

His Excellency Ambassador Slimane CHIKH's speech at the OIC group ambassadorial meeting in Geneva

8th November 2010

Excellences and dear colleagues,

This is the first meeting of the OIC group that I have the pleasure to attend.

I have had the pleasure to meet some of you present here. Today it is to all the members of our group that I present myself to declare my wish to work in close collaboration with you all; convinced as I am that the mission we are carrying out in the OIC is a collective one.

I count on your amicable support to make my first steps in the wide field of multilateralism. The new comer that I am in this domain will need some guidance, brought in by your own experience. There will be need also for a convergence of positions within our group and a solid unity of action.

This unity of action has however been an object of a special resolution of the foreign affairs ministers of OIC member States. In May 2010 à Dushanbe. This resolution underlines **“the importance of reinforcing coordination and dialogue as well as adopting a unified position in the international forum in order to concretize the objectives of the OIC Charter and to serve the common cause and interest of member States and the Islamic world.”** Such a position, reaffirmed in New York last September, in line with the framework of the application of the directives of our head of States at the Dakar Summit in 2008, imposes on us the duty to conform collectively and to observe a strict discipline of voting in the international forum.

I will personally work in favour of a consensus within our ranking; a consensus that will go beyond the simple common points of view. I particularly intend to be a good listener to you and assume completely my role as an assembler. This is where; I believe lays the key to our collective success.

This mission is very important, especially now that we find ourselves faced with a vague of Islamophobia submerging the social climate in Europe and the western world. Such a situation is a symptom of a mutation crisis, undergoing in these societies, who are finding it hard to accept the emergence of Islam in their immediate environment through the third and fourth generation citizenship of children of Muslim immigrants. These societies who identify with a Judaeo-Christian reference refuse or accept reluctantly to integrate Islam in this reference. The right-wing drift of the powers in position in Europe contributes moreover to stress this refusal, fed increasingly by the convenient process of the recourse to picking a 'scapegoat' in a context of economic and social crisis.

Faced with such a situation, our response must, it seems to me, take several forms to avoid that the peaceful dialogue which we wish for, according to the program of the OIC, does not turn on deaf ears, bearing in mind that **two monologues do not make a dialogue**. A wanted dialogue dictates the listening of the other whose attention we are seeking, even if it means giving him back his own dialectic.

-Indeed, the universality of human rights cannot adapt a «double standard «by guarantying Israel impunity without limit, for its repeated crimes against the Palestinian people.

- The freedoms of speech and expression are used as excuses for defamation against Islam and Islamophobia behaviours, while these same liberties are severely condemned or even repressed in the slightest stench real or supposed of anti-Semitism.

-As for the secularism, the other recurring reference of the ideal republican, it has, for a very long time rejected its original anticlericalism to assert its neutrality and its respect towards the religions.

- Finally, globalization carried out by the neoliberalism economies is not shielded either from the contradiction, which on one hand advocates the

free circulation, worldwide, of capital, goods and ideas, and on the other hand, puts barriers in the free movement of people. So, the globalization of the western values still has no access to the universality.

Other contradictions could, definitely be found. There is need, more fundamentally to remind emphatically that the reject of another at the later stage means the refusal of an important part of oneself i.e. humanity and universality.

The debate on human rights is doubtlessly important and even necessary, but not sufficient. It does not have to take us away from the other concerns and other domains of actions in which the OIC could take initiatives by taking care of the concern of the moral and material interests of the peoples of its member countries.

The action of the OIC in the social and humanitarian sectors, as well as headways realized in the economic, technological and scientific domains should also be reflected in our common activities at the Geneva level. In this spirit, I feel it is necessary to re-revitalize the work of coordination of other thematic groups of the OIC in Geneva, created since 2005, but not yet functional. Indeed, the health, the migration, the economic, cultural and social development of our societies are an integral part of the promotion of human rights and remain the first and recurring concern of our member countries.

The strength of number must be supported by the strength of conviction and the rigorous and rational approach. We shall also attempt to strengthen our capacity of anticipation to avoid undergoing an event. It is under these conditions that our organization can play an active role within the United Nations System.

I am thinking of introducing, in this perspective, a project to organize an important exhibition in Geneva with the theme, the contribution of the Arab-Muslim civilization to universal science. Such an action will call on two already organized exhibitions the one in Paris by the Institute of the Arab World titled «the golden age of the Arabic sciences» And the other one in London by the Foundation for science, technology and civilization, entitled " 1001 inventions? Discover the Muslim Heritage in our world ".

This project had the approval of His Excellence the General Secretary of the OIC and has already obtained the support of Mrs High-commissioner for human rights as well as authorities of the City of Geneva.

Other initiatives could be envisaged to make known the real face of Islam, **an average religion** open to dialogue, to modernity and to progress.

I had various conversations with the leaders of Organizations of the United Nations System (The high-commission of human rights, the ICRC, the OIM, the WIPO, the WHO, the ITU, and ILO) as well as the European Union, the African Union, Arab league, the Francophone Organisation, Non-aligned movements. All expressed their availability for a narrow cooperation with the OCI.

I shall have to specify the contents of these conversations, during the debates if you wish.

These are, briefly explained some themes which occurred to me to subject to your enlightened opinion.

Listening to you I will definitely learn a lot.

I thank you.