

Final Communiqué

Of

**The Meeting of the
Permanent Representatives of the OIC Member States to
examine the developments pertaining to the Swiss ban on
Minarets**

**Jeddah, Saudi Arabia
January 31, 2010**

**Meeting of the Permanent Representatives of the OIC Member States to examine
the developments pertaining to the Swiss ban on Minarets
(Jeddah- January 31, 2010)**

Final Communiqué

The meeting of the Permanent Representatives of the Member States to the OIC was held in Jeddah on January 31, 2010 to examine the developments pertaining to the ban imposed on the building of minarets in mosques in Switzerland. The meeting made the following recommendations:

1. The meeting expressed its deep concern and disappointment on the ban on the construction of minarets in the mosques in Switzerland imposed as a result of a referendum held on November 29, 2009 and expressed solidarity with the peaceful and law abiding Muslim community in Switzerland.
2. The meeting emphasized that the ban was an act of Islamophobia that was in sharp contradiction to Switzerland's International human rights obligations concerning freedom of expression, conscience and religion, and it found unacceptable and dangerous to put to referendum the universal human rights and fundamental freedoms, including the freedom to worship.
3. The meeting agreed that minarets, as important religious symbols to call Muslims to worship and venerate God, were an integral part and an expression of Muslim identity as well as time honoured cultural, architectural, and civilizational heritage and that the ban restricted the freedom to manifest religion and display Islamic heritage to the outside world.
4. The meeting stressed that the ban could fuel extremism, misunderstanding and misperception leading to polarisation and fragmentation with unintended and unforeseen consequences, particularly in Europe.
5. The meeting welcomed statements and declarations made by Governments, specialized human rights bodies, faith leaders as well as civil society organizations expressing their concerns and highlighting the adverse implications of the ban and calling for mutual understanding, respect of diversity and tolerance.
6. The meeting particularly welcomed the statement made by UN High Commissioner for Human Rights describing the ban as discriminatory, deeply divisive and thoroughly unfortunate step that risked putting Switzerland on a collision course with its human rights obligations. In this regard, the meeting urged the High Commissioner and other relevant mandate holders of the UN Human Rights Council to highlight the Human Rights implications of this ban in their respective reports and work closely with the parties concerned towards an expeditious removal of the ban.
7. The meeting warned against the potentially adverse consequences of some subsequent developments propelled by negative and irresponsible pronouncements by Islamophobes and far right elements, particularly in Europe, and reiterated the OIC's commitment to promoting inter-faith dialogue aimed at arresting such negative trends and forging a world order based on tolerance,

respect for diversity and emphasis on promoting common values of different cultures.

8. The meeting expressed full support for the initiative, by the Custodian of the two Holy Mosques King Abdullah Ibn Abdulaziz, on Interfaith and Intercultural Dialogue as well as the outcome of the conferences relevant to the initiative and emphasized the development of a practical programme, including clear objectives, to correct misperceptions about Islam and Muslims in the West.
9. The meeting expressed its profound appreciation for the positive efforts and the role played by H.E. the OIC Secretary General in promoting the faith and inter-civilizational dialogue through sustained engagement within international political elite as well as important local and international actors and organizations.
10. The meeting commended the General Secretariat's efforts in engaging with the Swiss Government and other relevant actors and organizations, since the emergence of the issue of ban on building minarets, and also the supported OIC Islamophobia Observatory.
11. The meeting urged the Swiss Government and other relevant Swiss authorities to take necessary political and legal steps and adopt positions with a view to ensuring the reversal of the ban in a manner that would safeguard the rights of the Muslim community in Switzerland in accordance with the established principles of the Swiss Federal Constitution as well as the relevant international covenants, in particular the European Convention on Human Rights.
12. The meeting requested the General Secretariat to maintain a close contact with the Swiss Government, local institutions in Switzerland, and other relevant international actors, organizations and institutions towards seeking to reverse the ban on the construction of minarets in Switzerland while averting dangerous implications.
13. The meeting agreed on the importance of urging the Member States in jointly coordinating in raising the matter in the relevant international fora and seeking a resolution in view of its potentially grave implications.
14. The Meeting requested the Ambassadors of the OIC Member States in Berne to sustain a frequency of contacts, collectively as well as bilaterally, with the Swiss Government with a view to voicing their concerns on the ban and seeking its reversal. The meeting thanked the OIC Working Group on Human Rights and Humanitarian Affairs and their Coordinators in Geneva and New York for their efforts and requested them to continue to raise and pursue the matter in the relevant international fora, including the Human Rights Council and the UN General Assembly, in consonance with the relevant Resolutions of the OIC Summit and the Council of Foreign Ministers
15. The meeting further requested the OIC Working Group on Human Rights and Humanitarian Affairs in Geneva to work closely with the office of UN High Commissioner on Human Rights and other relevant mandate holders in the UN Human Rights Council.

16. The meeting reiterated OIC's concern at the ongoing trend of Islamophobia that formed a contemporary manifestation of racial discrimination, prejudice and xenophobia and urged the Member States for a concerted and result oriented effort with the international community, particularly the political and religious elite, towards evolving an agreed framework aimed at arresting this trend, discouraging particularly the organization of popular referendums on sensitive subjects, which may harm the convictions and beliefs of religious communities.
17. The meeting commended the consistent efforts of the Secretary General and requested him to continue to monitor developments subsequent to the ban imposed on the building of the minarets in the Mosques in Switzerland and keep the Member States informed.
18. The meeting agreed to remain seized of the matter and consider all the available options that would strengthen joint Islamic action geared towards seeking a reversal of the ban. The Secretary General will submit a report on the subject to the next Council of Foreign Ministers.

At the end, the Meeting expressed its thanks to H.E. Ambassador Majduddin Nashid, Consul General of the Syrian Arab Republic in Jeddah and its Permanent Representative to the Organization of the Islamic Conference for his wise chairmanship of the meeting.

The participants also expressed their appreciation to H. E. Professor Ekmeleddin Ihsanoglu, the Secretary General of the OIC for his visionary statement delivered at the opening session and for his consistent follow-up of the issue. They also expressed their appreciation to the OIC General Secretariat for the excellent preparations for the meeting.
