

OIC INTER-INSTITUTIONAL FORUM
ON THE OCCASION OF THE CELEBRATION
OF THE 60th ANNIVERSARY OF THE UNIVERSAL
DECLARATION ON HUMAN RIGHTS
GENEVA

19th DECEMBER 2008

Panel on Inter-institutional dialogue on development issues
and humanitarian Assistance

THE OIC HUMANITARIAN ACTIVITIES

By
Ambassador Atta El Manan Bakhit

OIC INTER-INSTITUTIONAL FORUM
ON THE OCCASION OF THE CELEBRATION
OF THE 60th ANNIVERSARY OF THE UNIVERSAL
DECLARATION ON HUMAN RIGHTS
GENEVA
19th DECEMBER 2008

Panel on Inter-institutional dialogue on development issues
and humanitarian Assistance

THE OIC HUMANITARIAN ACTIVITIES

By
Ambassador Atta El Manan Bakhit

**Your Excellencies,
Distinguished Guests,
Ladies and Gentlemen,**

Please allow me first of all to express my heartfelt thanks to the organisers of this important event marking the 60th Anniversary of the Universal Declaration on Human Rights for have invited me on behalf of the OIC General Secretariat to address this gathering in order to exchange on issues pertaining to humanitarian activities within the framework of the Organisation of the Islamic Conference.

Prior to delving into the subject proper, I would like to say few words about the Universal Declaration of Human Rights which took place 60 years ago in a highly polarized and divided world.

The event in itself was an extraordinary achievement for the whole humanity because it laid the foundations for a safer world despite the shortcomings and the persistence of the threat of war.

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights has given birth to an array of legal documents and concepts such as the international humanitarian law which governs and guides relations between various segments involvement in the humanitarian field.

**Your Excellencies,
Distinguished Guests,
Ladies and Gentlemen,**

It is also common knowledge that humanitarian activities have been on the increase for quite sometimes for various reasons, all over the world. The OIC which is an intergovernmental Organisation comprising 57 Member States could not sit idle and let things happen without intervening given the important number of its Member States which were in need of humanitarian assistance.

Indeed, humanitarian activities have been in one way or another high on the agenda of the OIC since its inception in 1969 through different organs of the General Secretariat. However, it is in December 2005, in Makka, when leaders of the Islamic Ummah met for an Extraordinary Summit that the idea of having a specialized Department within the setting of the OIC General Secretariat especially devoted to humanitarian activities really took off the ground.

So the highest decision making body of the OIC which is the Summit unanimously adopted the OIC 10 Year Programme of Action which set the guiding principles for the OIC to intervene in such a complex and wide domain.

Since then, many conferences and meetings took place and in June 2008, OIC Foreign Ministers adopted Resolution No.11/35-C establishing a fully fledged Department for Humanitarian Activities known in short as ICHAD which stands as “The Islamic Conference Humanitarian Affairs Department”.

However the OIC did not wait until such a date to take different humanitarian initiatives in order to alleviate the suffering and the lot of people living in OIC Member States or

Non Member States since most activities were performed under the wing of the Cabinet of the Secretary General.

But prior to that, emergency relief was extended to the needy people, orphans were looked after, many hospitals, medical centres, schools, houses, universities and centres of learning were built thanks to the Islamic Solidarity Fund or the funds received from many benefactors and philanthropists. In fact, humanitarian activities are not alien to Islam which is a religion of peace, tolerance, compassion and good deeds.

Where do we stand now with ICHAD?

- In December 2004, a year before the Makkah Extraordinary Summit, the world witnessed the biggest human tragedy in its history since the end of the 2nd World War. Indeed, many Asian countries were hit by huge tidal waves which caused widespread destruction. Indonesia, which is one of the OIC founding Member States, was the most affected country. The OIC reacted by launching an ambitious campaign throughout the Islamic Ummah. This drive led to the establishment of the OIC Fund for the Orphans victims of Tsunami which up to now over 10,000 orphans under its custody. Our target is to reach 25,000 children. The principle behind this scheme is that philanthropists, benefactors, donors or Member States sponsor one or several children up to the age of 18 by paying 30 US dollars per month. The scheme is jointly implemented by the OIC and the Islamic Development Bank. There is one office on the ground which works with Project Implementing Agencies (PIA). All activities are performed through an efficient computer network system which deals with real time information.
- After the end of the Balkan war, many people were displaced from their houses and many more were uprooted from their country of birth. So the OIC decided

to move and set up a Fund called the Fund for the Return of Bosnia Refugees. It is located in Sarajevo in Bosnia Herzegovina and receives funding from the OIC Member States and its various benefactors. The Fund has so far helped rebuild schools, hospitals, houses for the returning refugees and financed farming and self-employment activities besides its core humanitarian activities which were centred on providing humanitarian assistance to the victims of ethnic cleansing. Thanks to this Fund, many Bosnians have returned to their abandoned homes with their families and are engaged in self-employed activities.

- In Afghanistan and Sierra Leone, the OIC is very busy in these two countries thanks to its Funds who have embarked on humanitarian and post conflict reconstruction activities. The two Funds have built socioeconomic infrastructures such as hospitals, schools, jetty, houses, fisheries, boreholes. Blankets, heaters and warm clothing are also distributed in winter in the case of Afghanistan. Health workers and teachers are being trained since Afghanistan and Sierra Leone experienced workforce has been devastated by prolonged civil strife.
- ICHAD is also involved in Gaza. It has so far sent two humanitarian convoys to that place through the Saudi and the Hashemite Red Crescent which provided technical support. Prior to that, the OIC launched a telethon which enabled ICHAD to buy drugs, infants foods, medical supplies, blankets, tents, etc. ICHAD is busy preparing a third humanitarian convoy for Gaza.
- Recently, YEMEN has been hit by very serious flooding and in most parts of the country; roads, bridges and ways of communications were broken. ICHAD dispatched a fact-finding mission which assessed the situation and bought blankets, drugs and tents for the

needy in addition to the advocacy role it performs in such circumstances.

- When Mozambique was confronted with the same situation, the OIC sent a contribution to this country and built an OIC village comprising 100 houses with the collaboration of Deniz Feneri, a well-known Turkish NGO active in rural development and emergency relief.
- When Algeria, Bangladesh, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Pakistan were facing serious natural disasters, the OIC launched several appeals to the international community and the Islamic Ummah to come to their rescue and help them overcome this situation.
- ICHAD has also sent two field missions to the Somali Refugees camps in Dadaab which is in Kenyan territory. Indeed there are three camps harbouring over 200,000 refugees whose numbers are constantly swelling since 1991. Our Department has assessed the humanitarian needs and put the information at the disposal of our partners in the field so as to contribute to improving the lot of these longstanding refugees.
- ICHAD has also jointly organised in June 2007 in Doha (State of Qatar) an international donors' conference for the Republic of Niger to beef up its food capacities to help this country overcome its recurrent drought. Pledges amounting to over 360 millions dollars were made and the process is underway to open a coordination office in Niamey to implement the project.
- Cooperation agreements and memorandum of understanding have been signed with international and regional partners to boost the capacity of ICHAD in its interventions by forging partnership and close forms of collaboration.

- This year in Senegal, ICHAD organised the first humanitarian NGOs of the OIC countries in Saly Portudal. Over 60 NGOs participated and important recommendations were submitted to the Dakar Summit which acknowledged the role played by the Saly Conference in bringing together all OIC NGOs involved in humanitarian activities.

What is next?

- ICHAD is preparing the Darfur international donors' conference in collaboration with IDB so as to help tackle the roots of this conflict which is more economical and development oriented than anything else.
- ICHAD is going to launch a humanitarian campaign for Somalia following the worsening of the situation in this country which has been plagued with the scourge of war for nearly two decades now.
- ICHAD will launch its third humanitarian convoy to Gaza.
- ICHAD will boost its legal framework and conceptual tools through an overhauling exercise.
- ICHAD will make its presence more felt in the Balkans and the Caucuses.
- ICHAD is planning to organise the 2nd OIC Humanitarian NGOs Conference in compliance with the recommendations of the Saly Conference.
- ICHAD is working to establish an OIC NGO Forum which will be under the OIC umbrella all NGOs working in the humanitarian field.

**Your Excellencies,
Distinguished Guests,
Ladies and Gentlemen,**

This in a nutshell, what I wanted to share with you regarding the OIC humanitarian activities implemented through ICHAD. I know that the Department is quite young and the road ahead will be a long and arduous one but we are ready as a team and organisation to rise up to the challenges and expectations of the Islamic Ummah by rendering professional services.

I thank you for your kind attention.