

***Rabat Declaration on
Child's Issues in the Member States of
the Organization of the Islamic Conference***

We the Ministers in charge of child affairs in the Member States of the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC), and the Heads of Arab, Islamic and International Governmental and Non-Governmental Organizations taking part in the First Islamic Ministerial Conference on the Child, held in Rabat, in the Kingdom of Morocco, from 7 to 9 November 2005, in cooperation and coordination between the Islamic Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (ISESCO), UNICEF and the OIC:

Guided by the teachings of Islam which stress the need for taking due care of children and granting them full rights;

Recalling the resolution on Child Care and Protection in the Member States of the Organization of the Islamic Conference, adopted by the 10th Session of the Islamic Summit Conference (Putrajaya, Malaysia, October 2003), which stipulated the necessity to safeguard children's rights and fulfil the obligations of the states thereon and entrusted ISESCO with the convening of the First Islamic Ministerial Conference on the Child, in cooperation and coordination with UNICEF and the OIC;

Recalling the key principle enshrined in Sharia, the canonical law of Islam, that all children – girls and boys, in all situations, always and everywhere and even when they are still fetuses in the wombs of their mothers— have the right to live and thrive to reach their full potential, a principle that guides the implementation of the Islamic provisions for children, including provisions for the family environment, health, education, leisure and cultural activities, special protection, civil rights and freedoms, and preservation of identity;

Recalling the OIC Covenant on the Rights of the Child adopted by the 32nd Islamic Conference of Foreign Ministers (Sanaa, Republic of Yemen, June 2005);

Recalling the principles and resolutions of the United Nations on the rights of children, adopted by OIC Member States;

Emphasizing that the Convention on the Rights of the Child constitutes a frame of reference for the promotion and protection of the rights of the child;

Recalling the adoption by all OIC Member States of the United Nations Millennium Declaration, the Millennium Development Goals and the goals of “A World Fit for Children”;

Noting with concern that the current trends suggest that many low-income countries, including those which remain under colonial domination and foreign occupation, will not reach these internationally agreed-on development goals unless urgent action is taken and that only richer population groups may reach these goals; which will further broaden inequalities and exclusion of marginalized, remote, displaced and other disadvantaged populations;

Welcoming the constructive outcome of the 2005 World Summit in New York on 14 and 15 September 2005;

Commending the outstanding and fruitful cooperation between the OIC Member States, ISESCO, the OIC General Secretariat and UNICEF with a view to ensuring the safety, protection and development of children in the Islamic World;

Taking note of the fruitful discussions in the panels of experts held in Rabat on 7th and 8th November 2005;

DECLARE our Commitment:

1. To respect and ensure the rights of each child in our societies without discrimination of any kind, irrespective of race, colour, sex, language, religion, political opinion or social status;
2. To adhere to the general principles of child rights, *inter alia*, the best interests of the child, non discrimination, participation, survival and development, which provide the framework for all action concerning children and adolescents alike;
3. To preserve and enhance our common Islamic heritage to increase the awareness of the Muslim Youth of the values of Islam, and instil into them a sense of pride in the achievements of the glorious Islamic civilization; and to contribute to more understanding and tolerance among peoples and religions;

4. To publicize the values of Islam with regard to family, women and children through mass media, to disseminate the true and honourable image of Islam and the essence of its eternal Sharia, and to promote, among Member States, Islamic solidarity on the child's issues;

HEALTH

5. **Call upon** all Member States to allocate adequate resources and take all necessary measures to ensure the right of the child, without discrimination, to enjoy the highest possible standards of health; to develop sustainable health systems and social services; to ensure access to such systems and services; to provide adequate food and nutrition to prevent diseases and malnutrition; to secure health services for mothers, newborn infants and children; to dedicate a special care for adolescents while protecting them from drugs and smoking; and to promote reproductive and sexual health;
6. **Urge** all OIC Member States, the international community and civil society, particularly in the Islamic world, to provide the resources necessary to eradicate polio in all OIC Member States so that they can contribute effectively to the goal of Global Polio Eradication;

HIV/AIDS

7. **Urge** OIC Member States to break the silence on the HIV and AIDS epidemic, by reaching out to religious leaders, educational institutions, and NGOs and see to it that closer cooperation and greater action are taken with a view to combating this epidemic;
8. **Call upon** all Member States to support and attend to children and families affected by HIV/AIDS; ensure an effective prevention of infections through education and information; and facilitate access to voluntary and confidential screening as well as access to affordable treatment, while giving due attention to the prevention of mother-to-child transmission of the virus;

CHILD PROTECTION AGAINST VIOLENCE, EXPLOITATION AND ABUSE

9. **Call upon** Member States to take all appropriate measures to prevent and protect children from all forms of exploitation, abuse, torture and violence, including physical, mental, sexual and domestic violence;
10. **Call upon** all Member States to take the necessary measures to eliminate all forms of discrimination against girls and all harmful traditional or customary practices, such as child marriage and female genital mutilation, in the light of the Cairo Declaration on Legal Tools for the Prevention of Female Genital Mutilation and the Maputo Protocol, to enact and implement proper legislations and formulate, where appropriate, national plans, programmes and strategies protecting girls;
11. **Thank** the Member States that have ratified relevant human rights conventions and urge States that have not ratified and implemented yet the International Labour Organization's Conventions concerning Minimum Age for Admission to Employment (Convention No. 138) and Prohibition of the Worst Forms of Child Labour, 1999 (Convention No. 182), and the Optional Protocols to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict and on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography to do so;
12. **Welcome** the adoption by the United Nations General Assembly of Resolution N° 59/165 (2005) on Working towards the Elimination of Crimes against Women and Girls Committed in the Name of Honour, by taking appropriate legislative and administrative measures and devise suitable programmes;
13. **Urge** Member States to take all necessary measures to prevent the outbreak of any armed conflicts, in accordance with the objectives and principles of the United Nations Charter, and to provide particular care for the needs of children and women, who are the main victims of such conflicts, ensuring that they receive timely and effective humanitarian assistance including education;
14. **Strongly condemn** any recruitment and use of children in armed conflict contrary to international law, and urge all parties to armed conflicts who are engaged in such practices to end them and to take effective measures for the rehabilitation and reintegration of such children into society;

EDUCATION

15. **Call upon** Member States to double their efforts to raise the quality of primary education and make it available, free and compulsory to all, to progressively work towards making secondary, higher and vocational education and technical training generally available and accessible to all, and to care for the gifted and talented;
16. **Reaffirm** the commitment to achieve gender equality in education by 2015, in the light of the decisions and recommendations issued by conferences on education for all, with a focus on ensuring girls' permanent and equal access to full basic education of good quality;
17. **Reaffirm** the need to create a child-friendly environment, in which they feel safe, are protected from abuse, violence and discrimination, and are healthy and encouraged to learn ; as well as the need to ensure that education programmes and materials reflect fully the promotion and protection of human rights and the values of peace, tolerance, dialogue and gender equality, under the provisions of the International Decade for a Culture of Peace and Non-Violence for the Children of the World, 2001–2010;

INVESTING IN CHILDREN

18. **Call upon** all OIC Member States, the international community, civil society and philanthropic organizations, particularly in OIC Member states, to cooperate, support and participate in efforts for poverty eradication within OIC Member States, and to reduce debts, while recognizing that strengthened availability and effective allocation of financial resources are required to ensure that all the internationally agreed development and poverty eradication goals, including those set out in the United Nations Millennium Declaration, are realized within their time framework;
19. **Acknowledge** that rapid progress in this area will require political commitment and the speeding up of more efficient and effective strategies and actions, greater investment of financial resources, adequately specialized institutions, capacity-building in the public and private sectors, a clear focus on affording equality of opportunities and access to the outcome of this investment;

- 20. Urge Member States** to take all appropriate measures for the implementation of the rights recognized in the International Convention on the Rights of the Child by, inter alia, putting in place effective national legislations, policies and action plans, by strengthening governmental structures for children and by ensuring adequate and systematic training in the rights of the child for professional groups working with and for children;
- 21. Call upon ISESCO** to coordinate and cooperate with specialized Islamic and international institutions to undertake studies aimed at improving the status of women, children and families in the OIC Member States, especially in the target areas identified in this Declaration;

COORDINATION AND FOLLOW-UP

- 22. Request** the Islamic Commission for Economic, Social and Cultural Affairs in the Organization of the Islamic Conference to submit this Declaration to the 33rd Session of the Islamic Conference of Foreign Ministers and to the 11th Session of the Islamic Summit, for its adoption and support;
- 23. Entrust** ISESCO, UNICEF and the OIC with the responsibility of following up the implementation of this Declaration in conjunction with the Chairman of the Conference, and of supporting individual and joint efforts of Member States with a view to assisting them in fulfilling their obligations and commitments to children;
- 24. Entrust** ISESCO with the responsibility of convening the Islamic Ministerial Conference on the Child on a regular basis, and of following up the implementation of its resolutions and recommendations in conjunction with the General Secretariat of the OIC and UNICEF;
- 25. Recommend in this context**, the development of mechanisms to promote the exchange, among OIC Member States, of expertise in the development and implementation of policies pertaining to the child rights, and to provide oversight of progress in the implementation of this Declaration, any future Declarations or Resolutions relating to the rights of the child and of the “A World Fit for Children” Document.