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**Statement by Ambassador Masood Khan, Permanent Representative of Pakistan,
before handing over the OIC Chairmanship to the Ugandan Permanent
Representative in Geneva, 27 August 2008**

Excellencies,
Colleagues,
Ladies and Gentlemen

Today is a special day for us. We have gathered to pass the baton to Ambassador Arsene Balihuta of Uganda and his mission.

It is a longstanding tradition that the overall chair of the OIC in Geneva is given to the Ambassador representing the host of the Council of Foreign Ministers (previously called the Islamic Conference of Foreign Ministers).

This year, Uganda made us all proud by hosting the 35th CFM. The outcome of the meeting will give us guidance in the coming year.

I also want to mention the outcome of the historic OIC Summit held in Dakar in March this year. The Summit succeeded in revising the Charter, defining the criteria for membership and observers, and giving the necessary direction for the creation of an independent human rights body. Ambassador Babacar Carlos Mbaye of Senegal, with his sagacity, will continue to guide the Group on how to promote and implement the decisions of the Dakar Summit.

For the past year, as host of the 34th ICFM, Pakistan has been chairing the OIC in Geneva. During this period, we have tried to reach out to key international organizations based in Geneva. Although our main focus has been on the international human rights law and international humanitarian law, we have increased our exposure to a wide array of issues, including trade and development, intellectual property, international migration, telecommunications, labour, and employment. In the past year, the OIC has received, among others, Ms. Louise Arbour, former High Commissioner for Human Rights, Mr. Brunson McKinley, Director General IOM, Dr. Supachai Panitchpakdi, Secretary General UNCTAD, Mr. Juan Somavia, Director General ILO, and Mr. Alain Clerc, Executive Secretary of the Global Digital Solidarity Fund.

We have had useful interaction with Mr. Sergei Ordzhonikidze, Director General UNOG, about a host of issues including the repair and maintenance of *Palais de Nations*. He also briefed us about the vision of the new UN Secretary General, Mr. Ban Ki-moon.

Last year, we also set a new tradition by organizing jointly with the World Intellectual Property Organisation (WIPO) a retreat on the international IP system. OIC Ambassadors and experts underlined at the retreat that as OIC economies were

transitioning to higher levels of development, they needed to raise awareness about intellectual property rights and how these rights impinged on trade, industry and investment. The event was successful.

The OIC's combined vote bank has given it an important position in different electoral colleges. We have not reached a stage where we can vote as a bloc; but we have received several candidates for international organizations and intergovernmental forums, who have actively solicited our support.

In the past year, we have worked very closely with the Arab Group, whose members are in fact part of the OIC, and the African Group. We have also forged ties with the Western and Latin American Groups for dialogue and solidarity on issues of common interest. We have initiated a periodic and structured dialogue between the EU Troika and OIC Troika. From the OIC side, the troika has been represented by the current CFM chair, the previous CFM chair, the OIC Summit chair, Coordinator on Human Rights, the host country Saudi Arabia, and the permanent observer mission which represents the OIC Secretary General. The troika dialogue, which is mainly centered on human rights issues, has been very productive. The chair has regularly briefed the OIC Ambassadors about the discussion in the troika settings.

I want to take this opportunity to thank you, Ambassadors and dear colleagues, for your trust in me and my colleagues in the mission and your unstinted support to the initiatives we have taken collectively. The internal cohesiveness and coherence in the OIC Group in Geneva has been exemplary. We have followed through our initiatives because of our inner discipline and consistency. I also thank the OIC Permanent Observer Mission, Ambassador Babacar Ba and his associates, for their constant support to me, my mission and the OIC Group.

Today, I am handing over the Chair to Ambassador Arsene Balihuta in full confidence that he would build on the strengths of the OIC in Geneva and take it to an even higher plane of performance. As we all know, Ambassador Balihuta is a skilful negotiator and a catalyst for consensus. We have seen his immense qualities of leadership in WTO. He is an accomplished academic, researcher and diplomat. We are fortunate to have him as our leader for this year.

Let me assure you that Pakistan, as mandated, will continue to perform its role as the Coordinator of the OIC Group of Human Rights and Humanitarian Issues. Coordinatorships on various issues, including human rights, economic and disarmament issues, as per established practice, will come up for review by the end of the year.

I have informed the Ambassador of Uganda that we have already scheduled on September 19, a briefing by H.E. Antonio Guterres, UN High Commissioner for Refugees. This meeting will be presided over by our new Chairman.

With these remarks, may I invite Ambassador Arsene Balihuta to assume the chair.