



Organisation Of The Islamic Conference

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Statement by the OIC Secretary General Ekmeleddin Ihsanoglu at the Sixth Islamic Conference of Culture Ministers held in Baku, Republic of Azerbaijan

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Honourable Ministers,
Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

The OIC Secretary General Ekmeleddin Ihsanoglu, despite his sincere desire was unable to be present at this important meeting personally due to other pressing commitments. He has designated me to represent him and read out his statement to this august gathering.

QUOTE:

H. E. Mr. Abulfas Garayev, Minister of Culture and Tourism of the Republic of Azerbaijan and the Chairman of the Conference,
H. E. Dr. Abdulaziz Othman Altwaijri, Director General of the Islamic Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (ISESCO),
Honourable Ministers,
Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Assalamu alaikum wa rahmatullahi wa barakatuhu

At the outset, I would like to offer my sincere congratulations to you, Mr. Chairman on your election as the Chair of the 6th Islamic Conference of Culture Ministers being held under the high patronage of His Excellency Ilham Aliyev, President of this great nation.

The commitment of the leadership Azerbaijan to the OIC and causes of the Ummah has always been unwavering. I should particularly like to mention that since its Chairmanship of the OIC Council of Foreign Ministers in 2006, Azerbaijan has been taking exemplary and praiseworthy initiatives to support the new OIC vision, which is based on modernization, moderation and solidarity in action.

I am confident, Mr. Chairman that, under your wise stewardship, this Conference will reach a successful outcome.

We are happy that this event is taking place in Azerbaijan, a land that has for centuries represented the confluence of cultures history and tradition. It can rightfully take pride for being one of the greatest seats of Islamic culture and the custodian of some of the most prominent monuments of Islamic history and heritage. It is also important to note that this Conference is being held in the beautiful city of Baku that has been designated as one of the capitals of Islamic Culture for the year 2009.

Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

The current year marks the 40th anniversary of the establishment of the Organization of Islamic Conference. This is an occasion to reaffirm our commitment to the goals and objectives of our Organization, foster greater unity among our ranks and adopt a positive course for meeting the challenges faced by the Ummah.

When it celebrates its 40th Anniversary, inspired and mandated by its new Charter and The Ten Year Program of Action, the OIC firmly

stands for promoting of moderation and tolerance and countering the phenomenon of Islamophobia. Our new vision emphasizes the importance of inter-civilizational and interfaith dialogue based on mutual respect and equality among the interlocutors. We are committed to upholding cultural and religious diversity through engagement and dialogue. I am confident that the OIC institutions and member states can coordinate their efforts in the interest of being better prepared for meeting these formidable challenges.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The OIC General Secretariat supported by the subsidiary, specialized and affiliated institutions in the OIC system remain committed to addressing the pressing concerns of the Member States in the political, economic, social, educational, scientific and cultural spheres. It needs to be underscored that all these activities are now being conducted in a time-bound framework in terms of the targets set by the leadership in the Ten-Year Programme of Action adopted by the Third Extraordinary Islamic Summit held in Makkah Al-Mukarramah in 2005. I am particularly pleased to inform this august gathering that steady progress is being made in the domain of culture. It includes the adoption of OIC Plan of Action for Advancement of Women (OPAAW), the establishment of an Independent Permanent Commission on Human Rights as well as a set up on family affairs. This is based on the common aspiration of Member States to project the true image of Islam i.e a progressive religion that transcends the confines of time and space.

We have recently been endeavoring hard for reconciliation at two levels, between the Muslim World and the West and between Islam and Christianity. We are trying to contribute to fostering an objective understanding regarding the role of Islam and Muslims in the formation of European identity. In all these efforts, we believe that today's human civilization is one civilization with a multitude of tributaries and branches. In order to get desired level of impact from our efforts, coordination among member states and OIC institutions is of utmost importance. Our coordination should also target encouraging the UNESCO towards being the pertinent arena of international cooperation in the above issues.

However, I sincerely believe that what the Muslim World expects from us the most and on an urgent basis is related to our cooperation to preserve the Islamic heritage of the holy city of Al-Quds. Last week in my address to the UNESCO General Conference I have appealed to the UN and UNESCO to adopt a binding resolution that would guarantee against any excavation in the Al Aqsa Mosque area. Permanent Representatives of the OIC member states should attach a special importance to follow up this matter at UNESCO.

Naturally, preservation of the Islamic cultural heritage all around the world is particularly an important priority for the OIC. However, the threat caused by excavation works being carried out around the Holy Al-Aqsa Mosque in Jerusalem constitutes a very special and sensitive issue for the OIC member states and 1.5 billion Muslims of the world. The destruction of cultural heritage as a result of the excavations would be disastrous and irreparable loss for all humankind.

The situation of the Palestinian education institutions in the Occupied East Jerusalem is also a great concern for us. Deprivation from education because of the illegal practices of the occupying force is unacceptable and should not be allowed. The OIC member states should give all the possible support to the Palestinian educational institutions.

Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I understand that this Conference aims at developing a strategy for promoting cultural tourism. This is an important matter that would contribute positively towards presenting the true image of Islam to the world. Let me extend the assurance of our unstinted support to the joint efforts on this important issue.

Mr. Chairman,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

The OIC is the second largest international organization after the UN. Its visibility and credibility in the international community has been on the rise. Its new vision and current agenda encompasses issues of global significance. Needless to say an effective implementation of this agenda calls for a coherent and efficient OIC System. Such a system envisages a central coordinating role by the General Secretariat wherein all the subsidiary, specialized and affiliated institutions could be optimally utilized to serve the Member States in their respective spheres of expertise. This can be accomplished by effectively coordinating the work of the various bodies that constitute the OIC System. I look forward to enhancing coordination with ISESCO without infringing upon the mandates and role given to ISESCO within the OIC system. I sincerely believe that this would help in producing synergy, effective partnership and developing an efficient OIC system as envisaged by the Summit and the new Charter.

Before concluding I should express my appreciation to the ISESCO. Its implementation activities have contributed towards promoting understanding among the people, through education, science, culture and communication. This specialized organ of the OIC has come a long way, since it was established in 1982. It has contributed significantly towards enhancing the profile of Islamic culture, preservation of

the cultural sites and heritage and furthering the cause of promoting quality scientific education in the Muslim world. I am confident that ISESCO under the able leader leadership of H. E. Dr. Abdulaziz Othman Altwaijri would form an important constituent of the effective OIC System that we are striving to develop under the new Charter.

I thank you all.

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