt of working out a peaceful solution to the top Middle East conflict.

Now, in the event the Palestinian National Authority fails to get through its bid to gain full-fledged membership for the Palestinian State through the UN Security Council to the General Assembly, the Palestinians would fall back on contenting themselves with a non-member state status. However, the bottom line is that neither the first option being the best case scenario, nor the second option as the less appealing yet the best available offer, would restore to the Palestinians their legitimate rights, or compel Israel to withdraw from the occupied territories. Whatever one of the two possible recognitions the Palestinians manage to secure after they cast the dice at the anticipated UN voting sessions, it will at the very least help maintain the eyes and the senses of international community vigilant about a self-evident occupation acknowledged legally as such and which the UN recognizes as a temporary state of affairs that ought to negotiate its way through to an ineluctable solution. True, Israeli occupation should not be viewed as an exclusive Israeli prerogative no matter what excuses the government of Benjamin Netanyahu tries to brandish to justify its continued occupation of the Palestinian Territories, or to circumvent the international community in a bid to sustain

its presence in the Palestinian territories. The Palestinian issue will cease to be seen as a mere conflict about disputed territories, or simply as a conflict between two parties over border lands, as Israel claims and seeks to make the rest of the world buy it.

Politically, Palestinians scramble to keep their national cause tightly on the world's radar screen, and make every effort to ensure that it does not get damped as it drags on and on, during which time the Israeli government would confiscate ever more land in the West Bank, and forestall any nascent chance in the future for the peace process to rise from its ashes.

International support platform

Let me put the evolving situation in different terms. As the clock runs down fast, the battle the Palestinian National Authority is set to fight to try to make up ground in a peace process that appears to suffer agonizing death throes in the corridors of the Security Council augurs the commencement of a new type of conflict that may turn out to be a heavier millstone around Israel's neck than the shenanigans it has so often used to evade engaging in a real and meaningful peace process which has grown so spiritless and so substanceless that its very terms and fundamentals call for radical re-articulation.

In this connection, the OIC has endeavored since its inception to lend support to the Palestinian demand for statehood by banking on the wide margin it could afford to rally support, not merely at the level of its Member States, but also through a network of diplomatic relations created thanks to the States enjoying an OIC Observer status besides a string of other countries having special relations with the OIC, notably China, the UK, Brazil and others. To be sure, the OIC will serve as a key asset on the international scene for the Palestinians who are expected to rely more and more on an evolving critical mass of allies to wage the foreseen 'veto war', and cope with its subsequent ramifications.

The quest for the recognition of Palestinian statehood has topped the OIC agenda spanning its various activities and moves. The OIC Secretary General, Professor Ekmeleddin Ihsanoglu, has keenly endeavored to mobilize support for the Palestinians throughout his recent African and European tours prior to the 38th Session of the OIC Council of Foreign Ministers (CFM) held in Astana in late June 2011, and in particular during his European tour that covered London and Brussels. In his bilateral meetings with officials in Britain and the EU, the OIC Secretary General emphasized the importance of supporting the Palestinian demand. He pointed up the deadlock plaguing the peace process, as well as the inalienable and legitimate right of the Palestinians to establish their independent State with East Jerusalem as its capital in line with international resolutions and the commitments made by U.S. President Barack Obama to the 'birthing' of a Palestinian State by September 2011. With this in mind, a moral obligation arises vis-à-vis the Palestinians' right to enjoy an independent and sovereign State as the ultimate and inevitable outcome of any fair and comprehensive peace process.

Global fora

The OIC support for the right of Palestinians to have their own independent State has not been restricted to a simple iteration in the Astana Declaration issued by the 38th CFM, exhorting the international community to recognize Palestinian statehood next September; rather, the Islamic Group has over the past years spearheaded the pro-Palestinian position in the voting sessions at both UN General Assembly and the UN Human Rights Council. The OIC efforts have glaringly come through in the successive resolutions issued by the UN Human Rights Council, which consists of 47 member states 16 out of which are OIC Member States, which translates into a substantial voting power capable of titling the balance of a host of issues ranging from the positive vote on the Goldstone Report, which condemned the violations perpetrated by Israel in the 2008 assault it waged against the Gaza Strip, and the call for the creation of a commission of inquiry into the attack on the Gaza Freedom Flotilla which was boarded by Israeli naval commandos in international waters off Palestinian coasts. Dozens of crew members and humanitarian volunteers who were heading to break the siege imposed on Gaza and provide aid to Palestinians there were either killed or sustained injuries.

Make no mistake about it; if the Muslim world makes the best of this potential, Palestinian politicians who are faced with the intransigence of Netanyahu's government that brought the peace negotiations to a standstill through its adamant attitude and its willed rejection of the very idea of concession-making, will swim through uncharted waters by hurling the ball into the international court, and by wresting the Palestinian issue altogether away from the clutches of Western monopoly and onto the lap of the world's human and humanitarian responsibility to end the tragedy suffered for over six decades by the stateless Palestinian people.



Palestinian Foreign Minister Riad Al-Malki

Minister of Foreign Affairs of Kazakhstan Yerzhan Kazykhanov, Chairman of the 38th Session of the CFM: A historic milestone in the development of our organization

By Maha Akeel

After the conclusion of a successful CFM the Foreign Minister of the Republic of Kazakhstan Yerzhan Kazykhanov, the Chairman of the 38th Session of the CFM gave a wrap up interview with the *OIC Journal* on the important resolutions adopted.

How do you evaluate the outcome of the 38th session of CFM and which resolutions do you consider to be the most important among adopted?

According to the overall assessment of the participants, the meeting in Astana marked a historic milestone in the development of our Organization. As is known, it was renamed

the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), which signifies its transformation into a more consolidated and effective international grouping. In this regard, it was logical that we adopted a new logo of the OIC as well.

One of the session's major achievements was the adoption of a

recommendation to hold the OIC Summit once every two years instead of once every three years.

The long debated issue on the establishment of the OIC Permanent Commission on Human Rights was finally resolved in Astana, following which the Charter and major criteria of its activity were adopted.

The adoption of the OIC Action Plan for Cooperation with Central Asia, including a number of measures to promote the development in the region until 2015, is also of great practical value.

Overall, the CFM adopted 110 resolutions in political, socio-economic, scientific-technical and humanitarian areas. We are also grateful to all our partners for the approval of the resolutions initiated by Kazakhstan, including on the 20th anniversary of the closure of the Semipalatinsk nuclear test site, the International Day against Nuclear Tests and the Aral Sea rehabilitation, as well as on combating drug trafficking from Afghanistan and cooperation between the OIC and other international organizations.

For the first time within the framework of the Organization, Member States democratically elected the next Chairman of the Council of Foreign Ministers, a position sought by both Iraq and Djibouti. Following the results of the voting Djibouti was elected the next Chairman of the OIC CFM.

Most importantly, the Astana Declaration was adopted, reflecting the key issues of the OIC's agenda, which are the Middle East peace process, development of regional and interregional cooperation, the Afghan problem, the establishment of nuclear weapon free zones, the problem of non-proliferation, the fight against terrorism, extremism and drug trafficking, as well as the settlement of crisis in Libya and other countries and regions of the Islamic world.

The heads of delegations and the OIC Secretary General agreed unanimously that the meeting in Astana was the most informative in terms of the amount of the issues addressed, effective in achieving meaningful solutions, well-organized, dramatic, given the current international situation, and democratic in terms of decision-making.

The motto of Kazakhstan's Chairmanship in the OIC, "Peace, Cooperation and Development", has symbolized our country's achievements reached over the 20 years of our independence, and was perceived by OIC members as the quintessence of Kazakhstan's path of development, and a relevant model to follow for the Islamic states.

There was an interactive session on security, which is relevant considering the situation in different parts of the Muslim world. What do you think of the session and how do you propose the OIC proceed regarding this matter to establish security and peace?

Indeed, within the OIC CFM we have organized the Interactive Session under the title "Consolidation of Political



Stability and Economic Development in the Muslim World". It's not by chance that we had chosen this very subject for the session. The participants discussed the issues of strengthening international and regional security, including the social upheavals in North Africa and the Middle East in the broader context.

OIC members predominantly stressed the need for immediate social and economic reforms and strengthening of civil society institutions in the Muslim countries in order to embark on the road of sustained development.

Why is Kazakhstan keen on developing Islamic banking? How do you see the future of Islamic banking, intra-OIC trade and investment?

The Islamic financing is an important and effective instrument to develop both national and global economies. As Kazakhstan's President Nursultan Nazarbayev pointed out in his speech, the recent global economic crisis had clearly demonstrated the viability and relevance of the Islamic financial and economic model.

We attach great importance to the development of Islamic banking in Kazakhstan. With active support of the Islamic Development Bank (IDB), we have elaborated and adopted the Law on Islamic Finance and Islamic Banking. We have also opened the first Islamic bank in the country. And we have plans to issue sovereign and corporate sukuk securities.

Due to the investment nature of the Islamic finance, it may become one of the major sources of funding for the priority investment projects, including those implemented under the Programme of Accelerated Industrial and Innovative Development of Kazakhstan (PAIID). This large-scale investment programme is open for international capital, including that from the fraternal Muslim countries.

We also expect the expansion of the Islamic financing in our region. In this regard, we are planning to host a major international conference on Islamic banking next year.

What will be the priority issues for Kazakhstan during its chairmanship of the CFM?

During its chairmanship of the OIC CFM Kazakhstan is seeking to further contribute to the renewal and modernization of this most important international structure of the Islamic world in line with the new spirit of the times and on the basis of common faith and values. The trajectory of our development is based on modernizing the society while maintaining the Islamic principles.

The Kazakhstan Chairmanship is working to enhance diversified cooperation within the framework of the OIC and interaction in the field of science and technology, ecology, cultural and humanitarian cooperation.

We will also focus our efforts on strengthening the international and regional security, promoting development and addressing social problems, advancing the dialogue among civilizations and ensuring constructive interaction between the Islamic World and the West, fighting Islamophobia, and strengthening the regime of non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction.

Now that the Action Plan for Central Asia has been adopted, what will be the next step and priority areas to put it in action?

Due to various circumstances, Central Asia, as an integral part of the Muslim world, has long been cut off from the OIC and its Member States. Together with the neighbours in the region, Kazakhstan will continue to work towards more active involvement of our countries in mutually beneficial cooperation between the Muslim countries.

As is known, the high level meeting on OIC Cooperation with Central Asia took place within the 38th Session of the OIC CFM. The event took place under the chairmanship of Kazakhstan with the participation of ministers and heads of delegations of the OIC's Summit and CFM Troika member states, as well as the Central Asian countries and the OIC institutions.

Following the meeting, the OIC Action Plan for Cooperation with Central Asia for 2011-15 was adopted for the first time in the history of the Organization. It should be noted that the priorities of the Plan include topical issues for the region such as improvement in terms of trade, increase of investment attractiveness, strengthening food security, development of regional transport corridors, regional cooperation in fighting dangerous diseases, counteraction against organized crime, drug trafficking and illegal migration.

Annual ministerial and senior officials-level meetings will review the progress in the implementation of the Action Plan on a permanent basis, and will also form the Executive Committee. This will provide an opportunity to promptly respond to new challenges and make new amendments to the Action Plan and other related documents.

At the next high-level meeting, which will be held on 17-20 October 2011 in Istanbul within the 27th Session of the Standing Committee for Economic and Commercial Cooperation (COMCEC), we are going to decide on the first steps towards the practical implementation of the activities specified in the Action Plan.

Thank you for the interview.

I would also like to thank the *OIC Journal* for the opportunity to convey our position to our partners and all your readers.

Astana Declaration: Peace, Cooperation and Development

The Foreign Ministers and Heads of Delegations of the OIC Member States acknowledged that the 38th Session of the CFM was held at a time of dynamic change, which holds challenges as well as opportunities for the Muslim Ummah and all humankind. Being aware of the added significance of this Council meeting, they reaffirmed their dedication to the high principles of Islam, which enshrine the values of peace, compassion, tolerance, equality, justice and human dignity for the Ummah and all humankind and resolved to promote peace, cooperation and development all over the world.

The participants expressed their determination to give a new impetus to the OIC, and to strengthen its role as a means of promoting cooperation among their countries and implementing the new vision and goals for the Muslim world that requires its reform, good governance, and human rights in a way that meets the hopes and aspirations of the Ummah in the 21st Century.

"It is within this context that we heartily welcome the transformation of our organization to a more cohesive and effective body under the new name of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation with a new logo," stated the officials in the Astana Declaration. They also stressed the importance of a successful implementation of the OIC Ten Year Program of Action, both for the benefit of the Ummah and in contributing to the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals.

The officials recognized the emerging challenges to our community posed by the unfolding significant developments in the Middle East and North Africa. They appealed to all those concerned to engage in constructive dialogue and work towards peaceful solutions, assuring the protection of civilians. *"In the spirit of the OIC Charter, we will work, inter alia through the OIC, in order to turn these challenges into an opportunity to improve the lives of our peoples by promoting peace, cooperation, rule of law, human rights, fundamental freedoms, good governance, democracy and accountability,"* stated the Declaration.

Palestine issue:

The Heads of Delegations reiterated the need of an early settlement of the Palestinian issue and expressed full support to the Arab Peace Initiative aimed at reaching a lasting, comprehensive and just resolution of the Arab-Israeli conflict. They applauded the significant institution-building efforts accomplished by the Palestinian National Authority, and called on the international community to acknowledge the progress achieved, and to recognize the independent, sovereign state of Palestine based on the borders of 4 June 1967.

They strongly condemned Israel's settlement building and expansion. They called for the implementation of all relevant UN Security Council Resolutions pertaining to the Arab-Israeli conflict, in particular resolutions 242, 338, 425, 1515 and 1860. They also condemned illegal Israeli policies and actions aiming at altering the Arab and

Islamic character of occupied East Jerusalem, changing its demographic composition and isolating it from its Palestinian surroundings. They reaffirmed their support to the efforts made by His Majesty King Mohamed VI, Chairman of the Al-Quds Committee as well as the efforts of His Majesty King Abdullah II Ibn Al-Hussein of Jordan in this regard.

They also condemned Israel's persisting occupation of the Syrian Golan Heights and Lebanese territories, and they emphasized their support for these two countries in regaining all their territories occupied by Israel.

Peaceful resolution of conflicts:

The officials underlined the importance of security, sovereignty, independence, territorial integrity and legal rights for all OIC member countries and a peaceful resolution of the conflicts in accordance with principles of the United Nations Charter, the OIC Charter, and international law. They expressed solidarity with Iraq, Afghanistan, Azerbaijan, Somalia, Sudan, Cote d'Ivoire, the Union of Comoros, Bosnia and Herzegovina as well as peoples of Turkish Cypriot State, Kosovo and Jammu and Kashmir in their aspirations to a peaceful, secure and prosperous life.

They supported efforts to strengthen and enhance the role of the OIC in conflict prevention and resolution.

Libya:

The participants expressed deep concern about the situation in Libya and its humanitarian consequences and called upon the Member States and institutions of the OIC to take part in the ongoing efforts aimed at providing humanitarian assistance to the people of Libya. They also welcomed all efforts aiming at achieving peaceful solution to this crisis.

Afghanistan:

They reaffirmed their joint commitment to a long-term engagement in Afghanistan in order to bring peace, stability and socio-economic development and to tackle new challenges emerging from it. In this regard they welcomed the initiatives aimed at contributing to enhance cooperation with Afghanistan and commended relevant educational programs, technical assistance and infrastructural projects. They resolved to step up their efforts to prevent and control drugs and crime. They commended the activities of the Central Asian Regional Information and Coordination Centre for Combating the Illicit Trafficking of Narcotic Drugs, Psychotropic Substances and their Precursors (CARICC) in Almaty, Kazakhstan.

Terrorism:

The Foreign Ministers and Heads of Delegation strongly condemned terrorism in all its forms and manifestations and reaffirmed that terrorism should never be linked to any religion, race, faith, values, culture or society.

They noted that terrorism cannot be effectively

addressed purely through the security perspective or military means. “Combating terrorism must be dealt with through providing proper education and better social conditions for impoverished people and job opportunities for youth and would yield far better results by the eradication of its root causes,” they stressed in the Astana Declaration.

They reiterated their commitment to strengthen cooperation in fighting and eliminating terrorism and reaffirmed the proposal of the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques King Abdullah Bin Abdulaziz on the establishment of an international centre for combating terrorism under the umbrella of the United Nations. They welcomed the initiative of Iran in organizing the International Conference on the Global Fight against Terrorism in Tehran on June 2011.

Non-proliferation and disarmament:

Greater efforts are needed to promote non-proliferation and disarmament, stressed the Declaration. They applauded the call made at the 2010 NPT Review Conference to convene a conference in 2012 on the establishment of a Middle East zone free of nuclear weapons and all other weapons of mass destruction. They commended the on-going implementation of the Treaty on a Nuclear Weapon-Free Zone in Central Asia. The officials congratulated Kazakhstan on its achievement of closing the former Semipalatinsk nuclear test site and celebrated the 20th anniversary of this landmark event. They welcomed the UN Resolution on the initiative of Kazakhstan to declare 29 August as the International Day against Nuclear Tests.

Dialogue:

The participants reaffirmed the importance of increased efforts to promote inter-religious, inter-ethnic and inter-cultural dialogue within and between states in order to protect the rights of every individual, prevent conflict, foster social harmony, preserve identity and celebrate diversity. They welcomed the initiative of the President of Kazakhstan H.E. Nursultan Nazarbayev to convene the Congress of Leaders of World and Traditional Religions on a regular basis and support other important initiatives and fora of the Islamic countries that provide an effective platform for dialogue to promote inter-faith peace and harmony, including King Abdullah’s Centre for Dialogue between Cultures and Civilizations and the Alliance of Civilizations cosponsored by Turkey.

Central Asia:

The Heads of Delegations supported efforts to promote regional cooperation in Central Asia and applauded the various programs aimed at involving regional groups in the on-going socio-economic activities, including the adoption of the Plan of Action for Cooperation with Central Asia.

Economy:

The participants acknowledged the key role that socio-economic development plays for the stability of societies. They pledged to strengthen development, reduce

vulnerability and to unleash the potential of our peoples and economies. They also confirmed their determination to enhance trade and aid among Muslim countries, and to promote education and innovation in order to modernize our societies, cope with demographic changes and create new opportunities, especially for youth and women.

They called for the strengthening of multilateral cooperation within the OIC in trade, economic, scientific, technical and environmental dimensions, as well as for the establishment a SME fund under the auspices of the IDB.

Furthermore, they called for increased support for activities of private sector establishments in the OIC Member States, including encouragement of their participation in trade promotion and joint venture activities.

Health, food security, water:

The officials stressed the importance of sufficient health care for the prosperous development of societies. They commended the plans for adopting a “Strategic Plan of Action for the OIC in the Sphere of Healthcare until 2020” at the 3rd Conference of OIC Health Ministers to be hosted by Kazakhstan later this year.

They expressed concern over the fact that insufficient access to food and water can affect the well-being of peoples and the stability of states. They called for increased cooperation in the area of food security, among OIC states and between the OIC and interested partners. They therefore welcomed the establishment of a relevant food security mechanism. As for water, they called for greater cooperation to promote water management, including through the realization of the OIC Water Vision.

Culture:

They reiterated the importance of the preservation and restoration of our cultural heritage and the exchange of best practices in learning and teaching languages, history and culture of the Islamic countries. They welcomed the nomination of Almaty as the capital of Islamic culture in Asia 2015 by the Islamic Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization.

International cooperation:

The Ministers and Heads of Delegations supported the mobilization of additional resources and invited OIC Member States to scale up their relevant contributions. In this regard, they called on all national and international development partners to collaborate with the OIC in its efforts to expand South-South cooperation.

They also called for greater inter-institutional cooperation between the Organization of the Islamic Cooperation, the United Nations, the African Union, the League of Arab States, the European Union, the Conference on Interaction and Confidence Building Measures in Asia, the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, the Gulf Cooperation Council, the Cooperation Council of Turkic Speaking States and other relevant organizations.

Moroccans approve new constitution

Rabat, Morocco – The Secretary General of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) Ekmeleddin Ihsanoglu welcomed the approval by an overwhelming majority of Moroccan voters of the new constitution of the Kingdom of Morocco containing reforms perpetuating separation of powers and good governance in this founding Member State of the Organization.

The Secretary General also commended the democratic atmosphere in which the referendum took place.



More than 98 percent of voters backed a new constitution put forward in a referendum on July 1, 2011. King Mohammed VI announced the referendum in June to devolve some of his power to the prime minister and Parliament, saying the reform would “consolidate the pillars of a constitutional monarchy.”

The new constitution grants the government executive powers, but retains the king at the helm of the army, religious authorities and

the judiciary and still allows him to dissolve Parliament, although not unilaterally as is the case before.

Bahrain begins national dialogue

Manama, Bahrain – Talks between Bahrain’s opposition and pro-government groups began on July 2, 2011, aimed at healing the deep rifts caused by protests earlier this year. The national dialogue was decreed by King Hamad bin Isa Al-Khalifa to discuss political, economic, social, and legal reforms with “all options” on the table.

“We start without conditions or limits, our only condition

is accepting one another,” said Khalifa bin Ahmed Al-Dhahrani, chairman of the dialogue and also the speaker of Parliament, at the start of the dialogue. He told participants that any agreed proposals would be taken to the king, who “will pass it on to legal organizations for the necessary implementation.”

OIC ready to play a role in resolving Syrian crisis as number of victims rise

Jeddah, Saudi Arabia - Secretary General of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation Ekmeleddin Ihsanoglu, expressed his deep concern over the rising number of victims among civilians and the loss of so many innocent lives among the Syrian people, as a result of the escalating clashes that have prevailed in Syria for the past several months and the excessive use of force by the Syrian security. He stressed that the kind of approach used over the past several months in dealing with public demands has proven its failure to contain the crisis. Rather, it has led to further loss of lives and an even more complicated domestic situation with all the negative impact on the regional and international opinion whose rejection of this approach has been gaining momentum.

The Secretary General called upon all parties to preserve the unity and cohesion of their country and to spare it the risks of infighting and external intervention. He exhorted the

Syrian leadership to exercise the highest level of restraint through the immediate halt of the use of force and to engage in a dialogue with all the forces in Syria in order to reach an agreement on steps in favor of satisfactory and early reforms.

Ihsanoglu expressed OIC’s readiness to play some role in this framework, being convinced that dialogue is the only safe option through which the overwhelming crisis could be contained.

The Secretary General pointed out that the noble Islamic faith lays a particular stress on the inviolability of human life in all circumstances. Ihsanoglu further reiterates the ideals enshrined in the Ten-year Program of Action (TYPOA), which was adopted by the OIC Member States at their 2005 Extraordinary Summit in Makkah Al-Mukarramah, on the importance of good governance, democracy and human rights.

OIC, Gambia discuss ways to strengthen relations

Jeddah, Saudi Arabia – The OIC Assistant Secretary General for Political Affairs, Ambassador Abdullah Abdurrahman Alim, received, on 18 July 2011 at the OIC premises in Jeddah, Dr. Momoudo Tanjara, the Foreign

Minister of Gambia, and his accompanying delegation.

The two sides discussed ways and means to strengthen relations between the Organization and Gambia, and to promote the joint Islamic action.

Refugees on the rise: UNHCR

Geneva, Switzerland – The number of people forced to flee their homes to escape war or abuse has risen to its highest for 15 years, with four out of five refugees in developing countries, the United Nations said on June 20, 2011.

In all, there were 43.7 million displaced people worldwide at the end of 2010, up from 43.3 million a year before, the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) said. They include 15.4 million refugees who fled across borders – 80 percent of them to nearby developing countries – and 27.5 million uprooted within their own homelands, it said in an annual report. A further 850,000 are asylum seekers who lodged claims.

“Fear about supposed floods of refugees in industrialized countries are being vastly overblown or mistakenly conflated with issues of migration,” UN High Commissioner for Refugees Antonio Guterres said in a statement.

“Meanwhile it’s poor countries that are left having to pick up the burden,” said Guterres.

Rising food prices and poorer countries’ limited access to financial markets had intensified the humanitarian crisis for refugees.

The world’s poorest countries host huge refugee populations, both in absolute terms and in relation to their economic size, according to the agency’s report, “Global Trends 2010.” Slightly more than half of all refugees are children under 18.

Pakistan, Iran and Syria host the most refugees, with 1.9 million, 1.1 million and 1 million respectively, it says.

Afghans form the largest group, 3 million refugees, including many who left their homeland years ago, followed by Iraqis, Somalis and Congolese, whose countries are also mired in protracted conflicts.

Victims of the Srebrenica Massacre honored July 11

Jeddah, Saudi Arabia – On the occasion of the 16th anniversary of the Srebrenica massacre, the Secretary General of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) Ekmeleddin Ihsanoglu has reminded the Member States to honor the victims of the genocide on 11th July 2011.

Referring to the Resolution adopted by the 38th Session of the Council of Foreign Ministers held in Astana, Kazakhstan, on 30th June 2011, Ihsanoglu then called upon the Islamic world to commemorate the 11th July as the Day of Morning, which marked the worst atrocities to take place in Europe since the Second World War.

The Secretary General, while recalling, the tragic event of 11th July 1995, in Srebrenica, expressed his deepest condolence and prayed for the brotherly people of Bosnia

Herzegovina who lost the lives of their loved ones. He also conveyed his profound sympathy to their relatives. He reiterated the OIC’s strong condemnation of the aggression against innocent civilians of Bosnia Herzegovina, which violated international law and morality.

In this regard, he welcomed the recent arrest and indictment by the International Criminal Court of the war criminal, General Ratko Mladic, and urged that the search for other war criminals be continued so that no war criminal could no longer count on impunity. The Secretary General further reiterated the full support of the OIC to initiatives aimed at furthering the normalization of relations and the consolidation of the culture of peaceful coexistence in the region.

OIC welcomes new developments in Afghanistan-Pakistan relations

Islamabad, Pakistan – The Secretary General of the Organization of Islamic Conference Ekmeleddin Ihsanoglu has welcomed the recent positive developments in Afghanistan-Pakistan relations following the latest visit by President Karzai to Islamabad. He praised leaders of both countries and congratulated them for their resolve to work closely together for reconciliation and peace in Afghanistan.

The Secretary General further welcomed the first

meeting of the Afghanistan-Pakistan Joint Commission for Reconciliation and Peace in Afghanistan, which was convened in Islamabad on 11 June 2011 during which both sides, among other things, emphasized the importance of continued close cooperation, consultation and coordination on peace in Afghanistan, particularly in realizing the goal of a peaceful and prosperous region.

He reiterating the OIC’s continuous readiness to help advance stability, peace and prosperity in the region.

OIC takes up issue of banning Tajik youths from worshipping

Jeddah, Saudi Arabia – A spokesperson of the General Secretariat of the Organization of the Islamic Cooperation in Jeddah expressed concern at reports that the Government of Tajikistan has imposed a ban on Tajik youths from praying in mosques. The spokesperson added that the OIC has taken up the matter with the concerned authorities of Tajikistan seeking clarification of the reported development.

According to local news reports, President Emomali Rakhmon signed the measure banning all children and teenagers from worshipping in mosques into law on August 3 after it was unanimously adopted by the upper house of parliament the month before. The law bans those under the age of 18 from praying in churches and mosques and requires them to study in secular schools.

The State of Southern Sudan is born



President of the Republic of South Sudan, Salva Kiir Mayardit (L) and Sudan's President Omar Hassan Al-Bashir (C) during the South Sudan Independence celebrations, in Juba, 9 July 2011 (epa).

Juba, South Sudan – The Secretary General of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation Ekmeleddin Ihsanoglu, welcomed the birth of the Republic of South Sudan on 9 July 2011 in implementation of the results of the referendum on self-determination of South Sudan which took place on 9 January 2011. The Secretary General commended the

Government of Sudan for recognizing the new State of South Sudan, stressing the need to maintain peaceful relations between the two States and to consolidate the strong ties between Khartoum and Juba in order to establish peace and support socio-economic development in both countries. He called upon the two States to reach soonest a negotiated settlement.

Sudan was the first state to recognize the independence of the South on July 8, smoothing the way for the division of Africa's largest country into two. "The Republic of Sudan declares that it recognizes the state of South Sudan from July 9," Khartoum's Minister for Presidential Affairs Bakri Hassan Saleh announced on state television.

The UN Security Council voted on July 8 to establish a new peacekeeping force for South Sudan. The new mission called UNMISS, calls for up to 7000 UN peacekeepers and an additional 900 civilian police for South Sudan. The vote to adopt the resolution was unanimous. The current UNMIS mission, which monitors compliance with the 2005 peace deal, is set to end with the south's secession.

Peace Accord signed by the Government of Sudan and the LJM

Doha, Qatar – Ekmeleddin Ihsanoglu, Secretary General of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), attended the signing ceremony of the Doha Document for Peace in Darfur by the Sudanese Government and the Liberation and Justice Movement (LJM) held in Doha, capital of Qatar, on 14 July 2011 under the patronage of H.H. the Emir of Qatar and H.E. the Sudanese President Omar Hassan Al-Bashir, with wide African, Arab and international official presence.

The Secretary General delivered a statement during the signing ceremony in which he welcomed and expressed satisfaction with the signature of the peace accord, which he described as a historic achievement that comes in culmination of a long process of painstaking negotiations and difficult



consultations that lasted for over thirty months. The Secretary General commended the central contribution of the State of Qatar led by H.H. the Emir Sheikh Hamad Bin Khalifa Al-Thani in bringing about a rapprochement

in the viewpoints of the parties in Darfur towards the achievement of a comprehensive permanent peace agreement, marking the beginning of a new era of peace, security and harmony in Darfur.

The Secretary General also commended the relentless efforts and the good offices of H.E. Sheikh Hamad Bin Jassim Bin Jaber Al-Thani, Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs of Qatar, H.E. Ahmad Bin Abdullah Al-Mahmoud, Minister of State for Foreign Affairs of Qatar, and H.E. Jibril Bassouli, Joint African Union-United Nations Mediator for Darfur, for the success of the Doha Negotiations.

Ihsanoglu called and stressed on the need for intensifying efforts with a view to having all parties in Darfur join the peace process.

North and south Sudan sign Abyei deal

Addis Ababa, Ethiopia – North and south Sudan have signed an agreement to demilitarize the disputed Abyei region and allow in Ethiopian peacekeeping forces, former South African President Thabo Mbeki said on June 20, 2011.

The agreement "provides for the demilitarization of Abyei so that the Sudanese armed forces would withdraw and for the deployment of Ethiopian forces."

He said the northern Sudanese military, the south's

Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA) and Ethiopian officials would now meet to settle on a mandate for Ethiopian peacekeeping forces who will be deployed in the region.

The peacekeepers would go to Abyei as soon as they are authorized by the UN and would replace all military forces in the area, he said.

A police service would be established for the region, with the size and composition determined by a joint committee co-chaired by northern and southern officials.

Ihsanoglu discusses enhancing OIC cooperation with the British government and European Union

The Secretary General of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), Ekmeleddin Ihsanoglu paid an official visit to London from 12 to 16 June 2011 to discuss possible ways and means of enhancing and broadening OIC-UK strategic dialogue and mutual relations in various fields, and to share his views on the current developments taking place in the Middle east and worldwide. The Secretary General, who was accompanied by a high-ranking delegation, was received in audience by Rt. Hon. Prime Minister David Cameron and met Rt. Hon. William Hague MP, Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs. Ihsanoglu also met with Dr. Rowan Williams, Archbishop of Canterbury; Rt. Hon. Baroness Warsi, Cabinet Minister without Portfolio; Nigel Evans, Deputy Speaker of the House of Commons; Alistair Burt, MP Parliamentary Under Secretary of State; Alan Duncan, Minister of State for International Development; and Ambassador Marc Sedwill, UK Special Representative for Afghanistan and Pakistan; as well as Mohammed Shokat, UK Special Envoy designate to the OIC.

In a joint statement issued after concluding the visit, the Secretary General and his counterparts agreed to develop a joint framework of dialogue and cooperation between the OIC and the UK on selected areas such as development aid, humanitarian assistance, science and technology, interfaith dialogue and combating intolerance.

In his meeting with Prime Minister Cameron and Foreign Secretary Hague, the OIC Secretary General also exchanged views on the Middle East Peace Process, developments in some countries in North Africa and Middle East such as Libya, Syria and Yemen and the situation in Afghanistan. In this context, Ihsanoglu welcomed the appointment of Mohammed Shokat as the new UK Special Envoy to the OIC and expressed the readiness of the OIC to support him in consolidating the OIC-UK relations.

On the occasion of his visit, Ihsanoglu met with selected British Muslim personalities and exchanged views with them about their role and activities in society. He commended the valuable and successful work conducted by the British Muslim community and expressed his strong belief that Muslims in Britain set a good example for Muslims living in other European countries. In a separate event, the OIC Secretary General got together with the Ambassadors of the OIC Member States accredited to the United Kingdom and met with the representatives of the Royal Institute of International Affairs, Chatham House.

The OIC Secretary General also paid a visit to Brussels on



President of the European Commission Barosso with the OIC SG Ihsanoglu.

16 and 17 June 2011 to strengthen institutional cooperation between the OIC and the European Union (EU). He met with the President of the European Council Herman Von Rompuy and the President of the European Commission Jose Manuel Barosso. During the said meetings, the Secretary General discussed with them ways and means to further strengthen bilateral relations between the OIC and the EU in different areas of mutual concern including joint cooperation in development fields in OIC Member States. They also exchanged views on the situation in Palestine and Middle East Peace Process, developments in some countries in North Africa and Middle East such as Libya. Both sides agreed to intensify regular consultations at various levels.

The Secretary General's visits to the UK and Belgium came only a few days after concluding his African tour where he paid official visits to seven African countries and discussed with their heads of states possible ways of intensifying cooperation with the OIC in various sectors including promoting agriculture, cotton industry and infrastructure development.

During his visits to the Africa and European countries, Ihsanoglu also solicited support for the possible declaration of a Palestinian independent State by Palestinians during the forthcoming UN General Assembly in September 2011.

The end of Qaddafi's regime

National Transitional Council (NTC) recognized as Libya's legitimate body



Tripoli, Libya – After six months of bloody fighting the rebels in Libya were finally successful in ending the 42-year totalitarian regime of Muammar Qaddafi.

On August 21 the armed rebels on the ground, with the help of NATO air strikes, entered the Libyan capital Tripoli and forced Qaddafi and his sons and supporters into hiding while other members of his family and ministers fled the country. Soon after the fall of Tripoli, most of the Arab countries and many Muslim and world countries recognized the National Transitional Council (NTC) as the representative of the Libyan people. Although sporadic exchange of heavy fire continued for some time between the rebels and remnants of Qaddafi's forces in Tripoli and in his hometown of Sirte, the international community stepped into action to establish security in Libya, unfreeze Libya's foreign assets and provide humanitarian assistance.

Throughout the Libyan crisis the OIC Secretary General Ekmeleddin Ihsanoglu has been keen to participate in most of the meetings held at the international level addressing the Libyan crisis. Ihsanoglu in his speeches highlighted the OIC efforts in putting an end to the crisis, which began on the 17th of February 2011, through comprehensive diplomatic solutions. Among these efforts is sending a high-level OIC delegation to Tripoli and Benghazi in June to assess the situation as well as rushing to provide humanitarian aid as soon as the crisis began by opening a humanitarian coordination office in Benghazi.

The International Contact Group on Libya meeting before the fall of Tripoli, held in Istanbul on July 15, announced the decision to recognize the opposition National Transitional Council (NTC) as the nation's only legitimate body.

"We are making progress; political progress, not only military progress," said Italian Foreign Minister Franco Frattini to the *OIC Journal* after that meeting.

On the military side, he said the NTC is advancing towards Tripoli with the help of NATO.

Frattini urged to work for the day-after the crisis, for the future of Libya.

As for the political solution, he sees it as a governmental national unity encompassing all the regions and all

representatives of civil society, and not to seek revenge.

"The only red line is Qaddafi and his family, they cannot be part of the future of Libya," Frattini stated.

Whether Qaddafi stays in Libya or leaves is up to the Libyans, he added. "What is important is for Libyans to agree on the solution."

Ihsanoglu congratulates the Libyan people, reiterates OIC's support to the NTC

With the announcement of the fall of Qaddafi's regime by the NTC, the Secretary General conveyed his congratulations to the Libyan people for the success of their revolution and for the triumph of their free will and national choice.

Ihsanoglu urged the Libyan people at this crucial stage of their history to preserve the national unity and territorial integrity of Libya and to rally around the NTC as the only legitimate representative of the Libyan people, and underscored the need to preserve the private and public property of the Libyan people. The Secretary General insisted on all parties in Libya not to resort to retaliatory means and to comply with national and international laws.

Ihsanoglu reiterated OIC's full support to the NTC in the coming stage, which requires the multiplication of efforts for reconstruction, reinforcement of the foundations of good governance, promotion of human rights, expansion of political participation and comprehensive development in order to be able to face the growing political, social and economic challenges.

The Secretary General invited OIC Member States to provide their political and humanitarian support to the Libyan people to achieve long-term peace and stability.

The Secretary General participated in a telephone/video conference organized by the UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon on 26 August to discuss Libya and coordinate the role of the international and regional organizations in post-conflict planning of the country. The leaders of the international and regional organizations including the African Union, the League of Arab States and the European Union unequivocally recognized the prime role of the Libyan people to decide on their future and agreed to coordinate their efforts to assist the Libyan people in doing so.

Also, an OIC delegation participated in the Libya Contact Group Meeting in Istanbul under the Co-Chairmanship of Turkey and Norway on 25 August.

The participants of the meeting agreed to deal with the National Transitional Council (NTC) as the legitimate governing authority in Libya and underlined the need to empower the NTC with the legal, political and financial means necessary to form an interim government of Libya. They also attached utmost importance to the realization of national reconciliation in Libya and agreed that such a process should be based on principles of inclusiveness and avoidance of retribution and vengeance.

An OIC delegation also participated in the "Friends of Libya" conference in Paris on September 1.

The 4th Conference of the OIC Humanitarian NGOs: The role and responsibilities of civil society organizations

Khartoum, Sudan - The Fourth Conference of the OIC Humanitarian NGOs under the theme: "Civil society Organizations in the Muslim World: Responsibilities and Roles", was organized by the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) in collaboration with the Munazamat Al-Dawa Al-Islamiya on 8- 9 June 2011, under the high patronage of H.E. Field Marshal Omar Hassan El-Basheer, President of the Republic of the Sudan. The Conference stressed on the need to coordinate the activities of civil society organizations in the OIC Member States.

President El-Basheer called on the organizations to adopt the spirit of cooperation on righteousness and disseminate kindness to the world. He urged them to come together and work for a better future for humanitarian action in order to ensure dignified life for the people within and outside the Muslim world. The President also commended the Secretary General of the OIC Ekmeleddin Ihsanoglu for his extensive and massive role in leading joint Islamic action and making the OIC an open expression of the ambitions and hopes of the Islamic states and their peoples.

The OIC Assistant Secretary General for Humanitarian Affairs Ambassador Atta El-Manan Bahkit delivered a speech on behalf of the OIC Secretary General. He noted that the idea of organizing regular conferences of civil society organizations came as an expression of the change and reform initiative witnessed by the OIC, which was adopted by the historic Makkah Al Mukarramah Extraordinary Summit of 2005.

In his address, the Chairman of the Council of Trustees of Munazamat Al-Dawa Al-Islamia, co-organizer of the conference, Marshal Abdul Rahman Swaradahab stressed on the importance of relations between the state and the organizations of civil society and the role of these organizations in development and the social change. He noted the necessity for the holding of the conference in the light of the challenges and the plots woven against Islam and Muslim minorities, describing terrorism as an accusation meant to undermine the successful achievements in the Islamic world

The Sri Lankan Minister of Trade and Industry Abdul Rasheed Badic Deen also addressed the Conference and urged assistance for Muslim war victims in his country following the defeat of rebellion.

The Conference continued for two days to discuss two main themes: Relations between the state and civil society organizations and the role of civil society organizations in social development and change.

The Conference praised the role played by civil society organizations in Member States in the area of development and reconstruction, calling for additional support for these organizations to strengthen their presence both locally and internationally.

The Conference also invited the legislative councils in the Member States to develop legislation of civil society in

Member States in order to develop civil society, calling for the necessity to disseminate the culture of volunteerism and charitable work and make it part of the cultural component of Islamic societies. It commended the work undertaken by the committee in charge of preparing a draft code of conduct for humanitarian action, confirming that the project needs further study and review.

The Conference also stressed on the need to hold the Conference of humanitarian organizations annually and the formation of a working group for emergency humanitarian intervention and report the results of this experience in the next conference, praising the successful experiences of some organizations in Member States, calling on them to continue to review these experiences in coming sessions. The Conference also called on humanitarian organizations in the Members States to introduce laws for the renaissance of Muslim communities in all areas and to adopt community partnerships on the basis of shared benefit and away from religious and sectarian matters, stressing the need to promote adherence to the principle of transparency and accountability in humanitarian work to support the credibility of humanitarian organizations for donors and beneficiaries.

The Conference also urged organizations to expand the involvement of humanitarian organizations from the African and Asian groups so as to overcome the obstacles to their participation in the work of upcoming conferences, inviting them to provide adequate resources to strengthen education resources on the African continent through endowments and specialized funds. It also recommended the preparation of standard curricula for African countries in the Arabic language and Islamic education, and to enhance competencies and capabilities of teachers and students, and to expand open learning and distance education.

The Conference had also recommended giving special attention to Muslim minorities in non Member States.

Training on non-violent civilian peace keeping

New York, USA - On 16th of June, 2011, the OIC office in New York organized a training/presentation at its premises on the concept and implementation of non-violent civilian peace keeping, for the staff of the office as well as representatives from the Permanent Missions of the OIC Member States to the UN in New York. This event was organized in cooperation with the Nonviolent Peaceforce (NP) organization based in Brussels.



OIC Member States pledge \$350 million for Somalia



Istanbul, Turkey – Member States of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) have pledged \$350 million in aid to fight famine in Somalia at an emergency meeting in Istanbul on August 17.

With some 3.7 million Somalis at risk of starvation in the Horn of Africa country, OIC Secretary General Ekmeleddin Ihsanoglu said he hoped the aid would soon reach \$500 million and urged donors to improve drought-stricken Somalia's long-term food security by helping it rebuild infrastructure and agriculture.

“All in all we have secured \$350 million in pledges. We hope to raise the commitments to \$500 million in a very short time,” he told a news conference after the meeting. The promised amount includes \$150 million that Turkey has already collected for Somalia from a national aid campaign, Ihsanoglu said.

Other donations came from Algeria, Bahrain, Egypt, Gabon, Iran, Kazakhstan, Malaysia, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Senegal and Sudan, according to the meeting's final declaration.

Member States, financial institutions, humanitarian organizations and philanthropists were urged to generously contribute to the Somali Trust Fund, which was founded under the OIC secretariat by the 38th Council of Foreign Ministers, said Turkish Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoglu.

Kazakhstan, Turkey, Saudi Arabia, Senegal and the OIC constituted a task force dedicated to follow the situation in Somalia and coordinate the aid campaigns, he added.

“We decided to have aid campaigns in all Islamic countries,” Davutoglu said.

The Islamic world would “actively take part” in finding a solution for the domestic tensions in Somalia, he added. The meeting urged the rebel groups to stop the fighting and called on all Member States and the international community

to help in solving the crisis in Somalia by tackling the deep-rooted causes of the civil strife.

Kazakhstan, the term chair of the OIC Council of Foreign Ministers, also offered to establish a food security mechanism to prevent future famines in the Horn of Africa, Kazakhstan's Foreign Minister Yerzhan Kazykhanov said.

Noting the recurrence of crises and humanitarian disasters in Member States, the meeting called on the OIC to expedite the establishment of the OIC Emergency Response Fund.

“The OIC secretariat will open bank accounts in different countries for individual donations to Somalia,” Kazykhanov added.

Rallying support:

The United Nations has declared that one billion dollars is needed for Somalia, but the international community only pledged half this amount, Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan said in his opening remarks at the emergency meeting, which Turkey had called for holding.

“There is a fire in Somalia and what's urgent is to extinguish that fire,” Erdogan said to the Foreign Ministers and representatives of 40 out of the 57-nation OIC to galvanize support for Somalia and neighboring regions also hit by drought. He invited Muslim countries as well as strong economies throughout the world to extend a helping hand to the people of Somalia.

Erdogan said the Somali famine was “a litmus test” not only for Muslims but for all humanity.

Somali President Sheikh Sharif Ahmed said his country was unable to raise enough food and cattle, and faced militant attacks. Al Shabaab militants, who have prevented aid from getting to people, control the worst hit areas.

The rebels, who have waged a four-year insurgency against Somalia's government, withdrew from Mogadishu at the beginning of August, which was also the start of the fasting month of Ramadan for Muslims, opening the way for life-saving food aid but also raising the risk of insurgency attacks.

Somalia is the country hardest hit by the drought that has affected people around the Horn of Africa region.

UN officials have said some 12 million people are in danger of starvation in the Horn of Africa region.

Ihsanoglu declares famine in Somalia, launches ‘Days of Giving’ Campaign

The OIC Secretary General Ekmeleddin Ihsanoglu has announced on July 20 that Somalia is suffering from

- * The famine has adversely affected 80% of the population in middle and lower Shabelle, Banadir and Bay regions
- * Below average rainfalls have failed crops and vegetation for the last 3 seasons
- * More than 60% of the livestock were killed by the famine in these regions
- * Women, children, elders and the sick who cannot travel are the most vulnerable populations with high number of malnourished children
- * The humanitarian response in these areas are to non-existing
- * The urgently needed interventions are: food aid, water, nutrition and medicine



famine especially in Bay, Bakool, lower Shabelle and Juba. Ihsanoglu urged for helping the victims in this country, which suffers from an on going civil war for more than two decades. The Secretary General issued an urgent appeal to all Somali parties to stop fighting and allow complete unrestricted access of humanitarian organizations into Somalia.

The OIC organized a meeting of OIC Alliance of Relief Organizations on the 28th of July in Istanbul. The event was attended by some 17 humanitarian organizations from around the Muslim world. The Secretary General called on the Member States, charity organizations, financial institutions, international organizations, civil societies and philanthropists to provide generous aid and the necessary support to help Somalia overcome its crisis.

Ihsanoglu also announced the formation of the OIC Alliance for Relief as a voluntary umbrella for all humanitarian organizations and financial institutions to coordinate the humanitarian work. The Alliance's role includes the elaboration of plans and programs, mobilization of resources, needs assessment, provision of data, definition of action sectors according to specialty and the implementation of programs, their documentation and their media coverage. Work was divided within the Alliance into five sectors for which five organizations were selected to ensure coordination in their respective fields of specialty as follows:

1. Management of camps: Assigned to the Turkish Red Crescent Society
2. Health: Federation of Arab Doctors
3. Food and Emergency needs: Qatar Red Crescent
4. Media and documentation: Islamic Relief – Britain
5. Mobilization of Resources: Department of Humanitarian Affairs of the OIC

The Secretary General also launched a humanitarian campaign under the title: "Days of Giving" which started in the holy month of Ramadan and is to continue afterwards. The campaign will be accompanied by a media awareness campaign addressing the current tragic situation in Somalia. The campaign will also include providing humanitarian aid to victims in Yemen, Côte d'Ivoire, Libya and Gaza Strip.

Ihsanoglu highlighted the Somali catastrophe in his address to the first session of the OIC Alliance meeting. He stated that the OIC would start distributing aid among 40,000 people in Afgooye corridor near Mogadishu under an agreement with the World Food Program (WFP). He also said that 60,000 people were already receiving food aid under the umbrella of the OIC.

In the same context, the Secretary General expressed his profound appreciation for the generous donation announced by King Abdullah, Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques, who allocated an amount of \$60 million to provide urgent aid to Somalia. He also valued the Kuwaiti donations of \$10 millions attributed to the same cause. Ihsanoglu further reiterated his gratitude to the countries and organizations

that provided speedy aid to Somalia.

However, Ihsanoglu warned that the complicated situation of Somalia demands an international collaboration as it surpasses the capacities of a single country or organization. The OIC Alliance, added the Secretary General, is open to all international partners and welcomes coordinating help in affected areas in Somalia and in other countries.

The OIC sent aid through its office for humanitarian cooperation in Mogadishu, which plays a major role in collaborating with different organizations and delivering aid to refugees. The OIC office also helped linking a number of humanitarian organizations working in Somalia with affected and displaced people inside Somalia.

Meanwhile, the Islamic Development Bank (IDB), the financial arm of the OIC, has allocated \$2.2 million to distribute food, medicine and other relief supplies among famine-hit Somalis. It sent a delegation to oversee the distribution of the relief supplies. It also provided hospitals in Mogadishu with medical supplies.

The OIC has expressed its deep concern over the spread of cholera and other contagious diseases in Somalia as a result of contaminated water and a lack of pure water and health services.

The drought and famine in Somalia have killed more than 29,000 children under the age of five.

The United Nations has said previously that tens of thousands of people have died in the drought, the worst to hit Somalia in 60 years. The UN says 640,000 Somali children are acutely malnourished, a statistic that suggests the death toll of small children to rise.

Famine is officially defined as when two adults or four children per 10,000 people die of hunger each day and a third of children are acutely malnourished. In some areas of Somalia, six people are dying a day and more than half of children are acutely malnourished.

Prices of staple foods have increased 270 percent over the last year.

Tens of thousands of Somali families from the famine-struck regions make the difficult agonizing journey to Mogadishu and neighboring Kenya and Ethiopia, hoping to get aid in refugee camps, often dying on the road and burying their own.



Dutch court acquits Geert Wilders

Amsterdam, Netherlands – A Dutch court on June 23, 2011 acquitted politician Geert Wilders of inciting hatred against Muslims when he compared Islam with Nazism and called for a ban on the Holy Quran.

The court found that Wilders was “at the edge of what’s legally permissible” when he described the threat Islam allegedly poses to Dutch culture as “a fight going on and we must arm ourselves.” “This has an inciting character,” said presiding Judge Marcel van Oosten, but because Wilders later added that he has no objections to Muslims who integrate and accept Dutch values, judges ruled he had not crossed the line. The ruling did lay down a clear limit: Calls for violence remain out of bounds.

Judge van Oosten said some of Wilders’ comments may be “crude and denigrating”, but he said they did not amount to inciting hatred and must be seen in a wider context of a fierce national debate over immigration policy and multiculturalism.

The Secretary General of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) issued a statement on June 30 in which

he strongly condemned the continued attacks on Islam, and insult and vilification of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) and his wives by the extremist Dutch right wing politician Geert Wilders. The OIC Secretary General said that Wilders has taken upon himself a dangerous path of derailing inter-civilizational harmony and peace by spreading and fanning hatred against Islam and Muslims in his own country as well as in other European countries.

Ihsanoglu said that the vilification of Islam and the sacred image of the Prophet Muhammad by Wilders have reached a stage when it can no longer be tolerated under any pretext, including the right to freedom of expression. He urged the Government of the Netherlands to take necessary appropriate action to contain the campaign of hatred and incitement by Wilders who is a coalition partner of the Dutch Government. He expressed serious concern that the silence of the Dutch Government in this respect may undermine the existing good bilateral relations between the OIC Member States and the Netherlands.

Shock and horror at the Norway massacre



Norway's Prime Minister Jens Stoltenberg (C) attends the funeral of Mona Abdinur in Oslo, Norway, who was killed in the 22 July attack.

Oslo, Norway – Ekmeleddin Ihsanoglu, Secretary General of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), had expressed shock and horror at the terrorist attacks in Norway and strongly condemned it. He expressed concern at the reasons behind the brutal massacre of 76 youths in Norway on July 22, 2011 that the highly condemnable act of terrorism was carried out by a person consumed by hatred and intolerance of religious diversity and multiculturalism.

The Secretary General, offered his condolences to the families of the victims, the Government and the people of Norway over this tragedy. The Norwegian charged with the bombing in the capital and a rampage at a Labor Party retreat for young people had belonged to an anti-immigration party and wrote blogs attacking multiculturalism and Islam. Anders Behring Breivik confessed to the massacre but he pleaded not guilty to the terrorism charges he faces, claiming he acted to save Europe from what he says is Muslim colonization.

Ihsanoglu recalled that the OIC have always warned against the dangerous implications of intolerance,

incitement to hatred on religious grounds and the campaign against cultural diversity being fueled by some right wing politicians in Europe. He emphasized that the massacre in Norway justified OIC’s concern of the worrisome outreach of the perpetrators of hatred and intolerance in motivating and corrupting the youth and of its dreadful implications for society.

He added that the OIC had been consistent in its efforts geared towards evolving an international consensus aimed at combating intolerance, incitement to violence or hatred and discrimination based on religion or belief best reflected in the eight-point approach outlined in the UN Human Rights Council Resolution 16/ 18 (on Combating Intolerance, Negative Stereotyping and Stigmatization of, and Discrimination, Incitement to Violence, and Violence Against Persons Based on Religion or Belief).

Highlighting the importance of the political impetus provided to the implementation of the Resolution 16 /18 at the Ministerial Meeting held in Istanbul on July 15, 2011, the Secretary General called upon the international community to remain vigilant against those involved in intolerance of religious and cultural diversity and renew its resolve to implement the Resolution in letter and spirit. To that end, the Secretary General reiterated OIC’s call for evolving, on a consensual basis, a normative approach to deal with this matter.



Muslim-Western Tensions Persist: Pew Survey

Muslim and Western publics continue to see relations between them as generally bad, with both sides holding negative stereotypes of the other. Many in the West see Muslims as fanatical and violent, while few say Muslims are tolerant or respectful of women. Meanwhile, Muslims in the Middle East and Asia generally see Westerners as selfish, immoral and greedy – as well as violent and fanatical.

However, the latest Pew Global Attitudes survey finds somewhat of a thaw in the U.S. and Europe compared with five years ago. A greater percentage of Western publics now see relations between themselves and Muslims as generally good compared with 2006.

In contrast, Muslims in predominantly Muslim nations are as inclined to say relations are generally bad as they were five years ago.

For the most part, Muslims and Westerners finger point about the causes of problems in their relations, and about which side holds the high ground on key issues. Muslims in the Middle East and elsewhere who say relations with the West are bad overwhelmingly blame the West. However, while Americans and Europeans tend to blame Muslims for bad relations, significant numbers believe Westerners are responsible.

One note of agreement between Westerners and Muslims is that both believe Muslim nations should be more economically prosperous than they are today. But they gauge the problem quite differently. Muslim publics have an aggrieved view of the West – they blame Western policies for their own lack of prosperity. Across the Muslim publics surveyed, a median of 53% say U.S. and Western policies are one of the top two reasons why Muslim nations are not wealthier.

In contrast, few Americans or Western Europeans think the economic challenges facing Muslim countries are a result of Western policies.

However, both Muslims and Westerners believe corrupt governments and inadequate education in Muslim nations are at least partly responsible for the lack of prosperity. And perhaps reflecting the Arab Spring, in several Muslim and Western nations, people are more likely than they were five years ago to say the dearth of prosperity stems from a lack of democracy.

These are among the key findings from a survey by the Pew Research Center's Global Attitudes Project, conducted March 21 to May 15. The survey updates a number of trend questions from a 2006 Pew Global Attitudes poll that explored how Muslim and Western publics view one another. The current survey finds that five years later – and nearly 10 years after the attacks of September 11, 2001 – tensions remain high, although there are also some shared concerns.

For instance, both Muslims and Westerners are concerned about Islamic extremism. More than two-thirds in Russia, Germany, Britain, the U.S. and France are worried about Islamic extremists in their country.

But extremism is considered a threat in predominantly

Muslim nations as well. More than seven-in-ten Palestinian and Lebanese Muslims are worried about Islamic extremists in their countries, as are most Muslims in Egypt, Pakistan, and Turkey. For Muslims, the most common concern about extremism is that it is violent, although in both Egypt and the Palestinian territories the top fear is that extremism could divide the country.

In four of the six largely Christian nations included in the study, most say they have a positive opinion of Muslims. The exceptions are Germany (45% favorable) and Spain (37%), although views toward Muslims have improved in both countries since 2006.

Muslim views toward Christians vary considerably across countries. In Lebanon, which has a large Christian population, nearly all Muslims (96%) express a positive view of Christians. Narrow majorities of Jordanian (57%) and Indonesian (52%) Muslims also give Christians a favorable rating, while in Egypt – which has recently experienced violence between elements of its Muslim and Christian communities – views are divided (48% favorable; 47% unfavorable).

Meanwhile, very few Muslims in Pakistan (16%) or Turkey (6%) have a positive opinion of Christians.

Ratings for Jews are uniformly low in the predominantly Muslim nations surveyed.

Among Israel's minority Muslim community, however, views are divided: 48% express a positive opinion of Jews, while 49% offer a negative opinion. In contrast, only 9% of Israeli Jews have a positive view of Muslims. Christians receive somewhat higher ratings among Israeli Muslims (67% favorable) than among Israeli Jews (51%).

Also of Note:

- There is a widespread perception that Muslims living in the West do not want to assimilate. Majorities in Europe and the U.S. think Muslims wish to remain distinct from the rest of society, instead of embracing the way of life in Western nations. More than two-thirds in Germany and Spain believe Muslims do not want to adopt national customs.

- Among Muslim publics, many believe that Americans and Europeans are hostile toward Muslims. In fact, in Turkey, Pakistan, Egypt, and Jordan, the belief that Americans and Europeans are hostile has become more common since 2006.

- In Western nations, those who believe some religions are more prone to violence than others tend to say Islam is the most violent faith (when asked to choose among Islam, Christianity, Judaism and Hinduism). Muslim publics who think some religions are especially prone to violence tend to name Judaism.

- There is an education gap on views about Muslim assimilation – in Western Europe and the U.S., those who do not have a college degree are more likely than those who do to believe that Muslims want to remain distinct from the broader society.

A need for constructive dialogue for tolerance

Jeddah, Saudi Arabia – Dr. Lansine (Al-Hassan) Kaba, distinguished visiting professor of history at Carnegie Mellon University in Qatar, urges for a constructive dialogue on civilization for tolerance to prevail in order to make the world more humane.

During a recent visit to the OIC Headquarters in Jeddah, he sat with the OIC Journal for a brief history of Islam in the West.

Islam is a religion that is based on diversity, globalism and interdependence; therefore, it has no problem with these concepts as some claim. He said that Muslims willing to defend their fundamental values as Muslims does not mean that they are denying the values of Christianity and Judaism and other people, but to ensure that they are following a tradition that since its conception until now always called for the dignity of men and their brotherhood.

He believes that the recent debates held at the official government level in France and the US about the presence of Islam are politically motivated because Islam has been present in France, in the US and other western countries for a very long time.

In the case of France, Muslims defended France in World War I and fought under the leadership of General Charles de Gaulle in World War II; why was there no debate then, he asked, or when France colonized Muslim countries and exploited their resources. Dr. Kaba believes that the reason for the recent debates is because President Nicolas Sarkozy wanted to win some potential electoral votes in the next elections away from the right wing party.

“The problem does not exist. But Sarkozy created it to antagonize, to create a sense of antagonism among French electoral and attract right wing elements who are anti-foreigners, xenophobes, anti-Arab, anti-black, and any element not “pure French”.”

He does not see Islam as a cultural threat to France as some has argued. “There has always been a co-habitation,” asserts Dr. Kaba. Muslims only want to ensure their right to



practice their religion. “The right wing has to manufacture threat” to win over people without knowledge.

In the US it is the same. Muslims have been there for centuries. Although they came in large numbers after the repeal of the Immigration Act in 1965 by President Johnson, said Dr. Kaba, in fact they were in the US long before that, during slavery and even came with Columbus when he discovered America.

“Islam is not new in the US. What is new is the willingness of Muslims to develop their presence, not to make Islam a transient religion but a reality of American consciousness, which was not possible before the war of cessation or after the war of 1864 because of the slavery system. But then Muslims became full fledged citizens.”

Now there are mosques all across the US and Muslims are found in every aspect of life.

The hearings launched by Congressman Peter King persuaded Muslims to develop a better consciousness of their rights and to defend their rights, according to Dr. Kaba.

“The new phenomenon of Islamophobia literally, in my judgment, is threatening the foundation of America. Luckily the US has a constitution that defends freedom of religion,” he said.

As ominous as those hearing were, Dr. Kaba sees a bright future for Islam in the US.

Every religion can lead at times to misconception in the mind of people, to commit terrible things, said Dr. Kaba. “We need to resist the feelings of hatred.”

Diversity is part of humanity. Differences are no reason to hate each other.

“A constructive dialogue on civilization is a necessity for tolerance and to make the world a humane world. I think within this context, Islam is here to stay in France, in the US, and other places, and to blossom.”

At Middle East's first 'Belief in Dialogue' conference:

Ihsanoglu calls for higher education reform, stresses priority of S&T

Sharjah, UAE – In his speech at the opening session of the three-day long Conference on 'Belief in Dialogue: Science, Culture and Modernity' at the American University of Sharjah on 21 June 2011, the Secretary General of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) Professor Ekmeleddin Ihsanoglu stated that the OIC encourages development of science and technology (S&T) based on the premise that OIC Member States are committed to become a community that values knowledge and is competent in utilizing and advancing S&T to enhance socio-economic wellbeing of the Muslim world.

He declared that the OIC General Secretariat and OIC institutions have made advances in the fields of S&T and Higher Education in the last five years and have moved closer to the targets set by the OIC for Vision 1441H for S&T. He stated the number of scientific publications in the OIC Member States has more than tripled from 18,391 publications in the year 2000 to 63,342 in 2009, whereby Turkey alone produced more than 25,000 scientific publications in 2009. He said the OIC Member States' research and development (R&D) spending has, on average, doubled from 0.2% of the GDP to 0.41% in 2005. He emphasized that the leading countries of the OIC should increase the R&D expenditures up to 1% of their GDPs.

In his speech, titled "Modernity, Civilization and Science in the Islamic-European Civilizational Dialogue", the Secretary General expressed the need to reform higher education sector and stressed that priority should be given to S&T with emphasis on the tolerant and moderate understanding of the religion of Islam. He reiterated his call for the OIC Member States to strive for quality education that promotes creativity and innovation, and to increase their expenditure on R&D, considering that Islam and science have had a remarkably harmonious relationship over the centuries.

Ihsanoglu gave an account of Muslims' meritorious contributions to scientific and technological achievements and their quest for advancement. He noted that Muslim scholars developed new disciplines, enriched and enlightened Europe, Asia and Africa in various fields of scientific and intellectual pursuits, including mathematics, astronomy, optics, medicine, chemistry, philosophy, theology, law and diplomacy as they added to the old knowledge, corrected many concepts and brought in many innovative contributions, developing a genuine scientific approach, and introduced experimental methodology to the world through new sciences and technologies.



He underlined that with the advent of the 21st century, the importance of scientific enterprise became more prominent and the need for excellence in research is felt in more advanced Muslim countries.

The 'Science, Culture and Modernity' conference was organized by the British Council in conjunction with American University of Sharjah (AUS) and held under the patronage of HH Sheikh Dr. Sultan Bin Mohammad Al Qassimi, Supreme Council Member, Ruler of Sharjah, and Founder and President of AUS.

Dr. Peter Heath, Chancellor of American University of Sharjah, speaking at the opening ceremony said, "It is an essential part of the mission of AUS, as with any great university, to offer

opportunities for its own community and for members of the general public to consider, discuss, and investigate the great issues of the day."

Patrick Brazier, Regional Director (MENA) of British Council, addressed the opening ceremony on behalf of the British Council, "It is important that the discussions that take place here in Sharjah do not end here. That is why we at the British Council, with our international networks, are committed to ensure that the dialogue continues."

"We will be running further events in different places around the world. And with our partners from the BBC World Service, we will be making sure that the conversations continue, over the airwaves and over the internet."

The themes and issues discussed over three days all addressed the intersection of science, religion, ethics, public policy and the extent to which the development and accumulation of more knowledge about these topics will promote common cause amidst diversity or simply fan the flames of disagreement and division," he added.

Over 40 of the world's leading thinkers from across 10 countries have convened at the AUS Conference, which is part of the British Council's global 'Belief in Dialogue' program.

'Belief in Dialogue' is a new British Council program which will explore how people in the UK and globally can live peacefully with diversity and difference in an increasing pluralistic world.

Currently in its development phase, the program will consist of a number of activities based on dialogue, widening participation and engagement with policy makers, opinion formers, thought leaders and the wider public worldwide.

The aim is to build global awareness and understanding between diverse communities which enables greater appreciation of the value of living with difference.

First International Model of OIC engages young people



By Maha Akeel

Istanbul, Turkey - The Secretary General of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) Prof. Ekmeleddin Ihsanoglu gave the keynote speech at the International Conference of the First International Model of the OIC (IMOIC) on July 12, 2011 at the beautiful campus of Sabanci University on the outskirts of Istanbul. The Conference was organized by the Islamic Conference Youth Forum for Dialogue and Cooperation (ICYF-DC), an affiliate institution of the OIC, in coordination with the Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Center for Civilization Studies and Dialogue of Cultures (CCSDC) of Cairo University.

The IMOIC aims to bring awareness about the work of OIC to Muslim students, who came from over 30 countries to participate in this first conference. In this regard, there were earlier initiatives since 2006, the first being at the Cairo University and then in Azerbaijan, but the Conference in Istanbul was the first International Model of the OIC, which is hoped to be an annual event.

In his speech the Secretary General gave a general overview of the history, objectives and functions of the OIC. He highlighted in particular the OIC Ten-Year Program of Action adopted in 2005 and what has been achieved so far in implementing it in various fields, the revised Charter endorsed in 2008, and the change of the name and logo of the OIC, which was adopted at the 38th Session of the Council of Foreign Ministers (CFM) in Astana, Kazakhstan on June 28 -30, 2011. The 38th CFM also saw the birth of the Independent Permanent Human Rights Commission of the OIC. Ihsanoglu stressed to the students that the OIC now stands to be a viable organization in the new map of the world that is shaping up. His next objective is to see a permanent seat of OIC at the UN Security Council (UNSC). "I hope within ten years, in the attempt to reform the UN, to have OIC seat at the UNSC as the representative of 1.5

billion people."

The Conference was a timely event in bringing the youth of the Muslim world to discuss and address the issues of the Muslim world from their perspective.

Ambassador Elshad Iskandarov, ICYF-DC Secretary General, said that young people today stand at the center of transformation in the Muslim world.

Dr. Pakynam Elsharkawy, Director of CCSDC, said: "The OIC has a privileged role in terms of being a moderator in current unrest and in the further development in the Islamic geography since the organization is legitimate and accepted by the states as well as their societies."

Kareem Mettwally, MOIC Egypt co-founder, expressed the opinion that the long-term success of the OIC depends on future generations. "Every young Muslim is an ambassador of faith, and responsible for peace and prosperity of his or her own country," he added.

During the five days of the conference, the students participated in training in three areas, namely, a study of OIC, its history, functions and philosophy; the agenda items of the OIC which touch on the hot current issues of the Muslim world; and a practical simulation of the OIC Council of Foreign Ministers.

The International MOIC (I MOIC) gave an opportunity for students to share experiences, knowledge, and being engaged in trans-cultural dialogue about socio-economic and political problems of the Muslim world. It encouraged youth to actively create and establish intercultural and interreligious dialogue. It also aimed to establish a network among Islamic universities with the help of established MOIC clubs in all 57 Member States of OIC that will serve the idea of strengthening intercultural dialogue and provide training in the field of international diplomacy.

The students heard lectures from university professors and experts on various issues addressed by the OIC, including Jerusalem, post-Soviet countries, Islamophobia, international relations and democracy. The sessions saw lively debates and discussions of the issues. The conference was supervised by the "International MOIC Training Program" (IMTP), which is the project of internationalizing the student Models of OIC throughout the OIC universities, under supervision of the ICYF-DC and partnership of the CCSDC.

The students received training in how to start MOIC, the organizational process of MOIC Club, and in the final stage, how to prepare for a conference, with a finale of simulating the Council of Foreign Ministers including drafting a resolution. The students trained on drafting resolutions on the Gaza Freedom Flotilla crisis and on the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, while the finale was on the Libyan case.

Intergovernmental body and ICCI partner fosters inter-religious dialogue and Islamic cooperation



EUCLID's Zahid Ali and ICCI's ASG Attiya Ali at the signing ceremony.

Karachi, Pakistan - Syed Zahid Ali of Pakistan was the President of the Junior Chamber International Pakistan, when he founded an international NGO called the International Organization for Sustainable Development (IOSD). From its inception in 2005, IOSD has had a vision to foster dialogue and development through knowledge, which is why it developed a broad network of relationships and agreements with universities, and as early as 2006, with the Islamic Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ICCI). In partnership with the universities of N'Djamena (Chad being an OIC member) and Bangui (the Central African Republic being an OIC observer), IOSD almost immediately launched a project called 'Euclid' whose aim was to create extension programs in sustainable development as well as inter-religious diplomacy and bioethics.

"I was amazed" explains Syed Zahid Ali, "that these distance learning programs received so many expressions of interest from universities and government officials." Indeed, in 2008, several governments interested in using the 'Euclid' programs to train their own staff jointly signed an intergovernmental agreement establishing 'EUCLID' as an educational framework with a university charter with the full name Pôle Universitaire Euclide / Euclid University. As of June 2011, 11 countries (including 6 OIC members)

participate in EUCLID.

In 2009, as part of a 'Joint Initiative', EUCLID and ICCI began offering an MBA in Islamic Finance with an annual scholarship scheme, followed by a similar program between EUCLID and ECOWAS (the Economic Community of Western African States), an African regional organization with 16 Member States (including 9 OIC members).

Appointed as EUCLID's first Secretary-General in accordance with the Statutes, Syed Zahid Ali is more than ever convinced that education and cooperation are essential, especially to overcome anti-Islamic prejudice which he considers, even by personal experience, a significant concern, especially in the USA. For this reason, EUCLID now offers two academic programs in inter-religious dialogue and diplomacy which have a strong focus on Muslim – Christian dialogue. "IOSD and EUCLID are examples of what can happen when Islam and the West are able to cooperate in the spirit of 'A Common Word' to serve humanity" explains Zahid Ali. "It is my sincere hope that our organization will be able to make a contribution to the vision of OIC, especially by fostering a better understanding of how sustainable economic development relates to our religious values."

From IOSD to EUCLID, the organization's institutional processes were completed in May 2011 with its registration and listing by the UNESCO-based International Organization of Universities in the exclusive group of International / Regional institutions. Zahid Ali is eager to point out that out of the 5 institutions listed in the group (United Nations University, European University Institute and two intergovernmental maritime schools), only EUCLID is headquartered in Africa, specifically in an OIC affiliated country, and uniquely committed to Islamic cooperation. EUCLID's High Steward is Mohamed Toihiri, the current Ambassador of the Comoros to the United Nations.

For more information on EUCLID, visit www.euclid.int

The 5th Forum on Statistical Capacity Building for Arab Countries

Amman, Jordan - Under the patronage of Dr. Marouf Suleiman al-Bakhit, Prime Minister of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, the Fifth Forum on Statistical Capacity Building for Arab Countries with the theme "Statistics, Media and Policy Making" was held on 4- 5 July 2011 in Amman, Jordan. The delegates of National Statistical Offices (NSO) from 13 Arab Countries including Bahrain, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, Oman, Somalia, Sudan and Tunisia, and the representatives of the Arab Institute for Training and Research in Statistics (AITRS), the Arab League, EUROSTAT, the European Central Bank, the International Cooperation Agency for the French Ministries of Economy and Finance (ADETEF), PARIS21, the Statistical, Economic and Social Research and Training Centre for Islamic Countries (SESRIC), Statistics Netherlands, Statistics Norway, the United Nations Economic and Social

Commission for Western Asia (UNESCWA), and the World Bank participated in the Forum.

During the meeting, recommendations of the previous forums were assessed in the context of lessons learned from the challenges experienced in the implementation of the recommendations. Participants also discussed the knowledge and experience exchange, the role of media to create statistical awareness and increase the visibility, and reputation of the NSOs and their products. The importance of coordination with national stakeholders and strengthening role of international partners by providing financial and technical support were also highlighted for further development of national statistical systems.

At the end of the Forum, a draft resolution of the meeting was prepared and it has been decided that the next Forum be organized in the first quarter of 2013 in Lebanon.

Faience and colored glass... Two Syrian handicrafts facing extinction



Damascus, Syria (dpa) - Omar Ramadan fears that the craft of his ancestors is threatened and might fade away. Porcelain, ceramic and pottery decoration is a rare craft that families have been inheriting for hundreds of years, turning items into attractive objects that people from all over the world seek especially foreign tourists.

Ramadan explains that the good raw materials used in this craft such as sand and special stones available in Syria are used to shape objects that are then placed in special ovens. Then, these objects are painted turning them into elegant vessels with exquisite oriental details.

According to Ramadan there is a difference between faience and glass arts since the raw materials used are different. The primary materials and the steps used to finalize the faience and glass objects are different, the similarities are only in a few points like the use of colors.

The glass needs to be blown in after getting it out of the oven, while faience needs different tools to shape it. Also, the cooling and heating and coloring systems differ between glass and faience.

Ramadan said that this art spread in different countries but it was launched from Syria by Turkish and Syrian merchants.

The art of colored glass and faience dates back to hundreds of years; it spread in Egypt, Turkey, Iran among other countries.

Ahmad, one of the makers of colored glass, said that their craft teaches them creativity and patience. "It needs time to think of the needs of customers who are looking for new and different products. "I think the oven we own located at the district of Bab Sharqi at Bab Touma area in old Damascus is one of the few ovens that are still active and provides products for the local market."

Abu Muhammad said that this work teaches them perseverance since the heat inside the oven might be as high as 1000-1200 degrees. Sitting in front of these ovens, they use simple tools including two pieces of iron and specific ways of blowing to design different shapes, cups and chandeliers as



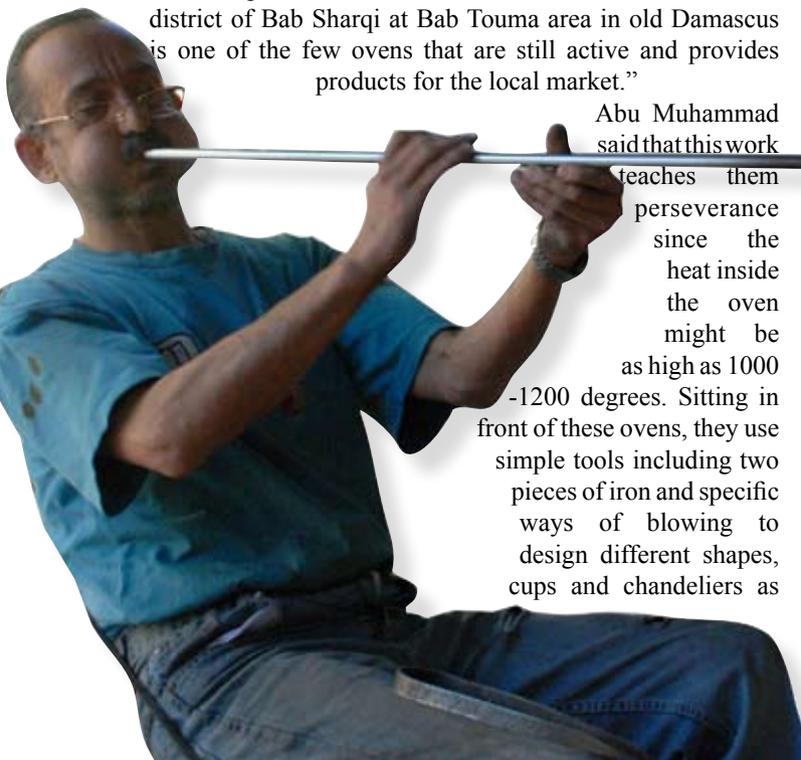
well as other decorated vases.

Abu Muhammad added that their craft depends on broken glass which is made from sand. "We melt it inside the oven at 1200 degrees, add some oxides for color, then we blow in it using Al-Masha, a specific iron tool. Then the same tool is used to shape the object and turn it into a cup, vase or chandelier that is ready for use within approximately one day."

Handcrafters tend to complain from the high prices of the raw materials as well as the lack of support or encouragement from the concerned authorities.

Dozens of shops selling porcelain and colored glass are available in Al-Hamidiya market, Bab Touma, Al-Amin Districts of Damascus; all these areas attract thousands of tourists. However, these days the markets and shops are empty due to the current circumstances in Syria. The recent public unrest which started four months ago has negatively affected the tourism sector in this country.

Handcraft workers agree that these crafts might face extinction if it did not enjoy proper care and support. The World Tourism Organization indicated that Syria is one of the main tourism destinations especially when it comes to historic and religious tourism.



Islamic Arts Magazine: A new window on Islamic arts



Sarajevo, Bosnia – For Islamic arts connoisseurs and its lovers a new window has been opened on this rich, diverse and inspirational world.

Islamic Arts Magazine, based in Sarajevo, is an electronic magazine devoted to Islamic arts in all its types and forms. Founded by its editor-in-chief Kenan Surkovic in 2009, its mission is to present traditional and contemporary Islamic art forms inspired by Islam and based upon Islamic ethics. With its high quality journalism, photography and presentation, it is certainly an indulgence for the sight and soul.

The OIC Journal had the pleasure of interviewing Surkovic:

You launched the magazine in 2009, how is it doing so far?

It has been two amazing years and we are very proud of our team. We published 6 issues and we are soon publishing our 7th issue. Each issue has over 250 pages. Islamic Arts Magazine is now recognized as an online source for Islamic Arts, both traditional as well as contemporary. We established communication and cooperation with many Museums and Galleries around the world and have readers from 152 countries.

Why do you consider such a magazine - electronic and on Islamic art - is needed? Is there a market for it? Is it the first of its kind?

Islamic Arts Magazine is the first e-magazine in the world devoted to Islamic arts. By presenting Islamic arts to specialists and the general public, we aim to contribute to a better understanding of Islamic culture. We are all in the era of the Internet and many people search and

read only online, especially the younger generation. We decided to make an e-magazine so our readers can get the information and the inspiration faster and efficiently. As soon as we finish and upload the e-magazine our subscribers can download it and read it on their computer. Our market is basically worldwide.

Who are your readers?

Islamic Arts Magazine readers are creative professionals: artists, designers, photographers, architects, curators, gallery dealers, museum directors, scholars, students, high school and university professors and art lovers seeking an authentic connection to the growing Islamic Art community.

Please describe the content of the magazine.

The topics of Islamic Arts Magazine range from traditional to contemporary Islamic art and cover all media. We make interviews with fine artists, architects, designers, graffiti artists, calligraphers, ebru artists, gallery owners, collectors, curators, etc. In each issue we present a museum with Islamic collection, an exhibition review, a book review, a reportage from a city with Islamic tradition and heritage, a presentation of one mosque, an article about the art history or art theory and so much more. We also bring a lot of current information about Islamic arts worldwide in our daily blog (<http://islamicartsmagazine.com>) and we invite your readers to follow us on Twitter (<http://twitter.com/IslamicArtsMag>) and join us on Facebook (<http://www.facebook.com/IslamicArtsMagazine>).

What are your future plans?

We are now in the process of redesigning our website and we hope to make it even more user friendly. Our plans include making other electronic versions of our e-magazine like Ipad and Kindle version so our readers can read Islamic Arts Magazine on their tablets as well. We hope to become an ultimate online source for all students and experts around the globe.



Kenan Surkovic



Conakry: Capital of Islamic Culture in the African Region for 2011



Conakry is the capital and largest city of Guinea. A port city on the Atlantic Ocean, the capital city is also viewed as one of the major African cities. According to some historical records, the name of the city comes from the fusion of the name “Cona”, a wine producer of the Baga people, and the word “Nakiri”, which means in Sosso the other bank or side.

railway to Kankan opened.

The city of Conakry spread up the neighboring Kaloum Peninsula, forming five municipal communes. These are: Kaloum – the city centre; Dixinn – including the Abdel-Nasser University of Conakry and many embassies; Ratoma; Matam; and Matoto – home to Conakry International Airport.

The major civilizational landmarks of the city include the Conakry Grand Mosque, the Guinea Palais du Peuple (People’s Palace), and the Guinea National Museum.

Conakry has been declared by the Islamic Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (ISESCO) a Capital of Islamic Culture in the African region for 2011. On 18 July 2011, the official launching of this event was held.

Guinea undertook several programs within the framework of “Conakry: Capital of Islamic Culture in the African Region for 2011”.

The Republic of Guinea is located on the West African Coast. It is bounded on the north by Senegal and Guinea-Bissau; on the east by Mali and Côte D’Ivoire; on the south by Sierra Leone and Liberia; and on the west by the Atlantic Ocean. Guinea is divided into four distinct natural regions: namely, Lower (or Maritime) Guinea; Mid-Guinea; Upper-Guinea; and Forested Guinea. Conakry was originally settled on a tiny Tombo Island and later spread to the neighboring Kaloum Peninsula. The city was essentially founded after Britain ceded the island to France in 1887. Conakry became the capital in 1904 and prospered as an export port, particularly after a



In pursuit of justice for women

New York, USA – Justice still out of reach for millions of women, a flagship report launched in July 2011 by the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women, also known as 'UN Women', warns.

'Progress of the World's Women: In Pursuit of Justice' is UN Women's first major report, following the organization's launch in early 2011. It recognizes progress, but calls on governments to take urgent action to end the injustices that keep women poorer and less powerful than men in every country in the world.

To ensure justice becomes a reality for all women, UN Women calls on governments to:

- Repeal laws that discriminate against women, and ensure that legislation protects women from violence and inequality in the home and the workplace.
- Support innovative justice services, including one-stop shops, legal aid and specialized courts, to ensure women can access the justice to which they are entitled.
- Put women on the frontline of justice delivery. As police, judges, legislators and activists, women in every region are making a difference and bringing about change.
- Invest in justice systems that can respond to women's needs. Donors spend US\$4.2 billion annually on aid for justice reform, but only 5% of this spending specifically targets women and girls.

"With half the world's population at stake, the findings of this report are a powerful call to action. The foundations for justice for women have been laid: in 1911, just two countries in the world allowed women to vote – now that right is virtually universal. But full equality demands that women become men's true equals in the eyes of the law – in their home and working lives, and in the public sphere," said Michelle Bachelet, Under-Secretary-General and Executive Director of UN Women.

Women still suffer gender injustice in their homes, the workplace and public life. The report finds much has been achieved in the private and public spheres in the last century, yet discrimination and gender injustice remain prevalent around the world. **This inequality can be seen:**

In the home:

- Domestic violence is now outlawed in 125 countries but, globally, 603 million women live in countries where domestic violence is not considered a crime.
- By 2011, at least 52 countries had made marital rape a criminal offence. And yet, over 2.6 billion women live in countries where it has not been explicitly criminalized.
- Laws based on custom or religion, which exist alongside state legislation, frequently restrict women's rights within the family, in marriage, divorce and the right to inherit property.

In the workplace:

- 117 countries have equal pay laws yet, in practice, women are still paid up to 30% less than men in some countries. And women still do more unpaid domestic and

caring work than men in every region of the world.

- Globally, 53% of working women – 600 million in total – are in vulnerable jobs, such as self-employment, domestic work or unpaid work for family businesses, which often lack the protection of labor laws.

In politics and public life:

- In countries where there have been steep increases in women's representation in parliaments, progressive laws on women's rights have often followed. Yet there are still less than 30% of women in parliament in the vast majority of countries.

Changes in the law, when properly enforced, lay the groundwork for changing attitudes and improving women's position in society.

Progress has been made, the report shows, thanks to the efforts of individuals, civil society and governments to give women more economic and political power through legal change – including guaranteeing equal pay, introducing parliamentary quotas, and ensuring women know their rights and are able to claim them.

But legal reform is only a start, the report argues – laws must be implemented to translate into true equality

Across the board, existing laws are too often inadequately enforced, the report finds. Many women shrink away from reporting crimes due to social stigma and weak justice systems. The costs and practical difficulties of seeking justice can be prohibitive – from travel to a distant court, to paying for expensive legal advice. The result is high dropout rates in cases where women seek redress, especially on gender-based violence.

By changing laws and giving women practical support to see justice done, we can change society and ensure women and men enjoy real equality in the future, the report concludes.



OIC, US commit to promote women's and girl's engagement in science



Washington, D.C., USA – The Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) and the US State Department have committed to promoting women's and girl's engagement in science, technology, engineering, medicine and mathematics.

The OIC (formerly known as Organization of the Islamic Conference) through its office at the UN in New York joined forces with the US State Department and National Science Foundation on June 13, 2011 to sponsor a groundbreaking symposium entitled “Changing Mindsets to Promote Women and Girls in Science”. The symposium, a commitment under the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women (CSW), brought fifteen women scientists from Benin, Jordan, Burkina Faso, Mongolia, Brazil, India, Tanzania, The Gambia, Nigeria, Pakistan, Iraq and Palestine together with more than 100 scientists, educators, and representatives from the private sector and foreign governments.

Participants examined programs and policies that are making a positive impact on attracting girls to science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) fields, keeping them interested in STEM through college, and providing concrete tools to retain women scientists at every level of their scientific careers.

At the symposium the OIC announced that it will host

Clinton launches TechWomen initiative

“Technology opens doors for women”

Washington, D.C., USA - Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton celebrated her department's 'TechWomen' exchange program, which uses technology to open doors that are otherwise closed to women in the Middle East and North Africa. “Being a woman in the field of technology is not always easy,” Clinton said at the State Department during a July 6 gathering for the 'TechWomen' initiative. “But there are so many opportunities in technology that we just have to forge ahead.”

'TechWomen', funded by the State Department's Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs, is a public-private partnership that pairs women from top technology companies in California's Silicon Valley with women emerging as leaders in technical fields across the Middle East and North Africa for a professional mentorship and exchange program.

The program began in May with 38 women from

a visit by RAISE Project leadership in OIC Member States in the coming months. The visit will offer opportunities to adapt RAISE programming in OIC nations. The RAISE Project, sponsored by the Society for Women's Health Research (SWHR), is a campaign to increase the status of professional

women through enhanced recognition of their achievements in science, technology, engineering, medicine, and mathematics. Its searchable database of professional awards is an invaluable resource for scientists wishing to nominate women for professional recognition. RAISE and OIC will work together to establish culturally relevant databases for women scientists in OIC nations by adapting or replicating current RAISE programming and by engaging scientists and professional societies in OIC countries to contribute to the database.

At the conclusion of the symposium, the US State Department and the OIC agreed to hold a similar symposium in the Middle East and North Africa region later this year.

The Department of State's Bureau of Oceans and International Environmental and Scientific Affairs (OES), in close partnership with the Secretary of State's Office of Global Women's Issues, led this effort with support from the Organization of the Islamic Cooperation and the National Science Foundation as major partners. Additional partners were NASA, the National Institutes of Health, USAID, the Iraqi Women's Fellowship Foundation, the National Academy of Sciences, and the Novus International.

the region who came to the United States to spend five weeks working with their American mentors. The State Department's July 6 event concluded the U.S. portion of the exchange. The American participants are scheduled to visit their counterparts later in 2011.

Clinton called on program participants to take what they have learned through 'TechWomen' and pass it on to other women and girls in their home countries. She stressed the importance of technology in “enhancing relationships, building businesses and creating greater opportunities.”

Clinton also announced a new program, 'TechGirls', scheduled to be launched in 2012 as a complement to the 'TechWomen' program. 'TechGirls' aims to bring teenage girls from across the Middle East and North Africa to the United States for “an intensive month of educational activities,” Clinton said.

Project partners urged to complete the Atlas of Islamic World Innovation

Istanbul, Turkey - In his address to the 3rd Joint Management Team (JMT) meeting of the Atlas of Islamic World Science and Innovation in Istanbul on 11 -12 June 2011, OIC Secretary General Prof. Ekmeleddin Ihsanoglu called upon the project partners to undertake necessary steps for the smooth completion of the Atlas project, emphasizing that the project can be a forerunner for a wider scientific and technological collaboration between the OIC and the partners in Europe and elsewhere.

The Secretary General reiterated that one of the most important objectives of the OIC Charter is to enhance and develop science and technology; and to encourage research and cooperation in these fields. He added that the commitment of the OIC Member States to develop a society that values knowledge, research, and innovation is further borne out by the adoption of the Vision 1441H for Science and Technology by the 10th Islamic Summit in 2003 and the OIC Ten Year Program of Action (TYPOA) by the 3rd Extraordinary Makkah Summit in 2005.

The Atlas of the Islamic World Science and Innovation is a three-year partnership between the OIC, the Royal Society of London, the OIC Standing Committee for Scientific

and Technological Cooperation (COMSTECH), the Islamic Development Bank (IDB), the Islamic Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (ISESCO), Statistical, Economic and Social Research and Training Center for Islamic Countries (SESRIC), Nature magazine, the British Council, the International Development Research Centre (IDRC) and the Qatar Foundation. Its objectives include mapping key trends and trajectories in science and technology-based innovation across the OIC Member States; and offering an objective and authoritative assessment of opportunities and barriers to their development and transition to an innovation-driven knowledge economy.

The Meeting reviewed the progress made so far in the Atlas Project concerning the country case studies and discussed several issues pertaining to the execution of the project, schedule of launching country reports, key events for profiling the project and future country studies. Currently, country studies in respect of Malaysia, Pakistan, Egypt, Jordan and Qatar are nearing completion. Five other country studies for Indonesia, Kazakhstan, Iran, Senegal and Nigeria are planned for completion by December 2012.

Agreement on Draft OIC Water Vision

Astana, Kazakhstan – The Advisory Panel experts on the OIC Water Vision of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) met on 14 July 2011 in Astana and agreed upon the draft OIC Water Vision, which include conceptual definitions following the results of the first meeting in May 2010 in Dubai.

The Draft defines the overall objectives and mechanisms for the effective use of water resources, and calls upon the OIC Member States to expand the joint scientific programs and projects in this area.

In the global context, the draft Vision is designed to significantly expand and complement the existing multilateral and bilateral mechanisms in water resources management.

The issues of water resources management are one of the most important on the OIC agenda. The aim to develop a Water Vision for the OIC Member States is to exchange experience and knowledge, to be involved in water research, as well as to determine the objectives and mechanisms for water management. The meeting considered such dimensions as the problem of rational use of water resources, access to water and sanitation of water use, balance of water use and food production, financing, the impact of climate change on water resources, and water security problems.

The next step will be the submission of the draft Water Vision for consideration by the senior officials of the concerned governmental bodies in the OIC Member States.

According to the Advisory Panel experts, the Water Vision of the OIC is expected to be adopted at the Conference of Ministers of Water Resources in January 2012 in Turkey.



Insider Threat

Wajdi Al-Quliti
Director of IT Departement,
OIC



Protecting organizations against abusers from the inside who have malicious intent and losing sensitive data are the biggest threats that organizations face. The data may include personal/business information of the employees as well as details on businesses- actions during the years of daily works. Often, the biggest threat is not from outside an organization, but from inside it. The 2011 Cybersecurity Watch survey made by Software Engineering Institute at Carnegie Mellon revealed that 27% of cyber security attacks against organizations were caused by disgruntled, greedy, or subversive insider employees, or contractors with privileges to access the organization's network systems or data.

Therefore, the most difficult problems faced by organizations are spyware. They cost more than viruses because they are well designed to be untraceable and undetectable. So an organization must learn the best practices to protect its network. Studies have shown time and again the naked truth in relation to the changing nature of security in the present day. The most dangerous threats regarding information and equipment owned by the organization is not the cyberspace criminals and malicious codes in the default locations, but the employees who are the subject of confidence.

System administrators in an organization generally have a complete privileged access to the entire organization's data, as they have the responsibility to manage and protect it. In most organizations, the weakest link in the security system is the internal threats. An organization safeguards and mitigates external threats proficiently by using a combination of antivirus, intrusion protection and dedicated firewall appliances, but these would not protect the organization against an IT employee gone rogue.

In recent years, there has been an increase in cases of insider incidents in many organizations. Thus, a publication from Carnegie Mellon/CERT identifies a number of best practices to address insider threats. These include:

Practice 1: Consider threats from insiders and business partners in enterprise-wide risk assessments.

Practice 2: Clearly document and consistently enforce policies and controls.

Practice 3: Institute periodic security awareness

training for all employees.

Practice 4: Monitor and respond to suspicious or disruptive behavior, beginning with the hiring process.

Practice 5: Anticipate and manage negative workplace issues.

Practice 6: Track and secure the physical environment.

Practice 7: Implement strict password and account management policies and practices.

Practice 8: Enforce separation of duties and least privilege.

Practice 9: Consider insider threats in the software development life cycle.

Practice 10: Use extra caution with system administrators and technical or privileged users.

Practice 11: Implement system change controls.

Practice 12: Log, monitor, and audit employee online actions.

Practice 13: Use layered defense against remote attacks.

Practice 14: Deactivate computer access following termination.

Practice 15: Implement secure backup and recovery processes.

Practice 16: Develop an insider incident response plan.

In addition, the organization needs to set up a data-loss prevention system, so the IT department should install a system to filter and monitor outbound network traffic to prevent data from leaving the organization's networks. It is recommended that all organizations check the outbound data packets, as well as inbound ones. By controlling, understanding and monitoring outbound network traffic, the organization can significantly increase the chance of preventing malicious activities from affecting it.

Furthermore, the organization should educate its employees about the danger of insider threat, especially IT staff, should get regular training about latest developments in security threats and how to detect malicious behaviors performed by a co-worker. An annual awareness course should be accompanied with the distribution of brochures, flyers and handouts about recent security threats to all departments in the organization.

Finally, to understand the insider threats and dangers on an organization, the Chief Information Officer (CIO) and others within the circle of information technology should continue to check and access the organization's status report, to stand on the state of enterprise environment, and what are the policies that work and those that do not, and to adjust those policies according to that. Hence, automated auditing and surveillance will give IT security staff sufficient flexibility to allow some specific services and applications, while maintaining arrangements to monitor the activity of workers. For example, if some of the accounting department staff is allowed accessing a specific application especially in financial matters, the IT must also know whether the user tries to access all these applications, to see if there is a malicious intent behind it, or a legitimate need.

Enhancing multilateral cooperation to eradicate polio

A recent report by the Statistical, Economic and Social Research and Training Centre for Islamic Countries (SESRIC) on the state of polio in the OIC Member States gave an overview of the prevalence of polio, the progress made in eradicating the disease and recommendations for future action.

Prevalence of polio at OIC level:

Over the years, the OIC member countries worked in close cooperation with international community and multilateral agencies to eradicate polio disease. Strong political will and public awareness played a pivotal role to improve the immunization coverage of infants with three drops of polio vaccine. According to the World Health Organization's (WHO) immunization coverage estimates (2010), over 81% of infants were immunized in OIC member countries in 2009. At the OIC regional level, 96% of infants were immunized against polio in Europe and Central Asia followed by Latin America and Caribbean (92%), East Asia and Pacific (90%), Middle East and North Africa (90%) and South Asia (88%); whereas the coverage rate remained only 65% in Sub-Saharan Africa.

Higher immunization coverage rate helped to eradicate the polio disease in OIC member countries. The number of reported poliovirus cases has declined from about six thousand in 1988 to only 711 in 2010. At the regional level, all OIC regions managed to contain the polio outbreaks and with the exception of South Asia and Sub-Saharan Africa, the WHO is declaring all regions as non-endemic. At the individual country level, only three OIC member countries are classified as endemic countries whereas ten member countries are classified as non-endemic importation countries.

Despite all achievements, poliovirus still exists in some pockets of three member countries: Afghanistan, Pakistan and Nigeria. On the other hand, ten OIC member countries: Tajikistan, Chad, Senegal, Mauritania, Mali, Uganda, Turkmenistan, Niger, Kazakhstan and Sierra Leone witnessed poliovirus cases following an importation. In 2010, more than 73% of OIC total polio cases were registered in non-endemic importation member countries. In this group, Tajikistan registered the highest number of polio cases (458) followed by Chad (25) and Senegal (18); whereas number of poliovirus cases remained equal to or less than five in Mauritania (5), Mali (4), Uganda (4), Turkmenistan (3), Niger (2), Kazakhstan (1) and Sierra Leone (1).

SESRIC report made following remarks and policy recommendations:

1. For the complete eradication of polio in OIC region there is an urgent need to develop close partnership with international health and donor agencies, including WHO, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the World Bank, Rotary International, American Red Cross, International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, the UN Foundation and the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation.

2. High infant immunization coverage with four doses of Oral Polio Vaccine (OPV) in the first year of life is critical.

All OIC member countries should work hard to increase the immunization coverage through routine immunization of infants and through achieving the highest possible coverage during Supplementary Immunization Activities (SIA's).

3. Lack of political and social ownership is one of the major impediments. It is highly recommended both at the national and intra-OIC cooperation level, to speed up efforts to mobilize high level political support for the polio eradication programs and campaigns. In addition, there is also a need to engage the local community leaders and the media outlets to spread awareness about the polio, its major causes, preventive measures and importance of vaccination.

4. The need for an effective management and supervision both at national and local government levels. Governments in member countries should establish specific mechanisms to hold local authorities accountable for the performance of polio eradication campaigns. Supporting and re-energizing the vaccinators is very crucial especially for two endemic member countries: Afghanistan and Pakistan. In these member countries the prevalence of type 1 poliovirus is very low and it is restricted to some clearly defined limited areas. Therefore, these countries should launch the large-scale mop-up activities - door-to-door vaccination activities - to eradicate the final chains of poliovirus transmission.

5. People concern about safety and religious permissibility of the polio vaccine. To avoid such issues in future, it's highly recommended to translate the fatwa of Islamic Fiqh Academy in national/local languages and distribute it especially in endemic areas. Imams should be provided with necessary information to explain the importance of vaccination during the Friday prayer gatherings and preaching sessions.

6. Incidence of polio in a country/region/area is closely linked to poverty, level of education, water and sanitation, food safety, and other social and cultural factors. There is a strong need for closer cooperation and coordination between national polio eradication programs, and other ministries and agencies like Ministry of Education, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Ministry of Women, Ministry of Environment and National Food Security Program.

7. All polio free member countries should work hard to avoid re-emergence of the disease by increasing the immunization coverage. These countries should also pay special attention to the communities that are either living near the border of an affected neighboring country or migrating from that country. In addition, all importation countries should increase surveillance for Acute Flaccid Paralysis (AFP) cases by ensuring examination of all specimens at a WHO-accredited poliovirus laboratory.

8. High-income member countries can play a pivotal role to eradicate polio by contributing more financial resource to the Global Polio Eradication Initiative (GPEI) as well as by helping the polio affected member countries to boost up their health care systems. There is a funding gap of US\$ 720 million for the GPEI Strategic Plan 2010 -2012 (GPEI, Financial Resource Requirements 2011 -2012, 2011).

Islamic Broadcasting Union (IBU) New Statutes and Organizational Structure adopted



OIC SG Ihsanoglu (C-L) and Saudi Minister of Information and Culture Khoja (C-R) at the Executive Council of IBU meeting in Jeddah on June 19, 2011.

Jeddah, Saudi Arabia - The Executive Council of the Islamic Broadcasting Union (IBU) held an extraordinary session at the premises of the General Secretariat of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) in Jeddah on 19 June 2011 and adopted the new ‘Statutes and Organizational Structure of the Union’. The meeting, which was chaired by Dr. Abdul Aziz Mohieddine Khojah, Minister of Culture and Information of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and the Chairman of IBU Executive Council, also discussed the procedure of appointing a new Director General for the Union.

The OIC Secretary General Ekmeleddin Ihsanoglu in his opening speech at the meeting, noted that mass media is critical and has essential role in contemporary society. He underlined that the media have positive and negative effects in creating tension in the global climate and in increasing conflicts, particularly with regard to distortion and defamation of religions and religious symbols. Changes in the region have demonstrated that media are regarded as essential part of the system of fundamental freedoms and for resisting corruption. Requirements of reform in the OIC necessitate providing IBU with the essential capabilities and powers to start functioning without obstacles to develop cooperation between radio and television stations in the Muslim world, and exchange of radio and television programs that serve the common objectives of OIC since IBU, which caters for the development of joint Islamic media action, is an institution for the Member States, he added.

The Chairman of IBU Executive Council Dr. Abdul Aziz Mohieddine Khojah welcomed the delegations of the OIC member countries who participated in the meeting and conveyed the greetings of the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques King Abdullah bin Abdulaziz, and of the Crown Prince and the Second Deputy Premier Prince Sultan bin Abdulaziz. He stressed on the unique importance of the

meeting and emphasized the important role of media and information in the new era especially with the technological advancements taking place at a rapid pace, which undoubtedly have impact on the political and economic happenings in the Middle East and the Muslim world in general. He underlined the dire need for IBU and the International Islamic News Agency (IINA) to adopt new technologies and advancements in the field of information, especially in light of the new vision of the Union. The Chairman noted that Islamic institutions should do away with old-fashioned roles, bureaucracy and routine works. He also underlined that IBU and IINA, being the OIC media arm, shoulder big responsibilities, therefore, both institutions should either succeed or fail, for media in the contemporary era have central role in political, social and economical spheres. He highlighted the significance of the meeting and stated that it is up to the Member States to succeed or fail in formulating a clear vision for the OIC media arm. The Chairman thanked the outgoing IBU Director General Zainal Abidin Iberahim for his hard work and dedication during his tenure who had to resign his post due to a personal matter.

In addition to the adoption of IBU’s new Statutes and Organizational Structure, the meeting discussed the procedure of appointing a new Director General for IBU. The delegates reviewed the curriculum vitas of eight nominated applicants and agreed on the principle of choosing a candidate for the post of Director General from among three nominees from Senegal, Pakistan and Mauritania. The participants authorized IBU Chairman to interview the three candidates in order to select one of them for the post of IBU Director General.

Later in August the candidate from Mauritania, Salem weld Buka, was selected as the new Director General of IBU. Buka is the Director General of Mauritania Radio Broadcast.

“Facebook” plays a positive role in changing the Arab world...and perhaps also a negative role



Beirut, Lebanon (dpa) - The youth in the Arab world benefited from the advancements in communication technology and used the virtual world to shake some regimes and threaten others through public movements that relied mainly on campaigning through social networks, one of which is “Facebook”. These campaigns forced a new reality that is not totally clear yet.

Some believe that these social networks including “Facebook” have played a major role in making these movements succeed. However, they still believe in the negative or illusory role of these social networks since some political groups can use them to influence the youth who lead these campaigns in order to divert the course of the political and social change. The Arab World since the start of this year has witnessed mass movements led by youth groups, or so called “Facebook Groups.” The youth are motivated by their strong belief and desire for change and affected by the current global culture, which stresses on democracy and freedom.

Dr. Nadim Mansouri, professor of political sociology at the University of Lebanon, said to dpa that “Facebook” is the primary mover of these mass movements, but not its cause. According to him, “Facebook” facilitated the communication among activists because of its multiple features.

Mansouri added that “Facebook” has succeeded in advancing the movements for a number of reasons. Primarily, “Facebook” helped in providing quick communication at less cost, this helped in transferring ideas and news quickly. “Facebook” also is a user-friendly network that can be used by different age groups especially the youth. In Egypt for example 90% of “Facebook” users are between the age of 13 and 34.

Studies point out that the total users of “Facebook” in the

Arab world reached 78%, that is, from 11.9 million users by January 2010 to 21.3 million in December of the same year. The youth constitute 75% of “Facebook” of the users in the Arab world. Mansouri said that “Facebook” plays an important role because it is available all the time; it can be used from the mobile phones and not limited to computers. This makes “Facebook” available and able to transfer news of these movements instantly. Even traditional media including the television relied on it, which was unusual before.

“Facebook” became important because it is international, some 600 million users log into “Facebook” from 213 different countries. This facilitates mobilization fast to a vast number of users around the world. “Facebook” can also be used as a central work unit to direct the activists electronically.

“Facebook” also helps activists interact and comment on events outside the control of the political authorities. And “Facebook” helps the public communicate with their governments, official institutions and political parties. Mansouri added that “Facebook” can also be used in different ways such as posting images of real events or fabricated events. He said that there is no way to control this new media or what is now called the “fifth power.” According to him, “Facebook” changed media concepts.

The danger of “Facebook” he pointed lays in its use by political parties as a means to affect the youth who are leading the change. This, he said, can divert the direction of change completely. He also believes that whoever has control over the virtual world will eventually have control over the real world. Some believe that the danger of “Facebook” lies in hacking and analyzing the data available on it to know the characteristics of people using it and the groups connecting to it, to know their weaknesses and put plans to control and manipulate them.

Reports indicated that the number of social network users increased in the Arab World especially the ages between 15 and 29. The youth constitute one-third of the total population in the Arab World.

Nadine Muhasib, a writer and one of the founders of the Lebanon Civil Association, said that the social networks including “Facebook” do not adhere to specific systems, manners or frameworks. Democracy dictates that everything is allowed on “Facebook”, therefore information provided is not objective and it can be categorized as chaotic, and here lies the danger.

Muhasib also said that “Facebook” is the first media mean that bases its information on unidentified eyewitnesses, regardless of the accuracy of the information provided. Therefore, according to her, the role of “Facebook” is unreal and fabricated. Observers anticipate that social networks such as “Facebook” and “Twitter” among others will proceed in playing a major role in reshaping the social, civil and political scenes in the Arab world, with the hope that their effect remains positive.

“Aspire” Academy for Sports Excellence... Achieving Qatar’s dream of global recognition

Doha, Qatar (dpa) - Everyone in Doha knows exactly what “Aspire” means: The Academy for Sports Excellence. Away from local recognition, this advanced and modern institution is now receiving a distinguished international reputation as the place for achieving Qatar’s sports dreams in the international scene.

The child Hassan lifts his hands up, gives a good jump-start then shoots a goal. He waves his hands high marking his achievement before he goes back in the row. Though the child is quite young yet he has great skills that might help him put on his national football uniform within the ten coming years.

Hassan said that in the academy everyone has to work hard according to the Academy’s plan.

Though all the young players are living with their families yet the academy has a five star hotel with 120 rooms, 8 suites that can accommodate 250 students. The Academy has 60 sport specialists who can meet the international ambition of “Aspire”, helping Qatar in reaching global distinction in sports.

As proof of the comprehensive advancement in sports at Qatar lately, especially with the flow of international players joining the Qatari stars football league, not to mention the great success in organizing the Asian Games 2006, the Academy has international coaches, assistants, scientists, specialists in sport medicine and specialists in physical therapy as well as doctors who are keen to give care and attention around the clock to the young generation of Qatari players.

These specialists are divided among 20 halls well-equipped by all necessary training utilities. The Academy also provides classes of English language, physical education and biology. The goal is to help Qatar achieve excellence in sports through discovering national talents capable of competing in the international scene. The Academy, which started its activities in 2004, is an elite sport academy that raises distinguished sport players. The Academy now has 200 students, the majority of which are Qataris among other expatriate students.

Speaking about the goals of this sports establishment, the German Dean for Educational and Social Affairs at the Academy Dieter Hakfort said, “the first mission is to turn Qatari students into national heroes, but we seek to achieve international success in the future.”

The number of students did not exceed 31 students at the start of the activities of the Academy. The training was also

limited to football. Now however, the Academy offers its students training for a vast number of sport games based on international standards.

The training for youngsters starts at the age of six. For the 12 Olympic Games however, the Academy offers special programs for the distinguished talents starting at the age of 12 to 18 under the supervision of special international trainers and specialists who inspire in the players the spirit of “Aspire” based on hope and ambition.

Qatar is a GCC country with a 1.7 million population. The country believes that each talent is a piece of gold, and in a country rich with resources brought from oil and gas, the promising young generation are receiving deserved care and attention.

This attention is reflected in the Academy and its educational facilities and sport establishments that are built, developed and equipped based on high international standers. This is clearly seen in the classrooms, advanced labs, playing yards, gyms, physical therapy centers and entertainment sections.

The Academy also established in 2005 a huge covered sport hall on an area of 290 thousands square meters. The open area includes a football training field, gymnastic hall capable of hosting all games, a swimming pool that adheres to Olympic standers and can host swimming and diving competitions, gymnasium hall, and sports hall for multiple games, judo, taekwondo, and karate halls and squash halls.

The Academy also includes eight external playing yards all of which are adhering to FIFA international standards. FIFA chose Qatar to host the World Cup 2022. The Academy also has an open area capable of hosting running competitions, athletics, and swimming pools adhering to international standards.

The Academy’s achievements reflect the enthusiasm of Al-Thani family, rulers of Qatar. Therefore, there is no fear regarding Qatar’s sport distinction either because for lack of finance or other similar challenges. It is enough to mention that \$3 million were devoted only to establish a sport clinic for the academy.

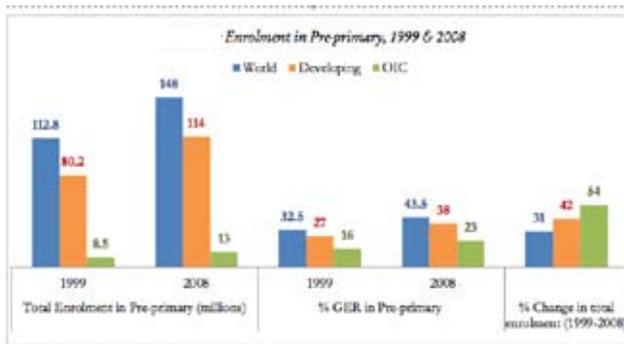
Since it began its comprehensive rehabilitation programs for the Olympic Games in September 2006, the Academy has tested 6000 Qatari students, among which it selected potential sport heroes, giving special attention to detecting young sport talents from the region and all around the world, then training them to achieve international recognition.

“Aspire” provides a series of activities aside from its international high quality sports activities including academic programs of high standers designed for players, scholarship programs for underdeveloped countries, and sport camps for summer vacations and winter breaks.

And in line with its international spirit, “Aspire” is keen to open relationships with all European and western institutions and their sport stars and clubs, several of whom have visited the Academy.



Early childhood care and education in OIC countries



Source: UNESCO, EFA GMR Database

The Statistical, Economic and Social Research and Training Centre for Islamic Countries (SESRTC) released a report in March 2011 on the state of early childhood care and education (ECCE) in OIC member countries for children during the period from birth until a child enters primary education, which is age 6 or 7 in most countries.

Overall, although the OIC countries have, on average, recorded a significant improvement in 'Early Childhood Care and Education' in recent years, the average level of enrolment in pre-school education in these countries, still lagged behind the world average and the average of the developing countries. Therefore, there is still a room for more efforts and actions to be taken in order to improve the quality and quantity of ECCE services in OIC Countries.

According to the said report, the challenges and policy implications are as follows:

* **Lack of a holistic ECCE approach among most of the OIC Countries:** Adopting a holistic national policy and establishing a commission/board or a leading ministry in charge of ECCE policy and implementation may overcome the problem of coordination.

* **Child survival and well-being inefficiencies:** The state of children survival and well-being is still unsatisfactory in some OIC Countries, particularly in Sub-Saharan Africa, and South and West Asia regions. Efforts should be made to develop ECCE programs for children between ages 0 – 3 and also for maternal care. OIC regional support is crucial for these countries to overcome the basic survival issues. In this regard, organizing pilot programs in these countries could be the first step for sustainable and good quality childcare services.

* **Inequity in access to ECCE:** Costs of early childhood programs are very high in most of the OIC Countries, where private sector provides most of these services compared to limited public involvement. Considering more than half of the population in more than one third of the OIC Countries lives on less than 2\$ per day (UNESCO, Education for All (EFA) Global Monitoring Report (GMR) Database), this poses a serious challenge for affordability. Higher government involvement in these programs through the use of support from regional (including related OIC institutions) and international donors is very important for

especially marginalized children and children with special needs, who get the most out of these services according to the UNESCO research (GMR, 2010). Moreover, private businesses' preference to operate schools in urban centers results in access problem for children living in rural and remote places. In 30 OIC Countries, more than half of the total population lives in rural areas (BASEIND, 2009). Organizing special programs for those children can be a solution to this problem.

* **Inadequate teacher qualifications:** Most of the teachers in ECCE services do not have satisfactory qualifications. This problem may be overcome by setting some common standards for the profession while making it a more attractive job alternative by improving the conditions for work and status of ECCE teachers. Executing capacity building programs through intra-OIC partnerships and the use of ICT technologies for training of existing pre-primary teachers can be short-term solutions.

* **Curricula deficiencies:** Academic nature of curricula in most ECCE programs, especially those in private sector, focuses on the development of child's ability to read and write at the expense of other important skills (UNESCO, GMR, 2007). The curricula should be organized for the child's emotional, social, physical, creative and cognitive skills as well. Moreover, the context of these education programs should be culturally relevant. Each country should base its own curriculum on its cultural and religious values and deliver the programs in mother tongue.

* **Lack of awareness of the importance of ECCE services:** A low level of parental education, especially of mothers, is one of the most pronounced barriers to entry to early childhood programs. Increasing parent empowerment and improving parent education programs for the importance of early childhood in overall development of a child is very important in this regard.

* **Lack of quality measuring and monitoring mechanisms:** Most of the OIC countries lack mechanisms for measuring and monitoring ECCE. This state necessitates the development of common quality standards supported by legal provisions of each country and followed by a regular field visits.

* **Difficulty of measuring informal institutions:** Especially due to high cost of ECCE services, parents may tend to get them through informal ways. Decreasing the cost of the services is a long-term solution to this problem. Gathering all the services under an official national body may provide part of the solution in the short-term. For example, in Morocco, the government gathered traditional Quranic schools under the roof of the Ministry of Islamic Affairs (UNESCO, Regional Report (Arab States), 2010).

* **Lack of data on ECCE services:** Establishing a national and/or regional data center would help in tracking ECCE experiences for more effective and accurate benchmarking between countries.

IDB urges more cooperation among member countries



Jeddah, Saudi Arabia – In his remarks at the 36th Annual Meeting of the Board of Governors of the Islamic Development Bank (IDB) on June 29, 2011, the President of IDB Dr. Ahmed Mohamed Ali spelled out IDB's plans and initiatives for the next four years. "We would like to improve the economic development facilities offered by the bank and stimulate the Islamic Solidarity Fund," he said and urged more cooperation among member countries in the fields of knowledge economy and trade.

"Who will lead the world in the 21st century is the question raised by Arab youth," Ali said, and urged Muslim countries to play a leading role on the world stage. He said the global financial crisis proved the relevance of Islamic banking and finance. "Our confused world is in dire need for financial, economic and social systems that are more balanced and more responsive to man's material, moral and spiritual requirements."

Ali emphasized IDB's support for Egypt to rebuild the country. "For development work ... failure is not an option. We have to work together to meet the urgent social needs by creating employment opportunities, and stimulate growth by attracting direct foreign investments," he added. He noted the enthusiasm shown by the present Egyptian government to create a new economic and social model.

Commending the role of the youth in the revolution, the IDB President said the youth want the Ummah to seize the opportunity without delay, because they sense the dangers inherent in remaining spectators rather than players.

"The youth fully realize the fact that the world economy is now turning from the West to the East where the Islamic Ummah lies. They yearn for liberation and for restoring the position their Ummah deserves. They believe that competition in the 21st century will not be confined to industrialized countries and will include new countries that have become capable of competing with big countries with soft power, having learned how to use the tools of the new world."

Ali said the renaissance of the Ummah sought by the youth was not different from the IDB's Vision 2020. "Ours is

a vision for human dignity and is inspired by the resolutions of the extraordinary OIC Islamic Summit in Makkah in 2005. The IDB has taken strategic initiatives aimed at combating poverty and unemployment," he said referring to the Solidarity Fund.

He said the global crisis was the best answer to skeptics of Islamic finance. "The financial crisis has shown one of the wonders of divine revelation. It showed the harmful effects of engaging in fictitious transactions for making quick material gains and the danger of giving loans without adequate guarantees."

The IDB chief also pinpointed some of the major shortcomings, calling for urgent remedial action. "The development models in member countries are based on outdated systems; the role of the Zakat and Awkaf has become ineffective in containing economic upheavals; there is a lack of strategic orientation toward knowledge economy; and debt-based products outweigh financing tools and investments in the real economy", he said.

He added, Muslim countries were incurring heavy losses due to lack of cooperation among them. "If we take Maghreb Union as an example, the figures are really frightening. Some studies indicate that the stagnating level of economic cooperation among these countries cost them 2 percent of their annual growth and lowered their GDP by 5 percent. It is indeed surprising that trade among the countries of this group constitutes less than 2 percent," he explained.

Ali said the IDB had signed an agreement with the UNDP to establish an effective mechanism for monitoring and taking preventive action in times of crises and disasters in favor of the citizens of member countries.

IDB chief thanked Saudi Arabia and other member states for supporting the bank. "This helped our institution retain its distinguished AAA rating by international rating agencies and sustain the growth of its project financing operations, which stood at \$3.7 billion in 2010," the President said. IDB has given \$70 billion worth of funding for development projects since its inception in 1975.

The IDB has also signed a memorandum of understanding

with Jeffrey Sachs, Head of the Earth Institute at Columbia University, with the objective of benefiting from its millennium village experience.

New economic order:

The IDB President called for a new economic order to promote global progress and prosperity.

“I call upon Islamic financial institutions to make use of the available opportunity to establish international investment banks in order to present a new vision and a different methodology to the world in asset management and fund investment ... and contribute to the reform of global financial system and stability,” Ali said.

Addressing a forum on the sidelines of the Conference on managing liquidity and enhancing the size of Islamic financial institutions, the IDB chief said the total assets of Islamic banks and financial institutions are expected to exceed \$1.5 trillion by 2012.

“Islamic banks contributed to financial and economic stability during the crisis, given that their credit and asset growth was at least twice as high as that of conventional banks,” he said quoting a survey conducted by the International Monetary Fund.

During the five-day conference about 35 forums, seminars and other events took place with the participation of experts from different parts of the world.

They include a forum on the role of the private sector in developing a road map for enhancing intra-OIC trade and a seminar on marginal water utilization in agriculture with special reference to Saudi Arabia.

Highlighting the progress achieved by the Islamic banking system during the past four decades, the IDB President said Islamic banks have been opened all over the world and won greater acceptance following the recent global economic crisis. “It has covered all sectors of the banking industry including trade and investment as well as non-banking services,” he pointed out.

Ali also spoke about the challenges facing the Islamic banking sector and urged greater efforts from Islamic financial institutions and experts to confront them. He said most Islamic banks have achieved considerable liquidity. However, he called for innovating new products for liquidity management and inventing ways to make use of short-term funds for long-term finance.

The IDB chief emphasized the role of Islamic banks in strengthening national economies by achieving a high rate of production efficiency and safeguarding financial stability in their countries.

Waleed Al-Wohaib, CEO of International Islamic Trade Finance Corporation (ITFC), said the intra-OIC trade rose from 14 percent in 2004 (\$333 billion) to 16.6 percent in 2010 (\$456 billion).

He was optimistic that ITFC would be able to achieve the intra-OIC trade target of 20 percent by 2015, which was set by the OIC summit in Makkah. The IDB had given \$38.7 billion to finance trade deals of member countries since January 2008 to the end of December 2010.

Decisions and sideline events:

At the conclusion of five-day Conference on June 30,

2011, the Governors endorsed allocation of 5% (not less than US\$ 5 million) of the Bank’s expected net income for the current year (2011) to financing technical assistance grants. At the same time they earmarked 2% of the Bank’s expected net income (not less than US\$ 2 million) for the current year 2011 to granting scholarships for the year 2012.

The Governors also agreed that the 37th and 38th Annual Meetings of the Board of Governors would be held in Sudan and Yemen, respectively. The Governors elected from among nine groups, nine members to the new Board of Executive Directors, which will commence work for a period of three years starting on 19 November 2011. These members are from Bangladesh, Burkina Faso, Ivory Coast, Kazakhstan, Malaysia, Mozambique, Oman, Palestine and Tunisia. The IDB Board of Executive Directors comprises 18 members, half of them are nominated and directly mandated by the member countries holding the largest contribution to the share capital of the Bank, viz., Egypt, Iran, Kuwait, Libya, Nigeria, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Turkey and the UAE.

The 26th Symposium, held on the sidelines of the IDB Conference, discussed the issue of unemployment in IDB member countries in the aftermath of the global financial crisis. The participants underlined the need and significance of making comprehensive decisions to promote educational systems in the member countries in line with market demands as well as implementing the education for employment programs between the IDB Group and the International Finance Corporation of the World Bank. The Symposium further underscored increasing the level of infrastructure investment for supporting small and medium enterprises together with professional training programs in member countries.

On the sidelines of the Conference, a number of other important meetings were held including the 4th Annual Meeting of the Board of Governors of the Islamic Solidarity Fund for Development (ISFD), which deals with poverty reduction and creating jobs in member countries; the 6th General Assembly of the International Islamic Trade Finance Corporation (ITFC) and the 18th Annual Meeting of the Board of Governors of the Islamic Corporation for Insurance of Investments and Export Credit (ICIEC), which accepted the Republic of Comoros as its 40th member country and approved to increase its capital from 150 million Islamic Dinars to 400 million.

The Islamic Corporation for the Development of the Private Sector (ICD) also held its 11th General Assembly, which approved the Corporation’s intervention in new sectors, such as agriculture and expanding support for industries to cover a large number of its member countries. The meeting of the Supreme Council for the Al Aqsa and Al Quds funds of the Islamic Development Bank urged the contributing countries to upgrade their contributions and a faster payment of commitments. Since establishment, the two funds have allocated almost US\$ 780 million on different projects including construction and reconstruction of tens of thousands of houses, roads, schools, water and electricity networks, hospitals, agricultural farmlands, etc. in the Palestinian territories.

IDB approves US\$ 16 million financing for Waqf project in Bahrain

Manama, Bahrain – The Islamic Development Bank (IDB) is contributing US\$ 16 million in financing for construction of a trade and residential complex in the Bahraini capital of Manama. The approval, which is to be put into action by IDB's Awqaf Properties Investment Fund (APIF) comes in line with the Bank's endeavors to support Islamic Awqaf (endowments) and upgrading its role in economic and social development of the Muslim Ummah. The proceeds of the 13-storey complex to be built in Seif district in Manama under the auspices of Bahrain's Al Ja'fariyah Waqf (endowment) Bureau are later to be spent on supporting

charitable social activities in the Kingdom of Bahrain. APIF was established in February 2001 based on the approval of the 6th meeting of Awqaf ministers of member countries of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) in Jakarta, Indonesia, 1997. It aims to promote the role of Awqaf and revitalize the tradition of Waqf (endowment) in its true sense in economic, social and cultural development of Islamic societies through development of endowed properties and relevant investments. Since its establishment, the Fund has provided financings to 41 different endowed projects worth nearly US\$ 884 million in 20 different countries.

\$2.5 billion IDB aid for Egypt and funds mega electricity project

Cairo, Egypt – The Islamic Development Bank (IDB) has agreed to give \$2.5 billion in loans to Egypt over the next three years in order to finance the cash-strapped country's development projects, and export and import operations, the Bank said.

IDB President Ahmed Mohammed Ali signed a series of loan agreements in Cairo with Egyptian officials in the presence of Prime Minister Essam Sharaf.

According to one agreement, IDB will give \$60 million to rent equipment required for a power plant in Suez.

It will also provide technical assistance worth \$300,000 to launch an education center for non-Arabs.

A grant worth \$160,000 will be provided to develop methods for financing small-scale projects, the Bank said.

In August, the IDB Group approved US\$ 200 million for funding a mega electricity production project in Egypt. The South Helwan Power Plant Project, crucial for keeping pace with the historically rising electricity demand in Egypt, aims to promote the living standards of the public by increasing the production capacity and maintaining the reliability of country's power generating grid by installing a 1950 mega watt steam power plant. Over the past decade, electricity

demand in Egypt has been rising at an average rate of 7.2 percent per year and is projected to grow by 6.1 percent in the next 5 years.

The South Helwan project is part of the ambitious 5 year electricity generation expansion plan (2012 -2017) which is expected to add 12,410 mega watts of electric energy to the country's production capacity at a cost of US\$ 15 billion. It forms an integral part of the Egyptian government's efforts to maintain national electricity coverage at optimal rate, which would spur the country's economic growth. Once fully operational, the power plant shall help meet the growing energy needs of agriculture, industry, tourism and services sectors.

Since its establishment in 1975, the IDB has financed 44 development projects in Egypt. Currently, IDB Group's cumulative financing to the country stands at US\$4.07 billion. The Bank's finances covered various sectors including health, agriculture, water and energy.

Egypt is one the bank's oldest members and one of the seven countries that own the majority of its shares. It has contributed 7.1 percent of IDB's capital.

New travel company targets Islamic market

Dubai, UAE – A brand new travel company was launched in Dubai specifically targeting the Islamic travel sector.

The business-to-business (B2B) wholesaler offers travel agents, hotels, car rentals, sightseeing tours and transfers, train tickets, cruises and visas as well as specially tailored products for the Muslim traveler such as Hajj and Omrah tours and dry hotels.

Foras Tourism is part of Foras International Investment - the investment arm of the Islamic Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ICCI), an affiliate of OIC.

OIC countries make up 21.4% of the world's population, accounting for around 1.5 billion people.

Moataz Amin, Director of Sales and Marketing of Foras Tourism said the company has experienced high demand since its launch at Arabian Travel Market (ATM) in May. "During ATM, we had a great impact and feedback from

our both suppliers and prospects, they are all anxious for cooperation."

The company has bold plans to expand its services rapidly around the Muslim world with phase one focusing on the UAE, Indonesia, Iran, Kuwait, Malaysia, Morocco, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Turkey, Jordan, Lebanon and Egypt.

In August Foras unveiled its new online platform which will feature wholesale packages, hotel bookings, flights, visas, sightseeing, and tickets, offering real-time inventory with instant availability, pricing, booking and online confirmation.

"All our customers will benefit from all offered services, confirmations, and amendments instantly online or via our most professional, dedicated operations department and customer service call centre seven days a week, with the best advice," said Amin.

OIC signs Global Cooperate Agreement with Turkish Airlines



Dr. Deniz and Mr. Gokcek

Jeddah, Saudi Arabia - The Director General of Administration and Financial Affairs of the OIC signed a global cooperate agreement with Turkish Airlines which

provided special discount rates to OIC staff on official trips. The service is availed as long as the OIC staff member uses the OIC ticketing section for their purchasing of personnel travel tickets from Turkish Airlines.

Mr. Ali Gokcek, the Global Corporate Account Manager, came from Istanbul to the OIC Headquarters in Jeddah for the signing ceremony. He said Turkish Airlines was honoured to have such an agreement with the world's second largest international organization and to give this privilege to its employees and their families. With the signing, the agreement has entered into effect and it will give discounts based on the category of tickets with the special incentives of Turkish Airlines as 5 %, 10% and 15%.

Dr. Mustafa Deniz, the Director General of Administration and Financial Affairs, thanked Turkish Airlines for this opportunity and considered the agreement important in facilitating the work of the OIC staff. He hoped the agreement would be later extended to cover all OIC organs if they wish to participate in this scheme under the OIC umbrella.

First Meeting of the OIC E-Government Working Group

Ankara, Turkey – The First Meeting of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation E-Government Working Group (OIC eGovWG) - organized by the Statistical, Economic and Social Research and Training Centre for Islamic Countries (SESRIC) - was held on 5–6 July 2011 in Ankara, Turkey. Delegates from six OIC Member Countries, namely Iran, Lebanon, Malaysia, Syria, Turkey and Uzbekistan and observers from academia and public sector participated in the Meeting.

The decision for the establishment of the OIC eGovWG was taken in the 25th Session of the OIC Standing Committee for Economic and Commercial Cooperation (COMCEC) held in Istanbul on 57- November 2009. The First Meeting of the OIC eGovWG focused on main activities and roles as well as areas of cooperation and collaboration where the Working Group can act as a facilitator and catalyst for the benefit of e-government systems of the OIC Member Countries.

At the opening session, Eng. Eryetli conveyed the message of Dr. Savaş Alpay, Director General of SESRIC. In his message, Dr. Alpay stated that the OIC eGovWG was established with the purpose of focusing on four fundamental areas including priority setting, experience sharing, capacity building, and establishment of an OIC E-Government Portal. Expressing that expectations on the activities of the Working Group are parallel to the aforementioned focus areas, Dr. Alpay said that the short and long term plans and activities of the Working Group would take shape with the valuable contribution of the delegates attending the meeting.

During the sessions, the participants exchanged their experiences and views to establish an action plan regarding closer cooperation and collaboration in e-government applications and services, and content and framework of the OIC E-Government Portal.

IDB approves financing of mega electricity production project in Bangladesh

Jeddah, Saudi Arabia - The Islamic Development Bank (IDB) has given the go ahead for financing of a mega electricity production project in Bangladesh. The approval for the US\$200 million financing by IDB comes at a time when there is a sizable power shortfall of approximately 2000 megawatt. The total cost of Ashuganj Power Station Efficiency Improvement Project, which is scheduled to go on line by July 2016, is estimated to stand at US\$ 557.7

million.

Since it commenced operations, the IDB Group has approved 309 operations and projects totaling US\$ 9.52 billion for Bangladesh covering different economic sectors such as agriculture, energy, health, education, industry and mining, transportation, trade, water, sanitation and urban services. Trade financing accounted for 90 percent of the IDB Group's intervention in Bangladesh.

IDB Signs US\$29 million projects for irrigation and waste management with Senegal

Jeddah, Saudi Arabia - Senegal and the Islamic Development Bank (IDB) signed two agreements in June 2011 for US\$ 29 million for financing two projects for the second phase of a small irrigation project and urban solid waste management. These projects are expected to combat poverty and achieve food security as well as facilitate environmental protection respectively. At the signing ceremony, Senegalese Minister of State for International Cooperation, Oil and Air-transport stated that the signing marks the opening of a new horizon in cooperation between Senegal and the IDB, and that "there are plans for a US\$ 100 million agreement with the IDB for upgrading the power generation grid in Senegal to reach 70 megawatts." He also added that IDB's financings in support of economic and social development in his country for the year 2011 shall reach US\$ 250 million whereas the figure was US\$ 155 million in 2010. The IDB President Dr. Ahmad Mohamed Ali expressed pleasure over the signing of the two documents with

Senegal underlining that these agreements go in line with the resolve of the two sides to fight poverty, promote food security and protect the environment. Dr. Ali recalled the role that Senegal played in putting its weight behind the Islamic Solidarity Fund for Development (ISFD), IDB's arm for combating poverty. He expressed special thanks and appreciation to Senegalese President and the current Summit Chairman of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) Abdullah Wade for his initiatives in upgrading the Fund's role and securing its objectives. The irrigation project is expected to uplift the Senegalese government's capacity to combat poverty by providing sustainable farming resources in a number of eastern, south-eastern and central parts of the country, and thus provide tangible support for food security. The financing for the urban solid waste management program will facilitate indigenization of the technology while providing the infrastructure for solid waste disposal.

SPDA meeting highlights roles of IDB and African countries

Jeddah, Saudi Arabia - A meeting of the Special Program for the Development of Africa (SPDA) was held on the sidelines of the 36th annual meeting of IDB Board of Governors in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia on June 28. The session tackled the current economic situation in the African continent and defined the role of the IDB Group and its African members in the medium and long-term and the shift in aid architecture from the traditional North-South to South-South. It also reviewed alternatives of triangular cooperation and solutions for economic development.

Chairing the session, IDB Vice President for Operations, Birama Boubacar Sidibe highlighted the significant positive elements seen across Africa and stated that this was due to four main reasons: strong economic growth; rapid progress of the Millennium Development Goals leading to drop in poverty across many African countries; increased investments of the private sector and high return on investment as well as robust climate for market-oriented, pro-poor reforms which has led to prudent economic policies.

"The IDB has acknowledged that the situation in Africa is not what we had envisioned, the urgent need to provide much needed resources and the participation of the member countries to help sustain and further develop the growth of the African continent is a major factor for us and we are here to discuss ways to bolster our relationships and share knowledge and ideas," stated Sidibe.

The Panel discussion on the theme 'Weathering the Recent Crises – Drawing Lessons to Leverage Opportunities', was attended by Dr. Amadou Bobacar Cisse, Minister of Planning, Land and Community Development of Niger, Samir Redhwan, Minister of Economy of Egypt, Abdelaziz Khelef, the Director General of the Arab Bank for Economic Development in Africa (BADEA) and Professor Jeffrey Sachs, Director of the Earth Institute at Columbia University. Dr. Dahlan Siamat of the Indonesian delegation shared lessons learnt on Retail Sukuk and Dr. Metin Satir discussed the Turkish Authority's success stories with SME development.

IDB mobilizes US\$ 30 million to support projects in Al Quds

Jeddah, Saudi Arabia - The Board of Executive Directors of the Islamic Development Bank (IDB) has approved mobilization of \$30 million for financing of various projects in the city of Al Quds. The package includes a \$10 million grant from IDB's Waqf Fund and a US\$ 10 million loan from the Islamic Solidarity Fund for Development (ISFD), IDB's arm for combating poverty in its least developed member countries. In addition, a \$10 million is to be mobilized as grant by the IDB through participation of its other partner developmental institutions and funds.

The financing operation which shall cover projects in education, health, youth and housing sectors is to last for 5 years. It mainly opts to support efforts by the Palestinian authority for preservation of the identity of the city of Al Quds and improving the living standards in the city while contributing to economic and social development of Palestinians. The IDB has so far provided \$143 million of financings for 76% in Palestine. The Bank also manages the Al Aqsa and Al Quds Funds as well as the program by the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) for reconstruction of Gaza in addition to grants provided to Palestine by the Arabic funds.



SIERRA LEONE



Full Name: Republic of Sierra Leone
Capital: Freetown
Population: 6.4 million (July 2010 estimate)
Area: 71,740 square km.
Official Language: English
Monetary Unit: Leone

Overview

Sierra Leone is located on the west coast of Africa between latitudes 7 and 10 degrees north, and longitudes 10.5 and 13 degrees west. The Republic of Guinea is to the north and northeast; Liberia is to the east and southeast, and the Atlantic Ocean on the west and south. It has 300 miles of coastline.

From an approximate 70-mile costal belt of low-lying land, the country rises to a mountain plateau near the Eastern Frontier rising 4000 to 6000 feet with a rich timber forest region. The western area encompasses the Sierra Leone peninsula on which the capital and main commercial centre of Freetown stands; is 24 miles long and 10 miles wide.

Sierra Leone achieved independence on 27 April 1961 and attained republican status on 19 April 1971. Since independence many changes have been experienced politically and economically and in the social society of Sierra Leone.

Freetown

In 1787 the British helped four hundred freed slaves from the United States, Nova Scotia, and Great Britain returned to Sierra Leone to settle in what they called the "Province of Freedom". The area was first settled by freed slaves sent from England around the Cotton Tree which was said to have previously been a slave market. This settlement was joined by other groups of freed slaves and soon became known as Freetown. In 1792, Freetown became one of Britain's first colonies in West Africa. It is the largest city and also capital of Sierra Leone lying on the peninsula near the Atlantic coast and hosts the third largest natural harbor in the world - Elizabeth II Quay.

Today, Freetown is a buzzing capital and is lively by day or by night. In the main city centre and further towards the east is mainly the commercial area although more businesses today are moving towards the west to avoid overcrowding. The west of Freetown is mainly residential and further west

(South-West) there are some of the country's most beautiful beaches. Some of Freetown's attractions famous structures include The Cotton Tree, Freetown Law Courts, the Slave Gate and Portuguese Steps, St John's Maroon Church (built around 1820), St George's Cathedral (completed in 1828), Sierra Leone Museum, Foulah Town Mosque (built in the 1830s), Sierra Leone Museum (featuring the Ruitter Stone and original drum of Bai Bureh), Victoria Park, Creole and colonial architecture, the lively markets and fantastic beaches.

The other largest cities of Sierra Leone include Bo, Kenama, Makeni and Koidu Town.

Economy

Sierra Leone is gradually showing signs of a successful transition. Investor and consumer confidence continue to rise, adding impetus to the country's economic recovery. There is greater freedom of movement and successful re-habitation and resettlement of residential areas.

Rich in minerals, Sierra Leone has relied on mining, especially diamonds, for its economic base. The country is among the top 10 diamond producing nations in the world. Mineral exports remain the main foreign currency earner. Sierra Leone is a major producer of gem-quality diamonds. Annual production of Sierra Leone's diamond estimates range between \$250 – 300 million US\$. Formal exports have dramatically improved since the civil war with efforts to improve the management of them having some success.

Sierra Leone has one of the world's largest deposits of rutile, a titanium ore used as paint pigment and welding rod coatings. The new Mines and Minerals Act was passed by Parliament in November 2009, which aimed to improve concessions management in the Ministry of Mineral Resources.

About two-thirds of the population in the country engages in subsistence agriculture, which accounts for 52.5% of national income. The government has made efforts to increase food and cash crop production, and upgrade small farmer skills. The government works with several foreign donors to operate integrated rural development and agricultural projects.

Taking stock of Muslims in America

Parvez Ahmed

Jacksonville, Florida - Last year, during a raging controversy over the building of an Islamic centre in Lower Manhattan, Time Magazine ran a cover story titled, "Is America Islamophobic?" Shortly thereafter, a poll released by Time showed nearly six in ten Americans held an unfavorable view of Muslims. A Gallup poll released the same year revealed four in ten Americans admitting to "feeling at least 'a little' prejudice" towards Muslims.

The Gallup poll indicated that these adverse attitudes are likely the result of most Americans (62 per cent) personally not knowing anyone who is Muslim. The incessant headlines about violence in the name of Islam have led nearly one in two Americans to erroneously conclude that the faith of Islam is more likely than other religions to encourage violence.

But beyond the headlines lurks another reality.

A recent study by the newly established Abu Dhabi Gallup Center concluded, "Muslim Americans are satisfied with their current lives and are more optimistic than other faith groups that things are getting better." Muslims in America continue to profess a positive attitude despite being misunderstood by many and demonized by a few.

The Southern Poverty Law Center, an American non-profit civil rights organization dedicated to combating bigotry, wrote in a recent report that "...certain Americans, [who have been] prodded into paranoia by clever activists, opportunistic politicians and guileful media players, seem downright eager to deny Muslims the guarantees of religious freedom and the presumption of innocence." In New York, educator Debbie Almontaser was compelled to resign from a secular Arabic-English public school after she was misquoted in the New York Post, which "clever activists" exploited to insidiously imply she supported violence. However, when a similar cast of characters tried to rile up a controversy by selectively misquoting me to derail my nomination to the Jacksonville Human Rights Commission, they were effectively thwarted after influential leaders stood up to condemn the witch-hunt, which led to the City Council voting in favor of my candidacy.

This year, extreme right-wing activists rallied voters in Oklahoma to pass a constitutional amendment prohibiting judges from making rulings based on sharia, the source of Islam's religious and moral laws. A federal judge blocked the implementation of this referendum, but more than a

dozen states are considering "banning" sharia. Meanwhile, Congressman Peter King of New York continues his series of unbalanced congressional hearings about the "radicalization" of American Muslims, which negatively stereotype the Muslim community with the imprimatur of the US government.

Despite the efforts to marginalize this community, Muslim life in America remains vibrant, youthful and nuanced. According to Gallup, the average age of American Muslims is significantly lower than people of other faiths. This youthfulness explains why Muslims are least likely to vote despite having the most positive attitude towards American democracy, although they also have the least positive view of law enforcement and US military engagement abroad.

One of the most common complaints about Muslims is that they do not condemn terrorism as much as they ought to. Following the London bombings in 2005, New York Times columnist Thomas Friedman wrote, "To this day, no major Muslim cleric or religious body has ever issued a fatwa [a non-binding religious opinion] condemning Osama bin Laden." Such spurious statements help solidify the misperception of Muslims being sympathetic to terrorism. University of Michigan Professor Juan Cole and Professor Charles Kurzman from the University of North Carolina have documented many fatwas and statements from Muslim scholars and groups condemning terrorism. One only need enter the phrases, "Muslims Condemn Terrorism" or "Islamic Statements Against Terrorism", in any online search engine to read the multitude of statements against terrorism.

In fact, the latest Gallup survey shows nine out of ten American Muslims saying that they do not sympathize with Al Qaeda and view themselves as loyal Americans. Survey results also show that Muslims are the least likely of all religious groups to say that there is ever any justification for attacking civilians. However, most of their fellow Americans do not see Muslims as being patriotic. To win the hearts and minds of their fellow Americans, Muslims must spend more time not only educating others about their faith but also increase their commitment to endeavors that promote the common good.

Recently, mainstream media and civic groups have begun to question the means and motives of the anti-Muslim network. A report from the Center for American Progress, a progressive research and advocacy organization, shows that from 2001 to 2007 a handful of wealthy donors poured nearly \$42 million in financing anti-Muslim activities. Although the money trail is unprecedented, in many respects the challenges facing Muslims are no different from those faced by other religious minorities as they struggled to integrate in America. This gives hope because eventually the marginalized groups found acceptance and respect in mainstream society.

.....
* Parvez Ahmed is a Fulbright Scholar and Associate Professor of Finance at the University of North Florida. This article was written for the Common Ground News Service (CGNews).

Copyright permission is granted for publication.



About OIC

The Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) is the second largest inter-governmental organization after the United Nations with a membership of 57 states spread over four continents. The Organization is the collective voice of the Muslim world. It endeavors to safeguard and protect the interests of the Muslim world in the spirit of promoting international peace and harmony among various peoples of the world.

Originally named The Organization of the Islamic Conference, it was established pursuant a decision adopted by the historical summit which took place in Rabat, Kingdom of Morocco, on 12th Rajab 1389 AH/ 25 September 1969 AD, following the criminal arson of Al-Aqsa Mosque in occupied Jerusalem.

In 1970, the first ever meeting of the Islamic Conference of Foreign Minister (ICFM) was held in Jeddah. It adopted the decision to establish a permanent secretariat in Jeddah headed by the organization's secretary general. Prof Ekmeleddin Ihsanoglu is the 9th Secretary General who assumed office in January 2005 after being elected by the 31st ICFM Session.

The first OIC Charter was adopted by the 3rd ICFM Session held in 1972. The Charter was amended to keep pace with the developments that have unraveled recently across the world. The 11th Islamic Summit held in Dakar in March 2008 endorsed the new Charter, which has become the pillar of the OIC future Islamic action in line with the requirements of the 21st century. The new Charter provides for the dissemination and safeguard of Islamic teachings and values based on moderation and tolerance, as well as the need to strive for the projection and defense of the true image of Islam. The new Charter also called for encouraging inter-civilizational and interfaith dialogue. Over the last 40 years, the OIC membership has grown from its founding members of 30 to 57 states. In 2011 in Astana, Kazakhstan, the 38th Council of Foreign Ministers endorsed changing the emblem and name to Organization of Islamic Cooperation.

The Organization has the singular honor of galvanizing the Ummah into a unified voice and representing Muslims by espousing all causes close to the hearts of over 1.5 billion Muslims in the world. The Organization has consultative and cooperative relations with the UN and other inter-governmental organizations to protect the vital interests of the Muslims and to work for the settlement of conflicts and disputes involving Member States. In safeguarding the true values of Islam and Muslims, the organization has taken various steps to remove misperceptions and have strongly advocated elimination of discrimination against Muslims in all forms and manifestations. It has also engaged in fighting Islamophobia by setting up a dedicated observatory to track and monitor the phenomenon and its disturbing manifestations

The Member States of the OIC face many challenges in the 21st century. To address these challenges, the 3rd Extraordinary Session of the Islamic Summit held in Makkah in December 2005, laid down a blue print called the Ten-Year Program of Action (TYPOA) which envisages joint action by the Member States, promotion of tolerance and moderation, modernization, extensive reforms in all spheres of activities including science and technology, education, and development of trade. It also emphasizes good governance and the promotion of human rights in the Muslim world, especially with regard to the children's and women's rights as well as family values enshrined in Islamic Shariah [law].

One of the outstanding achievements since the adoption of the Ten-Year Programme of Action (TYPOA) has been the recent reinvigoration and restructuring of the various OIC bodies. Among the OIC's key bodies the Islamic Summit, the Council of Foreign Ministers (CFM), the General Secretariat, in addition to the Al-Quds Committee chaired by the king of the Kingdom of Morocco, as Al-Quds remains the paramount issue on the OIC's agenda, and three permanent committees, one of which is concerned with science and technology (COMSTECH) that is chaired by the President of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, the second committee is concerned with economy and trade (COMCEC) which is chaired by the President of the Republic of Turkey, while the third one is concerned with information and culture (COMIAC) which is chaired by the President of Senegal.

The OIC has subsidiary organs, notably Statistical, Economic and Social Research and Training Centre for the Islamic Countries (SESRIC), the Research Center for Islamic History, Art and Culture (IRCICA), the International Islamic Fiqh Academy (IIFA) and the Islamic Center for the development of Trade (ICDT). Other specialized organs operating under the OIC include the Islamic Development Bank (IDB) and the Islamic Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (ISESCO). There are also affiliated organs such as the Islamic Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ICCI) and the Islamic World Academy of Sciences (IAS).

The OIC subsidiary, affiliated and specialized organs play a vital role in boosting cooperation in various fields among the OIC Member States.

For more details, visit the OIC website at www.oic-oci.org

Boosting economic and trade cooperation

Encouraging dialogue among cultures and religions

Combating terrorism

Achieving economic and trade development

Strengthening international relations

Joint Islamic solidarity

Science and technology



Defending the Palestinian cause

Supporting human rights

Maintaining Islamic heritage

Protecting the rights of Muslim minorities

Augmenting Islamic culture

Combating poverty