

OIC/2-WCOD/2008/REP.FINAL

REPORT  
OF  
THE SECOND MINISTERIAL CONFERENCE  
ON  
THE ROLE OF WOMEN IN THE DEVELOPMENT  
OF OIC MEMBER STATES  
(CAIRO PLAN OF ACTION FOR WOMEN)

Cairo, Arab Republic of Egypt  
26-28 Dhul Qada, 1429H  
24 - 25 November 2008,

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Within the framework of the OIC's implementation of the Ten-Year Plan of Action adopted by the Third Extraordinary Islamic Summit Conference held in Makkah 2005, in line with the decision of the First Ministerial Conference on the Role of Women in the Development of OIC Member States held in November 2006 in Istanbul, Turkey, and in implementation of resolution no. 3/32-C(b) on "Muslim Women and their Role in the Development of Islamic Society" adopted by the 32<sup>nd</sup> Islamic Conference of Foreign Ministers held in Sana'a, Republic of Yemen, which called for convening a ministerial conference in order to "generate 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", the Second Ministerial Conference on the Role of Women in the Development of OIC Member States was convened in Cairo on 24 - 25 November 2008 at the kind invitation of the Government of the Arab Republic of Egypt.

2. The Second Ministerial Conference adopted the "OIC Plan of Action for the Advancement of Women (OPAAW)-Cairo Plan of Action for Women". The Cairo Conference successfully highlighted the important role played by women in social, economic and political fields in society as well as for the proper upbringing of family in accordance with Islamic values and underscored the urgent need to empower women through the implementation of the "Cairo Plan of Action" and involve their participation in all spheres of life including the decision making process.

3. The Opening Session was addressed by the patron of the Conference, Her Excellency Madame Suzanne Mubarak, First Lady of Egypt, His Excellency Mr. Ahmed Aboul Gheit, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Arab Republic of Egypt and His Excellency Prof. Ekmeleddin Ihsanoglu, Secretary General of the Organization of the Islamic Conference.

4. The Conference was attended by delegations representing 46 OIC Member States and representatives of the OIC General Secretariat, ISESCO and IRCICA, in addition to the participation of UNICEF, UNFPA and UNWF.

5. The First Lady of Egypt H.E. Madame Suzanne Mubarak stated that Women, over ages, had assumed a central role in the social, economic and political development of their community. This role was extended to an active and effective participation in national liberation movements in many Arab and Islamic countries. Her Excellency recalled the decisions of the 32<sup>nd</sup> ICFM and the 3<sup>rd</sup> Extraordinary Islamic Summit,

promoting the role of woman at the national, regional and international levels and declaration of the first of October as the day of solidarity with woman and child, victims of war and occupation in the Islamic world. She also underscored the important themes addressed during the first OIC Ministerial Conference in Istanbul in 2006. The First Lady expressed the hope that the deliberations and discussions of the Cairo Conference will lead to effective resolutions and recommendations and to a common plan of action that gives new impetus to the efforts aimed at promoting women in the Member States of the Organization. Her Excellency said that Islam envisioned an enlightened vision that promoted the status of women and eliminated all forms of discrimination and fanaticism. Her Excellency added that the change that occurred regarding the concept of development, made us realize that the issues of partnership, equality and empowering women have occupied an unprecedented pivotal position. The evolutionary concept of "human resources development" emphasized the importance of investing in human resources as well as in the importance of building women's capacities, expanding their choices and participation in the development process.

6. For his part, H.E. the Foreign Minister of the Arab Republic of Egypt stated that Cairo Meeting highlighted the efforts of the OIC to improve and empower women to take a leading role in the development process in our societies. His Excellency added that this conference was a second step that would take the efforts from the planning to the implementation. The Foreign Minister underscored the urgent need to create opportunities for women to encourage their participation in the political and social processes. His Excellency announced the decision of the Government of Egypt to offer 150 training courses for the advancement of women in the various fields accentuated at the Ten-Year Programme of Action, including the spheres of education, health and nursing during 2009 – 2010, affirming the Government of Egypt's willingness to offer more courses in the future in coordination with the Islamic Development Bank and other Islamic Financing Institutions in line with the Member States' needs.

7. In his address, H.E. Prof. Ekmeleddin Ihsanoglu, Secretary General of the OIC, expressed his sincere gratitude and appreciation to the President, the First Lady and the Government and people of Egypt for hosting this important conference. His Excellency recalled the invaluable contributions of Egypt in upholding and further developing the interests of Muslims and the positive contributions made towards attaining the overall objectives of the OIC. His Excellency said that development of women in society was one of the most important issues on the global agenda today and that the challenges that are faced should be met and overcome through devising wise policies and programmes consistent with the requirements of our time. His Excellency underscored that the advancement of women and the promotion of their role within the family and society was a major factor for development in society. His Excellency stated that there would be no meaningful progress if women who comprise one half of the society, remain out of the mainstream of society and do not have access to opportunities including those of quality education, healthcare, employment, protection from violence and for their participation in the decision making process in society as well ensuring their rights. His Excellency evoked the noble teachings of the Holy Quran and Prophet Muhammad (Prayers and peace be upon him) that upheld the status of women in society and guaranteed their rights and protection from violence. His Excellency stated that the "Cairo Plan of Action" was a landmark document that would serve as a road map for the empowerment of women and their cause for development in society.

8. The Conference elected its Bureau as follows:

Arab Republic of Egypt as Chair, the Republic of Senegal, Malaysia and the State of Palestine as Vice Chairs, and the Republic of Turkey as rapporteur of the Conference.

9. The Conference adopted its program of work and agenda which contained the following:

- a. Vision of OIC Member States on the advancement of women in Muslim communities and the priorities of joint action.
- b. Poverty eradication, sustainable development and the provision of necessary resources and support as major foundations for gender equality and women empowerment at all levels.
- c. Women participation in decision-making mechanisms at local and national levels.
- d. Equal opportunities for women through provision of good education and health care, as well as improved participation and elimination of all discrimination including combating violence against women.
- e. Comprehensive study on the situation of women in Islamic states.
- f. Follow up and review of implementation of the Cairo Plan of action.

10. The Conference addressed issues and challenges faced by women in the OIC member states particularly creating equal opportunities in labour markets, sustainable employment and adequate social security, eliminating gender inequalities in primary and secondary education, eliminating all forms of discrimination and violence against women and girls education promoting increased participation of women in decision-making bodies, including ensuring their participation in the political and decision making process.

11. The Conference underscored the need to set indicators for assessment and follow-up of the implementation of the Action Plan for the promotion of women in the OIC Member States.

12. The Conference called for necessary measures to translate the vision incorporated in the Cairo Plan of Action to raise awareness of the cause of empowerment and development of women and its implementation through their national plans and strategies.

13. The participants agreed to consider poverty as a major impediment to the empowerment of women and stressed on poverty alleviation. They called for political will to address the marginalization of women caused by poverty conditions. Member

states were urged to take up poverty alleviation programmes including micro-credit finance for their economic emancipation.

14. The participants highlighted the importance for parliaments of the OIC Member States to ratify necessary laws and relevant international conventions to alleviate women's social and economic deprivation and improve their material and spiritual status and to ensure their protection against all forms of violence, including domestic violence.

15. The participants urged active participation of NGOs and other civil society institutions in mobilizing poverty alleviation programs . They also called for awareness among both men and women of the rights of women including their right to economic well being and sustainable development.

16. The conference recommended the consideration of the proposal to establish a forum for networking among Member States of the OIC in line with the OPAAW recommendation No.7. In this connection, the Conference commended the success achieved by the Arab Network of Arab Business-Women under the umbrella of the League of Arab States known as the Arab Business-Women Council. The conference expressed hope that the OIC Business Forum project will join efforts with the Arab Business Women Council to produce comprehensive work and success that will serve the Arab and Islamic women.

17. The participants prioritized the issue of decision making mechanisms at local and national levels. They reiterated the need to create opportunities for equal participate of women in the decision making process in the family, workplace and national policies.

18. The conference underscored that violence against women constitutes a global phenomenon and a violation of human rights and fundamental freedoms of women and represents an obstacle to the advancement of women.

19. The conference called on the OIC Member States to exchange experiences and programs regarding prevention of violence against women and children and urged for the support of the rehabilitation and reintegration of women and children who are victims of violence. The conference also appealed to the member states to take up extensive awareness building campaign to enhance positive social change towards women and children, who are victims of violence. The conference asked for the establishment of national centers to collect data and information on violence against women and children for effective and timely intervention. The conference underscored the need to highlight Islamic teachings combating violence against women and children among all members of society. The conference urged the Member States to educate both women and men regarding the rights and rightful place of women in a society and encourage OIC Member States to intensify their efforts in combating female genital mutilation.

20. The conference condemned Israel's blockade of Gaza and requested the international community to act urgently to lift the blockade threatening our Palestinian brothers and sisters in Gaza, particularly women and children in the line of humanitarian danger.

21. On the occasion of the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women, the conference stressed that the blockade of Gaza, constituting a flagrant violation of International Humanitarian Law, is the worst form of violence against women and humanity in general.
22. The Conference welcomed the proposal of the Arab Republic of Egypt to establish a new organ under the OIC concerned with women's affairs to be based in Cairo. In response to the queries made by a limited number of delegations on the relationship between the proposal and the Department of Family Affairs scheduled to be established in the OIC and the financial obligations of the establishment of the new organ, the response elaborated that the new organ would implement the relevant recommendations and resolutions of OIC Conferences with the fundamental objective of building capacities, developing training programmes, providing guidance and technical assistance and exchanging experiences and expertise. In this connection, it was emphasized that the new organ does not contradict with the mandate of any other OIC department or subsidiary or affiliated organs. Rather, it is a specialized organ with optional membership and voluntary financing, which does not add any financial burdens on the OIC budget. This proposal will be developed through cooperation between Egypt, the OIC Member States and the General Secretariat during the 36<sup>th</sup> session of the Council of Foreign Ministers preparatory to its adoption. In this regard, the Conference adopted the Egyptian proposal which will contribute towards continuing the efforts to promote and empower women economically, politically and socially.
23. The Conference welcomed the offers made by delegations of Afghanistan and Sudan to hold meetings and conferences on the issues related to the development on advancement of women in OIC Member States.
24. The Conference welcomed the suggestion of the Republic of Azerbaijan to host Expert Meeting of the OIC Member States in 2010, in Baku.
25. The Conference requested the OIC General Secretariat to circulate a questionnaire to the member states for their inputs towards launching a comprehensive study on the status of women in OIC member states.
26. The Conference commended the OIC Secretary General for his special attention in highlighting women's issues in OIC Member States and expressed their thanks to the OIC General Secretariat for its efforts and contributions for the successful holding of this Conference.
27. The Conference expressed its appreciation to the Government of Malaysia for hosting an expert meeting on the issue of women's participation in decision-making and eradication of all forms of violence against women" held in Kuala Lumpur in January 2008.
28. The Conference expressed its appreciation to the Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran for its offer to host the Third Ministerial Conference on "Women's Role in the Development of OIC Member States" to be held in 2010.
29. The Conference expressed its sincere thanks and appreciation to Her Excellency Madame Suzanne Mubarak, First Lady of Egypt for her high patronage of the

Conference, to the Government and people of Egypt for the excellent preparations for holding this Conference as well as for providing all the necessary facilities during the Conference.

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