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**REPORT OF  
THE OIC-SECRETARY-GENERAL  
ON WOMEN AFFAIRS  
PRESENTED TO THE  
FOURTH SESSION OF THE MINISTERIAL CONFERENCE ON  
WOMEN'S ROLE IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE OIC  
MEMBER STATES  
"STRENGTHENING WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION AND ROLES IN ECONOMIC  
DEVELOPMENT IN THE OIC MEMBER STATES"**

**JAKARTA, REPUBLIC OF INDONESIA**

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## **INTRODUCTION**

1. Within the framework of the OIC Ten Year Program of Action (TYPOA) adopted by the 3<sup>rd</sup> Extraordinary Islamic Summit Conference held in Makkah Al-Mukarramah in December 2005 and under the new OIC Charter adopted by the 11<sup>th</sup> Session of the Islamic Summit Conference held on 13 – 14 March, 2008 in Dakar, Republic of Senegal, many new challenges and responsibilities in the spheres of social affairs in general and with regard to women affairs in particular have emerged that require serious consideration and committed efforts on the part of the OIC General Secretariat and its relevant bodies as well as the Member States.
2. The cause of Advancement of Women in the OIC Member States has been one my priorities since I assumed office of the Secretary General in 2005. I therefore took the initiative to have the first Meeting at the Ministerial level in Istanbul Turkey in 2006. The Istanbul Meeting was a landmark event as it set forth a serious discourse on developing an action plan that would empower Muslim women to the mainstream of our societies and play their due role as responsible citizens. The momentum created in the First Meeting gained pace in the subsequent meetings with positive outcomes such ads the OPAAW.
3. The OIC General Secretariat's activities were supplemented by those of the OIC subsidiary organs, specialized agencies and affiliated bodies.
4. Family is the basic nucleus of the society and forms an important institution in the life of a human being. Women as an important component of our society are faced with a host of daunting challenges and issues to bring about their overall development. In this context, the OIC has been focusing on some key areas of the development and empowerment of women, at various levels with its partners in order to promote the status of women and protect their rights. Similarly, the OIC is committed to bring children and youth into the mainstream of the society and make sure that they are empowered with education and conducive conditions for their access to the basic needs are created.
5. To this end, our efforts were mainly focused on protecting the rights of women; elimination of all forms of violence against women; eradicating poverty; providing adequate resources and support as essential components towards achieving gender equality and empowerment of women; raising womens' participation in decision making; providing equal opportunities for women through access to quality education; and elimination of all forms of discrimination against women including violence including domestic violence. The OIC General Secretariat's activities were supplemented by those of the OIC subsidiary organs, specialized agencies and affiliated bodies in addition to the Member States.

6. The women are among the most vulnerable and we have to ensure that they are promoted and advanced with the necessary care and adequate facilities and opportunities. They must be given access to modern education that will strengthen their base to absorb the modern day innovations and developments in science and technology. Likewise, women who form almost half of our population must be developed to further improve their self-confidence in their contribution to the society. We have to ensure the necessary facilities to the women of the Muslim world to develop themselves as good mothers capable of rearing good children and become active partners in the overall development of the Ummah.
7. The situation in some other Member states exacerbated all aspects of life. The increasing poverty and unemployment, and the continuing damage sustained by infrastructure, educational institutions and health facilities as well as the environment have increased the sufferings of women and children there.
8. Women are integral part in the development of the Muslim Ummah and the need for their advancement prioritized by the OIC Ten Year Program of Action. The First and Second Islamic Ministerial Conferences on Women held in Istanbul and Cairo respectively in 2006 and 2008 had generated the momentum for the cause of advancement of Muslim women. The General Secretariat had remained seized with the issue and took several actions to implement their decisions.
9. In line with the priority placed on women in the Muslim World- in the Ten Year Program of Action, we have been able to finalize the OIC Plan of Action for Advancement of Women (OPAAW) at the Second Ministerial Conference held in Cairo in November 2008. The OPAAW forms a landmark document and a comprehensive strategy towards improving the situation of Women in political, economic, cultural and social spheres in the Member States.
10. Following the adoption of OPAAW, the establishment of a specialized Organization under the OIC for the development of women in the OIC Member States was another breakthrough in this field. In the same vein, the establishment of the Department of Family Affairs within the OIC General Secretariat was another step towards the successful implementation of our decisions to advance the status of women in the Muslim world.
11. As the end of this year marks the completion of 5 years since the adoption of the OIC Ten Year Program of Action (TYPOA), the OIC is in the process of a Mid-Term Review of the TYPOA in which we feel encouraged by these developments in the advancement of women in the Muslim World for. However, we also strongly feel that the task ahead is very hard and requires commitment and joint coordinated action on the part of the Member States and the General Secretariat. We have still a long way to go to reach our goals.

12. There is no doubt that the OIC Member States are committed to improving women's status and ensuring equal rights for them. However, it is also true that, in one way or another, there are certain gaps to be filled. It is apparent that without strong determination and political will of the countries involved, discussions and bureaucratic efforts will fall short of making an actual impact.
13. The report is hereby submitted to the 4th Session of the Ministerial Conference on Women's Role in the Development of OIC Member States.

**A. GENERAL WOMENS ISSUES AND ACTIVITIES**

1. The 10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> Sessions of the Islamic Summit Conference (ISC) and the subsequent Sessions of the ICFMs and CFMs reiterated their call to the Member States to take adequate steps to organize the activities of women at national and international levels and in all fields, in line with the nature of women and *Sharia* standards.
2. These conferences also entrusted the General Secretariat to coordinate with the governments of the Member States in order to support direct and ongoing relations between Muslim women's associations in the Member States and to cooperate with existing international organizations of Muslim women in Islamic countries.
3. These conferences also called on the General Secretariat to undertake necessary efforts with the Member States in order to convene a ministerial conference on women every two years, which would study how to strengthen women's role in the development of Muslim society and provide them with greater opportunities in all walks of life.
4. These conferences entrusted me to establish a mechanism within the General Secretariat to take care of the issues of women, children, youth, the elderly, and those with special needs, and to follow up the implementation of this resolution and submit a report thereon.
5. The 3<sup>rd</sup> Extraordinary Session of the Islamic Summit Conference underlined the need to strengthen legislation geared to give women in Muslim society a greater role in economic, cultural, social, and political life and to protect them from all forms of violence and discrimination. The summit also called for greater efforts to be devoted to women's education and to eliminating illiteracy among women. It further called for the creation of a department dedicated to family affairs within the framework of efforts to restructure the OIC General Secretariat.
6. In line with the vision of the TYPOA, women were appointed in various departments of the OIC General Secretariat.
7. ISESCO convened many regional or national workshops and training sessions on the subject in different OIC Member States.
8. SESRIC with the cooperation of the General Secretariat developed a statistical database on women, youth, children and family in the OIC Member States to provide the decision-makers with accurate and timely information that would enlighten them on the appropriate actions to be taken for the promotion and protection of those vulnerable segments of the society.

9. ICCI has initiated a comprehensive program for the economic empowerment of businesswomen of the Member States to realize the economic potential of businesswomen in the OIC Member States.
10. The OIC General Secretariat attended the first 'International Multidisciplinary Women's Congress' organized by the Faculty of Arts and Sciences of the Dokuz Eylul University in Izmir, Turkey from 13 to 16 October 2009. The objective of the Congress was to provide the audience with an overview of the latest developments in women's studies in various disciplines (politics, labour, science and technology, law, culture, health, literature, history, religion, etc.) and to foster communication and collaboration between academicians, governmental and non-governmental organizations under the theme 'Change and Empowerment'.
11. The OIC General Secretariat has been very active since the beginning in providing assistance, shelter, education, living houses etc to the Children and families victim of Tsunami in Indonesia as well as children and women and families in other Member States such as Palestine, Yemen, Pakistan, Afghanistan, Somalia, and Mali.
12. The OIC General Secretariat and the US Government initiated to implement the OIC-US Government Cooperation Framework on an Emergency Global Response "Reaching Every Mother and Baby in the OIC with Emergency Care" signed on 1 December 2008 by piloting in two OIC member states countries namely Mali and Bangladesh.
13. The project will be implemented with full participation of the governments of the two selected countries and focusing on capacity building to assist the two member states to resolve the issue of high mortality rate of mother and child during delivery. On the basis of success of these two countries the project will be expanded to other Member States.
14. The OIC delegation participated at the 5th Forum for Business Women in Islamic Countries held in Cairo, Arab Republic of Egypt, on 22 —24 April 2010. These Business Forums are aimed to bring businesses women of the OIC member states closer together on issues of common concern. The high point of the meeting was the proposal that ICCI, in collaboration with IDB and other appropriate financial institutions should develop a suitable mechanism for extending easy credit facilities to businesswomen at the local levels. Alongside with the Forum, an exhibition was held and products, such as, textiles, ready-made garments, cosmetics and jewellery etc. were exhibited by businesswomen from several member states.
15. The representative of the OIC General Secretariat participated in the International Women Conference held on 5-6 November, 2010 in Istanbul, Republic of Turkey.

16. I issued messages on various occasions commemorating the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women calling for greater action and concerted efforts based on joint responsibilities to combat this evil phenomenon.
17. I continued to issue press releases and messages on Women's Day and United Nations Day for Women's Rights and International Peace, in which I underscored the need to promote and empower women and protect their rights and ensure their full enjoyment of these rights.
18. In my statement to commemorate the International Day of Families I highlighted the importance of motherhood as the corner stone of the family unit in consonance with the strong and cherished tradition of the family values in Islam. I called the international community to strive towards improving the lot of the daughters of today who would form future mothers.
19. At the invitation of the Government of the Republic of Turkey and the Parliamentary Union of Organization of Islamic Cooperation Member States (PUIC), I attended the International Meeting on "Change in Muslim Societies and the Role of Women" held in Istanbul on December 22-24, 2011 which discussed concerns and challenges facing women in the situations of change in Muslim societies.
20. The International Seminar on the Eminent Ladies of Divine Religions was convened by the Islamic Republic of Iran as the Chair of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Ministerial Conference on the Role of Women in the Development of the OIC Member States, in coordination with the OIC General Secretariat from 1<sup>st</sup> to 2<sup>nd</sup> February 2012 in Tehran, Islamic Republic of Iran which adopted a Final Declaration.
21. I dispatched a high level delegation to actively participate and deliver statement on my behalf in the proceedings of the Third NAM Ministerial Meeting on the Advancement of Women held in Doha, Qatar from 12 to 14 February 2012.
22. Consultations are underway with some Member States to convene events and conferences on women related issues.
23. In addition to that, some relevant OIC bodies such as ISESCO, ICCI and SESRIC have also been active in the field.

**B. FIRST MINISTERIAL CONFERENCE ON WOMEN'S ROLE IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF OIC MEMBER STATES**

1. As part of its activities, the OIC has also made efforts to enhance the capacity and the role of women in the member countries in accordance with the principles of equality and justice. In this vein, according to the recommendation 3/32-C(b) on "Muslim Women and Their Role in the Development of Islamic Society" adopted in the 32<sup>nd</sup> Islamic Conference of Foreign Ministers held in Sana'a, it was decided

to organize a Ministerial level conference towards “generating more opportunities for women in every walk of social life and to draft a plan of action to enhance the role of women in the development of Muslim societies”.

2. At the Conference of Ministers of Foreign Affairs held in Jeddah on 5 – 6 December 2005, preparatory to the third Extraordinary Islamic Summit Conference, the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Turkey offered to host this Conference in Turkey and a decision was reached to that effect.
3. The 1<sup>st</sup> Ministerial Conference on Women’s Role in the Development of OIC Member States that was hosted by Turkey on 20-21 November, 2006 provided an excellent opportunity for coordination among Member States in order to find out ways and means to prepare strategies, standards, programs and goals to advance the status of women. I personally attended the conference.
4. The following themes have been addressed in the conference:
  - i. National policies and strategies for increasing women’s employment and eradicating poverty among women that includes gender equality, women’s empowerment, health care etc.
  - ii. Women’s participation in decision-making at all levels through ensuring presence in the political process, eradicating poverty among women and equal access to education in all its forms.
  - iii. Better future for women through education, elimination of gender inequality.
  - iv. Elimination of all forms of violence against women through various measures including education, legislation, awareness-raising activities, that address inter-alia prevention, protection and prosecution.
5. The conference recommended the following:
  - i. A governmental group of experts be established within the OIC framework to formulate up the strategies and goals on the advancement of women.
  - ii. The women conference be convened at the ministerial level every two years.
  - iii. Subject-specific symposia be staged within the OIC framework to discuss the issues related to women.

### **C. EXPERT MEETING ON WOMEN IN DECISION MAKING**

1. The Ministry of Women, Family and Community Development of Malaysia convened the OIC Expert Group Meeting on Women’s Participation in Decision Making held in Kuala Lumpur on January 21-22, 2008. The delegation of the OIC



General Secretariat participated in the event. The Meeting focused on the issues and challenges in the OIC member states for the women participating in decision making discussing the leadership role of women in politics, governance, academia, public and corporate sectors and women in war and conflict.

**D. DRAFTING OIC PLAN OF ACTION FOR THE ADVANCEMENT OF WOMEN**

1. Pursuant to the decision made by the First Ministerial Islamic Conference on Women's Role in the Development of OIC Member State in Istanbul, Two Meetings were held at the level of Experts and Senior Officials to develop the OIC Plan of Action for the Advancement of Women held on 6-7 April 2008 and 12-14 October 2008 in the OIC Headquarters and then submit it to the 2<sup>nd</sup> Ministerial Islamic Conference on Women's Role in the Development of OIC Member States.
2. The OPAAW has set the following four Objectives for the OIC Member States:
  - i. Eradication of poverty, the achievement of sustainable development and provision of adequate resources and support as essential components towards achieving gender equality and empowerment of women at all levels and all sectors.
  - ii. Raising women's participation in decision-making mechanisms from local to national levels.
  - iii. Providing equal opportunities for women through access to quality education, health-care, and enhanced participation.
  - iv. Elimination of all forms of discrimination including combating violence against women.

**E. SECOND MINISTERIAL CONFERENCE ON WOMEN'S ROLE IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF OIC MEMBER STATES**

1. The Government of Arab Republic of Egypt submitted its graciously offer to the 11<sup>th</sup> Islamic Summit Conference in Dakar, Senegal to host the 2nd Ministerial Islamic Conference on Women's Role in the Development of OIC Member States. The offer was unanimously welcomed.
2. The 2<sup>nd</sup> Ministerial Islamic Conference on the Role of Women in the Development of the OIC Member States was held in Cairo, Egypt on 24-25 November 2008. It was a landmark event by the adoption of OIC Plan of Action for the Advancement of Women (OPAAW) also known as "Cairo Plan of Action for Women".
3. The Conference deliberated intensively on the issues and challenges faced by women in the OIC Member States particularly creating opportunities and

promoting their equal access to labour markets, sustainable employment and adequate social security, eliminating gender inequalities in education and all forms of discrimination and violence against women and girl children, promoting increased participation of women in decision-making bodies, including through ensuring their equal opportunity to participate in the political and decision-making process. The Conference underscored the need for appropriate legislations and their implementation through setting indicators for assessment and follow-up. It called for the continuation of the progress made with regard to women's advancement in the Member States.

**E. THIRD MINISTERIAL CONFERENCE ON WOMEN'S ROLE IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF OIC MEMBER STATES**

1. The 3<sup>rd</sup> Women Ministerial Conference on the Role of Women in the Development of the OIC Member States was held on December 19-21, 2010 in Tehran, Islamic Republic of Iran. The meeting was significant by adopting the Mechanism for the implementation of the OPAAW. It entrusted the Department of Family Affairs with the mandate to implement of the OPAAW and other decisions related to women in coordination with the Member States.
2. The Third Session of the above-mentioned Ministerial Conference was also a landmark by issuing Tehran Declaration which has set new innovative themes and mainstreamed women empowerment issues. The conference also explored new avenues to achieve the aspired goals set by the Member States in this field.
3. I firmly believe that the vision and the mission of the OIC reflected in the above-mentioned documents of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Ministerial Conference on the Role of Women in the Development of the OIC Member States could be best accomplished through further bilateral as well as multilateral consultations and exchange of views, expertise and good practices and through holding conference, seminars and workshops.
4. The Conference deliberated extensively on diverse issues affecting the status of women in the member states including the need for further progress both in terms of legislation and implementation, stressing the indivisibility of moral and justice from the process of development of the OIC member states, strengthening the family foundations, taking necessary measures with the view to promoting women education and training and their access to science and technology, and condemning any unjustified and politically motivated economic sanctions which may affect the welfare and economic security of families. The Conference further recommended that the OIC member states work together on establishing a road map with the view to helping initiate a universal movement seeking to revive rights of human beings, in particular women. It also recommended that the existing indices on development be supplemented in order to take into account Islamic specificities and cultural diversity aimed at, inter alia, to promote the status of women in politics, culture and economy.

**F. ESTABLISHMENT OF FAMILY AFFAIRS DEPARTMENT**

1. Various sessions of the CFM and Islamic Summit Conferences took note of the proposed mechanism to cater for family affairs that was presented by the State of Qatar and took into account the teachings of our magnanimous religion, which give special priority to the family as the foundation of Muslim society and its moral and religious structure. The 36<sup>th</sup> Session of the Council of Foreign Ministers held in Damascus, Syrian Arab Republic on 23-25 May 2009 adopted resolution No.8/36-ORG on the Establishment of Department Family Affairs.
2. The General Secretariat has been following up the issue of establishing a Department responsible for family affairs within the framework of the General Secretariat's restructuring. In this connection, the OIC benefited from other international organizations' experience.
5. The Department has recently been created after shifting to the new building within restructuring of the General Secretariat. The 37<sup>th</sup> Session of the Council of Foreign Ministers held in Dushanbe, Tajikistan and 9<sup>th</sup> Session of COMIAC noted with appreciation the establishment of Family Affairs Department.
6. The establishment of the new Department of Family Affairs was a milestone event for the OIC and hailed by all member states as a concrete achievement of the TYPOA. This new Department that would be devoted to further strengthen the basic family institution with noble and lofty Islamic values. The Department would need to be expanded with material and financial support to fulfill its objectives.

**G. ESTABLISHMENT OF NEW SPECIALIZED BODY FOR WOMEN DEVELOPMENT**

1. The OIC Intergovernmental Legal Expert Group Meeting to study the statute of the Organization of Women Development in the OIC Member States was held in Jeddah on 12-14 October 2009. As mandated by the Resolution No 4/36- CULT the three day meeting discussed the statute of the Organization to be established in Cairo with a view to ensuring the implementation of the OPAAW. The statute was adopted by the 37<sup>th</sup> CFM held on 29 – 31 March, 2010 in Dushanbe, Republic of Tajikistan.
2. During the 38<sup>th</sup> Session of the Council of Foreign Ministers held on 28 -30 June, 2011 in Astana, Republic of Kazakhstan some Member States signed the Statute of the Women Development Organization.
3. Till date, only Republic of Gabon has ratified the statute and the following Member States have signed it:
  - I. Arab Republic of Egypt.

- II. Republic of Mali.
- III. Islamic Republic of Mauritania
- IV. United Arab Emirates.
- V. Republic of Djibouti.
- VI. Union of Comoros Islands.
- VII. Republic of Benin.

- 4. The General Secretariat of the OIC continues to encourage and request its Member States to join the newly established specialized organization by signing and ratifying its statute so that it would be able to assume its functions.

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