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STATEMENT
BY
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SECRETARY GENERAL
OF
THE ORGANIZATION OF ISLAMIC
COOPERATION
TO
THE 4th MINISTERIAL CONFERENCE ON
THE
WOMEN'S ROLE IN THE DEVELOPMENT
OF OIC MEMBER STATES

JAKARTA, REPUBLIC OF INDONESIA
4-6 DECEMBER

**His Excellency Dr. Boediono,
Vice President of the Republic of Indonesia**

**Her Excellency Mrs. Linda Amalia Sari Gumelar,
Minister of Women's Empowerment and Child Protection of the Republic
of Indonesia**

**Honourable Ministers, Excellencies, Distinguished Delegates, Ladies and
Gentlemen**

Assalamo Alaikum wa rahmatollah wa barakatuhu

It gives me immense pleasure to once again be in Jakarta, the beautiful capital city of Indonesia, the largest Muslim country in the world. My last visit to the city was a few months ago on the occasion of the landmark meeting of the First Session of the OIC Independent Permanent Human Rights Commission. Today I have the the distinct honour and privilege to address the 4th OIC Ministerial Meeting on Women.

Allow me Excellency to take this opportunity to thank you and through you, the government and our brothers and sisters of Indonesia for their generosity and warm hospitality.

Excellencies, Distinguished Delegates,

Before addressing the core theme of today's conference, let me kindly allow to inform you that the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) today has successfully earned the recognition of the international community as a global actor in international affairs. It is also considered as the agent of moderation and modernization in the Muslim World. I take pride in saying that the paradigm shift which we introduced in the Organization since 2005, has brought us to this position. Today the United Nations takes the OIC as its strategic partner while

dealing with international peace and security issues. The Ten Year Program of Action (TYPOA) which I presented to the OIC leaders during the 3rd Extraordinary Summit in Makkah has ushered an era of moderation and modernization in the Muslim World, a testimony to which is today's august gathering. Solidarity "in action" instead of "in rhetoric" was introduced in promoting democracy, good governance, rule of law, human rights and in particular rights of women through the mandate given to me by the historic Makkah Summit of 2005. Emphasis was given in the TYPOA on the urgent need of women development and empowerment. The program also provided a clear set of directives to address the issues and challenges for women empowerment in our societies.

Excellencies, dear guests

If we look from the religious perspective, Islam pioneered in according recognition to the role of women in shaping development in society. The example was set by our revered Prophet Muhammad (PBUH). In his preaching and teachings, he has upheld the dignity and rights of women and their rightful place in society. Number of instances of role of Muslim women in social development could be found in history.

Regrettably, the crucial and pivotal role played by Muslim women in bringing changes in society, have mostly gone unrecognized or ignored. This was primarily due to age old prejudices and misgivings of male dominated society. In the present day as well, despite having women at the top decision making levels in many of our societies, a vast majority of Muslim women remain deprived of their basic rights and access to social opportunities vis a vis their male partners. .

As such, following the directives of the OIC TYPOA, we prioritized women issues in the OIC agenda. The OIC however, was never short in its realization of the huge potential of the role of women in development in the member states. It is on this ground that I took the initiative in holding the first ever OIC Ministerial Meeting on Women in Istanbul almost immediately after taking office of the Secretary General in 2006. The Istanbul meeting was a landmark event as it was the first gathering at the political level to look into the issues and challenges faced by Muslim women and to decide on ways to address them.

Following the Istanbul Meeting, the General Secretariat worked hard to identify the problems and challenges and to draft an action plan that would effectively help in empowerment of women. The draft was discussed and examined at length in two separate meetings by the Group of Experts of Member States at the General Secretariat in Jeddah. The final draft was submitted to the Second Ministerial Conference on the Women's Role in the Development of OIC Member States in Cairo in 2008 which adopted it as a landmark document known as the OIC Plan of Action for Advancement of Women or OPAAW. This plan provided the long awaited road map for the advancement of women and their participation in development and decision making.

The Second Ministerial Meeting also decided on the establishment of the Cairo Center for Women's Development. The Center which would be a specialized body of the OIC is open to all the OIC Member States. The OIC have already informed all Member States that its statute would be available here for signing and ratification. I would urge all Member States once again to join the body and take the opportunity to sign and ratify it during this Conference so that it may come into force immediately.

The 3rd Ministerial Conference on Women's Role in the Development of OIC Member States in Tehran in 2010 followed up on the deliberations of the earlier two meetings and took a number of visionary decisions in the implementation process of OPAAW. One positive outcome of the Tehran Meeting was the adoption of the Mechanism to implement the OPPAW. The document is relevant to the strengthening participation of women in development and I would strongly urge the Member States to implement it starting with the grassroots level.

In the same line, the Fourth Ministerial Conference on Women's Role in the Development of OIC Member States is timely and important. The decision to assign "Strengthening Women's Participation in the Development in OIC Member States" as the theme of this Meeting is most appropriate.

Excellencies, Distinguished delegates,

We were successful in implementing the decision of our Organization to establish the Department of Family Affairs at the General Secretariat that would exclusively be devoted to deal with issues concerning women, children and youth. We have made a humble beginning of the task entrusted on us and we hope to make this Department a coordination point for dissemination of information of the actions and policies undertaken by member states and to lend support toward implementation of the decisions taken at the Ministerial meetings.

A major step forward in furthering the cause of Muslim women was achieved with the establishment of an OIC Independent Permanent Commission on Human Rights (IPHRC). This Commission inter alia is mandated to promote the rights of women within the OIC boundaries. IPHRC will be expected to make specific recommendations for ensuring participation of women in development. I believe my optimism is already vindicated by the fact that 4 out of the eighteen members of the Commission are women, and the first two Sessions held in Jakarta and Ankara respectively were chaired by a woman who is a distinguished scholar and activist from Indonesia. I am particularly delighted to see Dr. Siti Ruhaini Dzuhaitin in our midst today in her capacity as Chair of the OIC IPHRC. I am confident that she will make substantive contributions in promotion and strengthening the rights of women and those of the girl child.

Ladies and Gentlemen

One of the important issues is the practice of female genital mutilation (FGM) in some countries and societies. I would like to mention that this practice is only a ritual that has survived over centuries and must be stopped as Islam doesn't support it. There is a rising awareness across the Muslim world against this hazardous practice that endangers physical and psychological health of girls and women. This issue was deliberated at length at the Second Islamic Conference of Ministers in charge of Childhood held in Khartoum in 2009 where there was wide support on the fact that Female Genital Mutilation tantamount to violation of human rights of girls and women. I would like to welcome UN General Assembly Third Committee on approving a draft resolution on November 26, 2012 which aimed at intensifying global effort to eliminate female genital

mutilation and take measures including legislation prohibiting the phenomenon to protect women and girls from that form of violence.

Excellencies,

The sorry plight of women of Palestine living under occupation is a matter of great concern for the OIC. For decades, Palestinian women had to endure repression, and unspeakable pain and sufferings of losing sons and daughters, husbands and fathers at the hands of the brutal aggressors. They continue to be deprived of the basic human rights including the right to life, security, shelter, education, healthcare, employment. The recent Israeli aerial bombardment in the Gaza has taken toll of lives of women and children. I would urge you all to take a renewed initiative to sensitize the international community of their obligation to protect the women and children of Palestine from repression of the occupying forces.

Excellencies,

Our outlook to address advancement of women is in line with other international efforts. In this respect the General Secretariat is actively engaged with other international and regional organizations. The OIC played an active role in the preparatory sessions for drafting the final declaration in New York for the Third Ministerial Meeting of the Non-Aligned Movement on the advancement of Women held in Doha, Qatar in February 2012. The OIC position on empowerment of women was adequately reflected in the final outcome document.

The United Nations Millennium Development Goals that include eradication of extreme poverty and hunger, achieving universal primary education, promoting gender equality and empowering women, reducing child mortality, improving maternal health, combating HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases are fully compatible with the goals and objectives outlined in the OIC Plan of Action for the Advancement of Women.

Within the same framework, the OIC General Secretariat and the US Government initiated to implement the OIC-US Cooperation Framework on an Emergency Global Response “Reaching Every Mother and Child in the OIC with Emergency Care” signed in December 2008 by piloting in two OIC member states namely Mali and Bangladesh. The project is under implementation with full participations of the governments of the two selected countries 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.

Excellencies, Distinguished Delegates

As I have mentioned in my address to the earlier Ministerial Meetings, the issues and challenges facing women in the Muslim world are not different from those faced by women universally. In the developed world, women have achieved substantial progress on account of their access to opportunities and their escape from poverty entrapment. But despite the progress, they are still subject to inequalities in terms of job opportunities, unequal pay, violence, abuse, etc.

Muslim women have an added advantage of the existing strong family values in our society to tackle many of the issues. The family lies at the core of human society. It is part of our development process from childhood to old age. The values of living a good life of morality and virtue will take firm root in our character if we are raised according to Islamic teachings and principles of honesty, justice, tolerance, kindness and compassion, obligations to the less fortunate in society and pursuing a culture of peace and tranquility.

The pivotal role in raising a strong and integrated family rests mostly with the women. It therefore falls upon the society to ensure that girls and women have access to all opportunities in particular good education, health care and nutrition to be able to contribute in a proper way to the building of a prosperous society.

The OIC has consistently upheld the cause of education of girls. In all OIC meetings and documents, the right of education of girl's has been of the highest priority. In this context, I must mention the barbaric attack on the Pakistani teenager Malala Yusufzai who stood-up against extremists to uphold the cause of education of girls. The OIC and the entire world condemned the attack on this young girl and strongly supported her commitments.

Let me conclude by reiterating that women are integral partners in our societies. Their legitimate claims and demands for equal treatment, access to opportunities, role in affairs of the state including policy and decision making and protection from violence and abuse must be met if we are to make women equal partners in development. The Member States would have to actively pursue the implementation of the decisions of the declarations and resolutions that are adopted at the Ministerial meetings. It would be my strong expectation that the Jakarta Meeting will give emphasis on the implementation aspect while setting goals in the cause of advancement of women.

I thank you.