

SECRETARY GENERAL'S REPORT

New Vision for the Muslim World: Solidarity in Action

Presented at the Third Extraordinary Session of the Islamic Summit Conference

**Makkah al-Mukarramah
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INTRODUCTION

Today the Muslim world stands at a historic crossroads amidst global changes and challenges with immense repercussions for its future. In order to chart our course for the future thoroughly we need to consider our past critically.

A clear vision of future Islamic solidarity can be drawn after a survey of the OIC experience and its successes and shortcomings since its beginnings.

From 1969 up until today the OIC went through three stages each covering roughly a decade: the phase of self-searching and realization, the phase of contention for a higher status in world affairs, and the phase of crisis and disorientation.

The first phase of self-searching and self-realization was the initial stage. The OIC came into being in a bipolar world, majority of its members being part of the Non-Aligned Movement. Its original cause was political solidarity that found its expression in the Al-Quds and Palestinian problem.

In the first decade from 1970 to 1980 economic cooperation became the main drive that characterized the OIC activities. Institutional expansion of the OIC together with formulation of policy guidelines highlighted the fact that the OIC was evolving and becoming institutionalized.

This momentum of the 1970s, the decade of oil booms brought the OIC to the second phase between 1980 and 1990. This era witnessed the efforts for utilizing solidarity to exert influence in the world affairs. The 1981 Taif and Mecca summit heralded a new path that signified the

Muslim world's realization of its own potential. Concrete actions were envisaged and three standing committees were established in this period. The euphoric feeling in this era, however, was overshadowed by conflicts among some Member States.

The third decade lasted from 1990 until today and characterized with a sense of crisis and disorientation in the face of overwhelming political and economic changes in the world. The bipolar world came to an end, the discourse of "clash of civilizations" came to the fore and as a result this gave rise to Islamophobia. Meanwhile many OIC member states faced imminent political and economic challenges and emerging tensions on a regional as well as global scale.

The global challenges imply, on the part of individual countries, the requirement to consider political reforms aimed at securing rule of law and democratic principles. They also force the economic activities to be concentrated on knowledge, research, technology and innovation.

The focus and performance of OIC is now challenged by an ever-widening scope of issues amidst rapid changes in world affairs. The OIC is in a position to respond to these global challenges. The role the OIC should play in the world scene is now greater and more critical thanks to its vast portfolio of tasks.

From the beginning the concepts of solidarity and cooperation marked the conduct of the OIC that ensured its continuity. Now this continuity needs to be strengthened in response to the challenges that the world in general and the Muslim world in particular face today. The resolute determination and steady exhibition of solidarity is urgently required in the current circumstances for both Muslim states and the OIC as their representative.

Therefore we have before us a new phase: the phase of a new vision and a new future.

It is thus a timely opportunity provided by The Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques, His Majesty King Abdullah Ibn Abdulaziz, who while addressing groups of pilgrims earlier this year, had called upon his brothers, the leaders of the Muslim Ummah, to endeavour to close their ranks and to put an end to the state of disunity and disintegration "suffered by the Muslim world, so that the Ummah may pursue its historic mission, by holding a meeting of the leaders to discuss the issues of "unity" and "joint action". Addressing the leaders of the Ummah he said: "This is a call to face ourselves, to look for what is common between us, to unify the ranks and to strengthen the bonds. This is an appeal launched by a brother of yours who shares with you the same preoccupations, pains, hopes and belief in Allah Almighty".

During this unprecedented call, His Majesty King Abdullah had also highlighted the need to “hold meetings of the Ummah’s intellectuals and scholars in preparation for the forthcoming Extraordinary Islamic Summit Conference, in order to examine the overall situation of the Muslim world, to explore the most effective solutions and means to unify the ranks, and to set the Muslim Ummah free from this state of impotence and disunity.”

In this context, His Majesty King Abdullah had extended an invitation to both the Prime Minister of Malaysia, in his capacity as the current Chairman of the OIC, and to myself, as the OIC Secretary General, to support this initiative. Both the Summit Chairman and I had promptly welcomed this proposal and we had committed ourselves to provide all possible support for the successful convening of the Extraordinary OIC Summit and the preparatory meeting of scholars and intellectuals.

The new vision and agenda has been shaped by the work of the Preparatory Forum of Muslim Scholars and Intellectuals both within and outside OIC Member States that was held, upon the invitation of His Majesty King Abdullah, in Makkah al-Mukarramah on 5-7 Shaban 1426 H (9-11 September 2005).

The scholars in three panels, namely the Political Affairs and Media, Economy, Science and Technology, and Islamic Thought, Culture and Education had intense and motivated deliberations. The forum produced analyses of the current challenges faced by the Muslim world, set the vision for the next decade and proposed specific actions in each of these areas.

It is not surprising to see parallels in the outcomes of this forum and of the Commission of the Eminent Persons by the initiative of Malaysia following the 10th OIC Summit Conference held in Putrajaya whose report will be presented separately to the Extraordinary OIC Summit Conference in Makkah al-Mukarramah.

This convergence indeed signifies the fact that there is a strong consensus on the current issues and challenges, the vision for the future and the agenda of action to reach that vision.

The sense of commitment and the level of intellectual quality in both of these fora were remarkable. These works need to be considered in formulating a forward-looking and proactive agenda for the Muslim world as they represent the intellectual input that can shed light on our way as one family of nations.

The final conclusions of these panels produced through brainstorming are summarized in the following paragraphs:

PANEL ON POLITICAL AND MEDIA ISSUES

1. On political and media issues, the scholars reviewed the position of the Muslim Ummah in the contemporary world, discussed extensively, Islamic solidarity and Joint Islamic Action as well as the reform and restructuring of the OIC. They also deliberated on the need for good governance, conflict prevention, conflict resolution and post-conflict peace-building. Similarly, the Palestinian Question, Terrorism, Dialogue among Civilizations, Islamophobia, the Political and Human Rights of Muslim Minorities in non-OIC Member States and Media issues, were discussed.

2. Reviewing the **position of the Ummah in the contemporary world**, the scholars stressed that the Ummah was an integral part of today's world and that there was no conflict between the Islamic and contemporary universal values. They noted that as a religion sent to mankind, the message of Islam is a role model for all people to establish the values of equality, justice, peace and brotherhood. However, while acknowledging that the Muslim Ummah has been going through a prolonged period of crisis which has been compounded by external challenges and negative campaigns against it, the scholars, in resetting priorities for the Ummah, recommended a number of measures that required implementation in the next decade.

3. Accordingly, the scholars proposed that, while respecting the sovereignty of individual OIC Member States, solidarity between them needed to be strengthened. They urged Muslim countries to play a more active role on the international scene especially in this transitional period when the evolving international order is being shaped. The scholars called for the Muslim world to effectively participate in the reform of the UN including the expansion of the UN Security Council, with adequate representation of the Muslim Ummah. In reaffirming the inalienable right of all Member States to develop nuclear capabilities for peaceful purposes in accordance with international legality, they also stressed the importance of making the Middle East, a Zone free of all weapons of mass destruction. While requesting the OIC to develop ways and means to promote intra-Islamic dialogue, the scholars also emphasized the necessity of addressing and resolving various conflicts among Muslims.

4. While deliberating on **Islamic Solidarity and Joint Islamic Action**, the scholars then reaffirmed the imperatives of solidarity and joint action in all domains including the political, economic and religious fields. They noted that real solidarity could only be achieved through the strengthening of institutions and a firm belief in a common destiny based on shared values as elaborated in the Qur'an and the Sunnah.

5. The scholars, while observing that extremism and sectarianism could undermine achieving real solidarity, called for renewed political commitment to promote pro-active Islamic solidarity through a gradual process. In this context, the scholars further called for the strengthening and expansion of the capacities of the existing institutions, including the revitalization of the OIC Islamic Solidarity Fund, the operationalization of the "Disaster Fund" to respond to various disasters and natural calamities, the creation of a Special Fund to eradicate poverty in the Muslim world and the setting up of a special "African Solidarity Programme" to address the peculiar needs of the continent. The importance of solidarity with Muslim Minorities in non-OIC Member States and with NGOs and civil society groups was also highlighted by the scholars.

6. With the enormous challenges posed by **globalization**, the scholars stressed the necessity for Muslims to act with unity and speak with one voice through the instrument of the OIC. As the only overarching Organization for the Muslim world, the OIC has the potential to play a major role in creating a brighter and prosperous future for the Ummah if certain reforms are implemented. Accordingly, the scholars recommended a strong political commitment during the Extraordinary Summit to rename the Organization, revise its Charter, and restructure the General Secretariat where new departments such as Strategic Planning, Peace and Security, to deal with early warning and conflict prevention, should be created. They called for the empowerment of the Secretary General with the necessary authority and expanded budgetary resources to undertake new initiatives, implement the new vision and mission in order to raise the profile and visibility of the Organization in all major international fora. While stressing the need for more coordination and complementarity among different OIC institutions with the General Secretariat, the scholars, proposed the opening of new OIC offices in large Muslim countries and other capitals of the world.

7. In discussing the need for **good governance**, the scholars noted that its benchmark is already enshrined in the Qur'an and the Sunnah. They further pointed out that Islamic parameters of good governance were compatible with democracy, equality, freedom, social justice, transparency, accountability, anti-corruption and the respect for human rights. In this

context, the scholars recommended the enhancement of political participation, the empowerment of the people and, the establishment of an OIC Permanent Commission to fight human rights violations.

8. The scholars underlined the importance of the **peaceful resolution of conflicts in the Muslim world**. In this regard, they stressed the key role that the General Secretariat of the OIC could play in view of the absence of any effective institution to manage conflicts in Muslim countries. While urging Muslim countries to actively cooperate among themselves in conflict prevention, conflict resolution and post conflict peace-building, the scholars appealed to them to effectively participate in the UN to create a collective security system. They further proposed the operationalization of the Islamic Court of Justice and the strengthening of regional and sub-regional consultation groups to prevent conflicts in the Muslim world. The need for the Secretary General to use his good offices in conflict management process, using the focal point of the Troika was also underscored by the scholars. Finally, they recommended that in case of the disintegration of any OIC Member State, no OIC country should accord recognition to any successor units.

9. Deliberating on the **Palestinian question**, the scholars stressed the importance of the comprehensive settlement of the problem according to international legality, the recognition of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people to self-determination and the establishment of an independent Palestinian State with Al-Quds Al-Sharif as its capital. Accordingly, they urged all Muslim countries to remain steadfast and united and avoid taking any unilateral steps to normalize relations with Israel until a just and comprehensive settlement is achieved. Accordingly, the scholars recommended that the Palestinian National Authority should be supported in their efforts to negotiate for the rights of the Palestinian people. They also appealed for assistance from all Muslim States to build Palestinian economic institutions, establish a university at Al-Aqsa, reopen the Gaza airport and seaport and the creation of Islamic Waqfs to protect religious and cultural sites in Palestine. The reactivation of OIC's role in the resolution of the Palestinian question as well as the renewal of the mandate of the five Member Committee of the OIC to continue contacts with the Quartet and other actors, were also proposed by the scholars.

10. While underscoring the imperative of **combating terrorism** and addressing its root causes, the scholars however, noted the lack of consensus on the definition of the term and insisted on its differentiation from the right to resist aggression, foreign occupation and self-defense. They rejected the linkage of Islam and Muslims to terrorism and noted that the war on

terrorism only through military means was breeding more violence. Therefore, while urging OIC Member States to combat terrorism through concerted efforts, the scholars also called for the operationalisation of the OIC Convention on Terrorism and the creation of an International Counter Terrorism Centre.

11. The scholars, in their discussions on the alarming phenomenon of **Islamophobia**, which they identified as a form of racism and discrimination, noted with concern its spread against Muslims. They, therefore, highlighted the necessity to fight and eradicate it as a way of raising the level of mutual understanding between different cultures. In this context, the scholars recommended the global monitoring of the phenomenon, the issuance of annual report on it, and the holding of a global congress to raise awareness and address the trend. They further called on Western countries to legislate against Islamophobia and use educational and media channels to combat it. In addition, the scholars, while welcoming the setting up of an “OIC Observatory” by the General Secretariat to monitor Islamophobia, called for enhanced coordination between the OIC institutions and civil society groups in the West to counter the phenomenon.

12. While deliberating on the **political and human rights of Muslim minorities in non-OIC countries**, the scholars noted the challenges faced by them in their countries of residence and insisted that like others, these Muslim Minorities were entitled to basic human rights which need to be safeguarded. To protect their full rights and identity, the scholars stressed the importance of cooperation between the OIC and other international organizations like the UN, EU, Council of Europe, OSCE, AU etc. to comprehensively address the question of Muslim Minorities’ rights and issues. While giving due respect to the sovereignty of states when dealing with the rights of its Muslim Minorities, the scholars recommended the preparation of annual human rights report on Muslim Minorities. They also called for the revitalization of the Department for Muslim Minorities and Communities in the General Secretariat and granting observer status in the OIC to NGOs representing Muslim Minorities. Furthermore, such NGOs should be encouraged to seek consultative status with international, regional and sub-regional organizations in conformity with their prevailing rules.

13. The scholars identified the **media** as a powerful tool in the modern world to project a positive image of Islam and to promote the interests of the Ummah. In this regard, they drew attention to the domination of the West in the field of information and the misuse of the media to misrepresent Islam and Muslims. They also noted the insufficient knowledge and expertise among the media in the Muslim world. To address these challenges, the scholars called on OIC Member States to guarantee freedom of the press, agree on a Code of Ethics for media channels,

establish TV stations to broadcast programmes on various religious, political and social issues, and produce documentaries and films to counter misrepresentations of Islam and Muslims. The scholars, similarly, urged Muslim media to reach out in a credible manner to non-Muslims and develop cooperation with friendly media networks in the West.

PANEL ON ECONOMY, SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY ISSUES

14. After reviewing the state of the economies of the OIC Member States, the scholars identified the challenges that need to be addressed in the near future. In the economic domain, those challenges are: globalization, state control of economies, lack of strong private sector in many countries, failure to promote and implement sustainable development policies, low levels of investment, insufficient trade financing, heavy burden of foreign debt and debt servicing on their economies, severe balance of payments difficulties in some Member States, market access problems (tariff and non-tariff barriers to trade) among Member States, lack of effective means of transportation and similar infrastructural inadequacies, needs for capacity-building, restrictions of access for businesspersons, failure to eradicate poverty and diseases, lack of basic needs, being far below the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), and inadequate human resource development. In the field of science and technology, the basic challenges include lack of national science and technology development strategies, low levels of commitment of funds to R&D, weak university-industry collaboration, human resources problems, and insufficient research infrastructures.

15. However, the scholars emphasized that the OIC Member States, numbering 57 today, are endowed with immense economic potentials in different fields such as energy and mining, agriculture, human resources, and trade. They held the view that these natural and human resources should be utilized fully with a view to ensuring the sustainable development of the Member States individually and collectively, while reinforcing the capability of the group to defend its interest in the world economy and international fora. Therefore, this Conference is timely and will give the opportunity to take the more needed historic decision in order to address these challenges and prepare the Islamic Ummah to play a more important role in this century. It will be recalled that the OIC since its inception has already initiated the process of economic and commercial cooperation through the Makkah Declaration adopted at the Third Islamic Summit Conference held in Makkah Al- Mukarramah in January 1981 and the Plan of

Action to strengthen Economic and Commercial Cooperation adopted during the same Conference.

16. Having noted the effects of globalization on the economies of the Member States, the 10th Islamic Summit Conference recommended that the process of their economic integration should be speeded up to avoid further marginalization and to accelerate the process of their sustainable development. In this context, the summit underlined the need to ensure effective implementation of the OIC Plan of Action for Strengthening Economic and Commercial Cooperation among the Member States. The 1981 Plan of Action was revised and adopted by the Tenth Session of the COMCEC held in Istanbul on 22-25 October 1994 and endorsed by the Seventh Islamic Summit held in Casablanca on 13-15 December 1994. The objectives of the Plan are as follows:

(a) To achieve food security for and raising the standard of living of the Muslim populations with special emphasis on the eradication of poverty, famine and malnutrition in the Islamic world;

(b) To realize increased and diversified production in various productive and service sectors of the economies of the Member States and promoting trade exchanges within the community;

(c) To enhance financial flows by reducing constraints on capital movements and investments among Member States;

(d) To reduce the existing development gaps within the OIC community to facilitate smoother and more effective economic and commercial cooperation amongst the Member States themselves;

(e) To improve the quality of human capital and reduce the technology gap between the OIC community and the developed world by enhancing the level of Research and Development activities;

(f) To Promote and expand economic cooperation among the Member States in such a way as to realize a gradual integration of the economies of the OIC countries with a view to setting up an Islamic Common Market or any other form of economic integration, on a step-by-step and initially regional basis. This approach would not only

help overcome the possible negative impacts on the OIC countries of the accelerating pace in the formation of global economic groupings, but also support the aspirations of the OIC community for a larger share in world economic activity and a more equitable division of labour vis-à-vis the rest of world.

The Plan of Action on economic and commercial cooperation is being implemented by the Standing Committee for Economic and Commercial Cooperation (COMCEC), chaired by the President of the Republic of Turkey. COMCEC has so far organized 20 annual ministerial conferences and many other sectoral conferences, seminars, workshops and expert level meetings with a view to accelerating the implementation of the Plan of Action. All these meetings have concluded that the political will of the leaders of the OIC Member States is the primary requirement for progress in the implementation of the plan of action. Another Plan of Action in the field of Science and Technology was adopted by the Fourth Islamic Summit held in Casablanca in 1984 and is being implemented by the Standing Committee on Scientific and Technological Cooperation (COMSTECH), chaired by the President of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan. The scholars strongly appealed to the leaders of the Ummah to take urgent measures to ensure the implementation of these two Plans of Action in order to foster the development of OIC Member States, both individually as well as collectively, and to effectively confront the present challenges.

17. While acknowledging that globalization presents advantages and challenges, the scholars stressed that the Muslim World can benefit from the economic advantages of globalization through effective regional economic cooperation.

18. After extensively deliberating upon how to utilize the global processes, the scholars proposed several concrete measures. These include the encouragement of regional economic groupings amongst OIC Member States; standardization of products and processes and the application of international standards; increase in the quality of products and services to improve their competitiveness; utilization of new advanced telecommunications and information technologies; removal of tariff and non-tariff barriers amongst Muslim nations in order to facilitate the integration of the economic process prior to the submersion of national economies into the powerful economies, and the promotion of an efficient political machinery and media as essential elements for enhancement of the internal infrastructure's capacity to benefit from globalization.

19. In addition to that, the following recommendations adopted by the Preparatory Forum of Muslim Scholars and Intellectuals during their meeting in Makkah Al Mukarramah from 9-11 September 2005 for consideration by the Extraordinary Islamic Summit Conference will contribute to strengthening economic and commercial cooperation among the Member States.

20. On the question of economic and commercial cooperation among OIC Member States, the scholars noted that intra-OIC trade actually represents only 14% of their total trade. They recommended that the process of economic integration among OIC Member States should be accelerated through the creation of a Free Trade Area. The scholars strongly recommended that all OIC Member States should accede to the Framework Agreement on Trade Preferential System among the OIC Member States (TPSOIC) so as to take part in the trade negotiations under the agreement as this will be the first step toward the creation of a Free Trade Area and ultimately the realization of the Islamic Common Market which is a long-term objective.

21. The scholars underlined the need to prepare and implement concrete programmes with goals and targets in the domain of economic and commercial cooperation among OIC Member States. In this connection, they welcomed the proposal to achieve a 20% level of intra-OIC trade by the year 2015.

22. To realize this objective, some measures need to be adopted, including, among others, increase of intra-OIC investment, removal of trade barriers, facilitation of visas for businessmen from OIC Member States, improvement of transport and communication between OIC Member States, reinforcement of capacity building and development of a strong private sector in OIC countries.

23. In this context, the scholars expressed their support for the initiatives aimed at revitalizing and energizing the role of the Islamic Chamber of Commerce and Industry. They also underlined the need to support the Islamic Development Bank Group and in particular the newly established International Islamic Trade Finance Corporation (ITFC).

24. In order to accelerate the process for energizing trade among OIC Member States, the following measures were also recommended, notably: trade promotion/facilitation, encouraging Member States to promote their export credit guarantee schemes and further enhance the capabilities of the Islamic Corporation for the Insurance of Investments and Export Credit (ICIEC). There is also the need for improved coordination among the Standing Committees as well as among the OIC Subsidiary Organs, Specialized and Affiliated Institutions; increased

investment by Muslim countries in other OIC Member States; the establishment of an OIC Zakat Authority to alleviate the sufferings of the Muslims in need; the establishment of an Association of Muslim Traders and Businesspersons; and for visa facilitation for Muslim businessmen. In this connection a special facility titled “*MAKKAH AL MUKARRAMAH VISA for entry to the OIC Member States*” could be considered. The scholars also stressed the need for promotion of national and regional initiatives for investments in the OIC LDCs and, the continuation of efforts to fight corruption through good governance as a means to remove barriers against investments.

25. On the question of sustainable development and finance, the scholars highlighted the fact that many OIC countries carried the burden of debt and are far below in the Millennium Development Goals. Moreover, the economies of some OIC countries are largely under state control and therefore, despite many efforts, the realization of trade liberalization and free market are still elusive.

26. It was also noted that to achieve the objective of liberalizing and modernizing their economies, the OIC Member States, and more importantly the least developed among them, need more financial resources preferably in the form of soft loans and concessional funds.

27. In order to address these challenges, the scholars recommended that the IDB's Board of Governors should be commissioned to take necessary measures geared towards achieving a substantial increase in its subscribed and paid-up capital, and to establish a concessional fund with sizeable resources for poverty reduction within the IDB Group, commensurate with the enormous economic needs of the least developed member countries of IDB. Detailed information concerning the proposal for the increase of subscribed and paid up capital of the IDB and the establishment of a fund in IDB Group to grant concessional financing for least developed OIC Member States will be submitted to the Summit for consideration. The establishment of free trade zone in OIC Member States would also play an important role in the intra-OIC trade promotion. The scholars also endorsed the proposal to establish a permanent OIC Relief Fund in order to assist Member States afflicted with natural disasters or famines, thus achieving Islamic solidarity. They further recommended that government to government debts of the OIC LDCs should be reduced and/or written off; that focus should be on changing the culture of debt in OIC countries as far as possible; and that poverty in poor OIC countries should be alleviated through the collection of Zakat. Furthermore, the scholars underscored the need for OIC Member States to adopt a unified stand in their international economic and commercial negotiations, in particular those conducted under WTO. In this context, they

commended the initiative of the OIC General Secretariat, the IDB, and the ICDT for organizing in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso, in April 2005, a forum on energizing trade and investment in Cotton sector in Africa and called for the effective implementation of the recommendations of the said forum.

28. The scholars commended Malaysia's initiative on Capacity Building for Poverty Alleviation in Least Developed and low-income Member States, in its capacity as Chairman of the 10th Islamic Summit Conference.

29. The scholars highlighted the role of tourism as an important sector for revenue creation and dialogue among civilizations as well as for preserving the Islamic cultural heritage. They, therefore, recommended enhanced cooperation in the field of tourism through the promotion of investment and the facilitation of travel amongst OIC Member States.

30. The scholars also stressed the need for the prevention and eradication of diseases and the awareness of environmental issues since they were essential components of sustainable development.

31. While deliberating on science and technology, the scholars stressed that this field was not only a vital element of human knowledge, but also an essential input for economic competitiveness. They highlighted the lack of national science and technology development strategies; low levels of commitment of funds to Research and Development (R&D); weak university-industry collaboration; human resources problems and insufficient research infrastructures.

32. The scholars recommended that OIC countries should set targets and specific indicators to be achieved in the long and medium terms. Accordingly, the scholars proposed the following targets for the year 2015: (a) number of experts and scientists: 800 per million, (b) ratio of students between ages 18 and 24 having the opportunity to enter into universities: 30% (c) number of students to professors: 16 (d) percentage of GDP for R&D: 1.2 %. The scholars agreed that the targets and indicators for the LDCs would be one-third of these targets. It was also stressed that an enabling environment for R&D was vital to achieve these targets.

33. The scholars also proposed national science and technology strategies in OIC Member States; establishment of centers of excellence; increased vocational training; use of modern technologies to promote education, such as long distance learning, linking scientists to industry;

establishment of an OIC R&D Fund to support Member States' projects on a cost sharing basis. The scholars further underlined that it is high time for the oil producing countries to channel part of the revenues generated from increased oil prices into their national R&D activities with a view to supporting their long-term sustainable development through generating new sources of wealth and expertise.

34. The scholars further recommended the promotion of corporations within OIC Member States to assist inventors to develop and patent their inventions. IDB may fund training programmes for scientists in different fields in the OIC Member States. The scholars noted the need for the creation of national and regional networking of their research institutions with a view to avoiding duplication and boosting innovation; the desired goal of exploring and harnessing their own natural resources. Finally, the scholars recommended the revision of targets stipulated in the Vision 2020, adopted by the 10th Islamic Summit in Malaysia, to new sets of targets to be achieved by 2015, and the strengthening of COMSTECH through greater allocation of resources.

PANEL ON ISLAMIC THOUGHT, CULTURE & EDUCATION

35. In reviewing issues in the fields of Islamic thought, culture and education the scholars noted that the Muslim World stands at a critical moment, and therefore, required a renewed commitment to address the problems of extremism, illiteracy, the provision of quality education, eradication of diseases, underdevelopment, unemployment, youth and women empowerment, as well as the cultural challenges of globalization on the heritage of the Ummah.

36. The scholars, while adopting a common approach in their discussions offered a number of far-reaching recommendations, which, if implemented within the next ten years, will positively, uplift the current unacceptable state of the Ummah in order to build advanced societies that will help us meet up with the train of modernity.

37. On the **concept of moderation in Islam**, the scholars agreed that this concept is based on a solid foundation of Islamic belief and constitutes the hallmark of the Islamic Ummah: "Thus have we made you an evenly-balanced nation that you may be witnesses for mankind and the Messenger may be a witness for you." (Al-Baqara – 143).

38. The scholars affirmed that Islam prescribes moderation in all aspects of life and stands for complete harmony in the society. They called for more efforts at all levels to reflect the true image of Islam as a faith of moderation, tolerance and peaceful co-existence. In this context, they stated that Islam condemns extremism in all its aspects as it goes against human values. They emphasized the need to address its root causes, which could not only be solved with security solutions. In addition, the scholars underlined that terrorism should not be linked to any particular religion, culture or civilization. They stressed the need to establish a moderate Islamic discourse, which is bound to time, place, and circumstances and one that is explained in contemporary language. This discourse should make clear difference between the root and the branch, between the original and the derived. It should also be moderate, credible, effective and influential in order to reflect the true image of Islam. They also stressed the need to develop Islamic educational curricula with this understanding and to initiate a revision process in this regard.

39. The scholars also extensively deliberated on the important question of the **multiple schools of thought**. They stated that differences in schools of thought reflect the rich nature of the Islamic thought sources. In this regard, they expressed their full support to the declaration made regarding these issues by the International Islamic Conference, which was held in Amman in July 2005 and was attended by more than 170 Muslim scholars.

40. While deliberating on the **role of the Islamic Fiqh Academy** in re-examining the Islamic heritage, the scholars stressed that issuing Islamic ruling (Fatwa) should be performed with objectivity and integrity. It must be assigned to Scholars who have deep Islamic Knowledge and wisdom. They warned against issuance of reckless Fatwas by people who were not qualified to speak in the name of Islam and Muslims and interpret Islamic teachings in accordance with their own opinion and preferences a situation that tarnished the image of Islam, both within and outside the Muslim world. The scholars stressed the need for a close coordination between religious ruling authorities in the Muslim World through the Islamic Fiqh Academy.

41. While deliberating on the question of a new vision for the Islamic Fiqh Academy, the scholars emphasized the need to have a credible international Islamic reference based on collective and organized jurisprudence in order to elucidate the religious point of view regarding new questions and issues. In this context, the scholars called for the reform of the Islamic Fiqh Academy, so that it could serve as the supreme juristic authority of the Islamic Ummah. In this regard, they called for applying competence and scholarly aptitude as criteria for the

membership of the Islamic Fiqh Academy. The scholars stressed that the IFA Secretary General and its Chairman should assume office through the election of the most qualified jurists of the Muslim world who can serve the vision set out here, and implement the IFA Statute and regulations in a strict and effective manner. They called for applying strict criteria of scholarly merit in nominating candidates for high office bearers. The scholars also recommended the inclusion of women scholars in the IFA's membership according to their juristic and scholarly aptitude and competence. The scholars affirmed the need of writing and publishing IFA resolutions and rulings in a modern simple language in order to expand the sphere of communication between the IFA and the public in the Muslim World. In order to enable the IFA to discharge the totality of its duties and to give it a wider autonomy within the OIC, the scholars called for establishing an IFA waqf with increasing resources.

42. Concerning the issue of illiteracy, the scholars stressed that it constitutes a major impediment to the development of the Islamic societies. They affirmed that combating illiteracy should be a strategic goal for the Islamic World and they emphasized the need to completely eradicate illiteracy from OIC Member States within the next 10 years. The scholars further suggested the establishment of an Iqra Fund to support and enhance the quality of education.

43. On the question of higher education as a tool for the advancement of the Ummah, the scholars emphasized that higher education was the major foundation for the advancement and progress of the Ummah, and that without proper attention being given to it, the Ummah would continue to suffer from backwardness in education and sciences. They also focused on the need to upgrade and reform higher education institutions and their curricula. The scholars further stressed the need for supporting academic research centers to promote the development of Muslim Societies.

44. The scholars also deliberated on the subject of cultural exchange as a tool for promoting understanding, harmony and solidarity among peoples of the Muslim World. In this context, the scholars stressed the importance of encouraging cultural exchange as a means for achieving mutual understanding. They advocated that the particularity of cultural diversity should be widely disseminated at the global level. The scholars called upon the Organization of the Islamic Conference to concentrate its efforts in enhancing cultural cooperation among Member States. They also called for paying attention to the issue of the translation between the different native languages in the Muslim World to realize the desired cultural exchange.

45. On **Dialogue among Civilizations**, the scholars underscored its necessity as an important step towards global peace, security and peaceful coexistence considering the existing lack of mutual understanding among cultures and civilizations. While stressing that successful dialogue should only be between equal partners based on mutual respect, reciprocity and dignity, the scholars recommended a central role for the OIC in conducting dialogue among civilizations. They also suggested that the dialogue be all-inclusive and comprehensive to remove all kinds of negative perceptions starting with the revision of relevant textbooks by all sides. They further proposed the formation of a core group from OIC Member States to initiate the dialogue.

46. As for the question of **women's rights in the Muslim world** and elaboration of an effective strategy for the integration of women into the society, the scholars highlighted that the prominent role and the rights of women in the society was clearly espoused in Islam. The scholars, accordingly, called for enhancing the status and position of women in the society of OIC Member states. They also called for supporting direct and sustainable relationship among Muslim Women Associations in Member States and cooperation with existing international Women's Organizations in Islamic Countries.

47. On the subject of the **rights of child in the Muslim World** and the elaboration of a strategy for the protection of their rights, the scholars highlighted that children were the Ummah's future and its edifiers. The scholars, accordingly, stressed the necessity to place them at the top of Member States national agenda priorities, and taking concrete actions in their favor. In this connection, they called for giving special attention to their quality education and guidance to particularly preserve their rights and to protect them from violence, abuse and exploitation. The scholars highlighted that according to the available international statistics, polio remained endemic in some OIC Member States with recent reports of outbreak in certain Members. The scholars, accordingly, appealed for a strong commitment by OIC Member States to join international efforts to achieve complete eradication of poliomyelitis in the Muslim world. They also stressed the need to protect children against other serious preventable diseases.

48. In discussing the question of dealing with the **material and spiritual demands of the youth in the Muslim world**, the scholars highlighted that since the youth constituted a large majority in Muslim societies, an enormous responsibility rested on their shoulders for the uplift of the Ummah. Accordingly, priority attention should be given to develop their knowledge, profession and behavior, through their educational institutions and the media. This would help them to devote themselves to their nations and peoples. The scholars also called for urgent

attention to alleviate the problem of unemployment in the Muslim world, particularly amongst the youth.

49. On the question of the **protection of the cultural and religious rights of Muslim societies and communities in non-OIC member states**, the scholars highlighted the impact of the problems confronted by these Muslim societies and communities. These problems included the protection of their cultural identity, and their participation in edifying their nation and compliance with their laws in order to protect them from all forms of discrimination, oppression and exclusion. The scholars stressed the need to step up and coordinate efforts to protect the cultural heritage of Muslims in non-OIC member states.

50. In identifying the **challenges of globalization and their effects on the cultural heritage of the Ummah**, the scholars acknowledged that globalization had become a reality, which requires sound knowledge of its nature, mechanisms, forms and challenges as well as how to deal with its positive and negative aspects. The scholars, accordingly, stressed the need to take advantage of the positive aspects of globalization while safeguarding the cultural heritage and the identity of the Islamic Ummah.

51. Reviewing the question of **setting new priorities and goals of the Ummah in the areas of Islamic thought, education, social and cultural affairs for the next decade**, the scholars highlighted the urgency of setting priorities and defining medium and long term goals in order to achieve progress and bring about renaissance in the Muslim world. The scholars urged the OIC, to revise its various strategies in different areas in a more realistic way, which would define priorities and objectives as well as take into account both the circumstances of time and place and what was feasible under those circumstances, in the areas of Islamic thought, education, cultural and social affairs, during the next decade.

CONCLUSION

It is the common aspiration of the Eminent Persons, intellectuals and scholars who participated in both the CEP and the Makkah Forum that the Muslim world is at a historic and critical juncture. A new vision is required for the Muslim world, an agenda of appropriate and urgent action is needed, and consequently a significantly redefined OIC is a must as an agent of change and promotion of Muslim interests at the global level.

Both fora delineated and analyzed the challenges that the Muslim world is facing today. These challenges have political, economic and cultural ramifications. They need to be addressed in the best way through a common understanding and by formulating a common path.

As one of these major challenges, globalization is a massive change that comes with both benign and malign connotations and needs to be fully understood and utilized to leverage its benefits for the ummah.

Most of these global challenges demonstrate the fact that the world is passing through rapid and sweeping changes. Current developments reshaping the international order oblige Muslims and their States to redefine their vision and actions and design a political, economic and cultural agenda that would engage Muslim states and societies proactively.

The participants underlined the essential need to revamp existing mindsets and agendas in individual Muslim societies but also their States and international organizations, chiefly the OIC, the largest international organization of the Muslim world.

They stressed the fact that the thoughts and energies of Muslims should be directed towards formulating answers rather than repeating questions.

What is needed is a change motivated by and within the Islamic world and not imposed from outside. This requires intellectual openness and alertness, political will and leadership much more than what was shown in previous periods of crises before.

The absence of a timely and unified endeavour to realize this goal is likely to lead to unintended consequences that could incite yet another wave of destruction, alienation, despair, embarrassment and dependency in the Muslim world.

What we need is a vision that would respond to these challenges and enable us to shape a brighter future for Muslims across the world. This is a vision of a unified Muslim world in hearts, in thoughts and in labor. It is a vision of a community of nations and states that represent justice, development and moral power. It is a vision of a Muslim world that has an effective international stature through an effective, competent and strong organization.

It is at this juncture that scholars and intellectuals came forward with a future-looking agenda of action. This agenda presents broad steps that need to be taken in order to move from today's shortcomings to the vision of a unified, strong and powerful Muslim world.

All these deliberations consequently focused on the issue of reshaping the OIC as to become the voice and medium for the Muslim world. This new vision was designed to call upon the Member States of the OIC to radically reform their international organization with a totally new mandate that would serve to the current and future interests of the Ummah.

In light of the above, what is needed is a new mission for the OIC. Its functions, scope of activities, structure, staffing, internal and external relations and performance must be redesigned in tandem with this new vision and mission. A new OIC based on the principles of transparency, accountability, effectiveness, flexibility and proactiveness must take the initiative to deal with the urgent problems of our day and age.

A new OIC will have a more comprehensive and larger scope of activities. These activities include monitoring, coordinating, agenda-building, advocacy and raising awareness about such crucial issues as conflict prevention and management, minority affairs, disaster relief, policy harmonization, economic and commercial development, science and research, education and cultural issues, women's and children's rights, preventing extremism of all kinds, and easing religious, sectarian and ethnic tensions through the guidance of scholars and leaders.

To achieve these goals, the reform of the OIC necessitates a redefinition of its mandate, status, structure and functions in line with the common principles and aspirations of Muslim states and societies.

Only an international organization possessing these qualities equipped with a merit-based and strong staff and with sufficient financial resources can cater to the vision set out here and work to facilitate the implementation of the agenda of action for the future of Muslim countries.

Only a new OIC that characterizes and catalyzes a principled change and an enlightened moderation can fulfill its mandate as an action base for Muslim States and represent the Muslim world in the best way in the international fora.

In conclusion, all of us want to see an end to a passive and insulated approach to the challenges that face the Muslim world today. We want a common voice and action. A new OIC with a new

mandate and structure is indispensable for this vision. A new OIC will be key for ensuring a brighter and promising future for hundreds of millions of people across the world. Its success will be a historic one not only for Muslims but also for the whole of humanity.