



**ORGANIZATION OF ISLAMIC COOPERATION  
(OIC)**

**OIC/ACM-2018/SG-SP**

**STATEMENT**

**Secretary General Dr Yousef Ahmed Al-Othaimeen**

**Annual Coordination Meeting of the Foreign Ministers of  
the OIC Member States**

**New York, 28 September 2018**

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

***Praise be to Allah and Peace and Blessing be upon His Prophet***

***Your Highnesses and Excellencies;***

***Your Excellency Ms Rosemary DiCarlo, Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs of the United Nations;***

***Ladies and gentlemen;***

*Assalamu alaikum warahmatu Allah wabarakatuh,*

I would like to begin by saying that this annual coordination meeting is an important event that commands much attention. It is particularly significant in that it provides an interface between our member states and the rest of the world.

So, let me take this opportunity to express my gratitude and appreciation to the Republic of Côte d'Ivoire for presiding over the previous session of the OIC Council of Foreign Ministers. Equal thanks and appreciation are also due to the People's Republic of Bangladesh, the incumbent Chair of the Council of Foreign Ministers, and to the State of the United Arab Emirates, who will chair the Council's upcoming session. I am also grateful to the Arab Republic of Egypt for chairing the Islamic Summit's previous session, to the Republic of Turkey, the incumbent Chair, and to the Republic of the Gambia, who will chair the Summit's next session.

I also want to place on record my grateful appreciation to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, the Seat Country, for the unfailing support to the Organization, and for all the facilitation in helping the OIC receive delegations from outside the Kingdom, organize meetings and perform all its activities and programs.

*Excellencies,  
Ladies and gentlemen,*

I wish to commend the long-standing relations between the Organization of Islamic Cooperation and the United Nations, and I highly value the efforts of UN Secretary General António Guterres. We are very gratified to have among us Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs, Ms Rosemary DiCarlo.

Our close ties of cooperation are established through coordination and synergy between our agencies for world peace and security, our common goal being to drive prosperity, progress and development for our Member States.

Here I wish to express my deep satisfaction at the outcome of the OIC-UN consultative meetings that took place recently in Rabat, in July 2018.

Let me in this context stress that the OIC is fully aware of the importance of collective action among organizations, regionally and worldwide. And that's why we at the OIC are making every effort to boost our partnerships with fellow organizations, such as the League of Arab States, the Cooperation Council for the Arab States of the Gulf, and the European Union. We have built together sustainable mechanisms for dialogue and cooperation, in association with the African Union, with which we wish to have much stronger ties.

*Ladies and gentlemen,*

Today's meeting takes place at a time when the Muslim world is facing a myriad of challenges. This compels us to work together to enhance our joint Islamic action and coordinate positions on issues of concern to all of us, especially those placed on the agenda of the current session of the United Nations General Assembly. Chief among these issues is the Palestinian cause. This year we remember the 49<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the burning of Al-Masjid Al-Aqsa, and still we are sad to see the Holy Mosque and Al-Quds Al-Sharif suffer from ongoing violations and attempts to undermine the Arab and Islamic identity in Palestine and alter its Islamic and Christian sanctities.

We reaffirm the importance to combined effort to fully implement the resolutions passed by the OIC, especially the resolution and Final Communiqué of the Islamic Summit's sixth and seventh extraordinary sessions, both held in Istanbul, Republic of Turkey, in December 2017 and May 2018, respectively. We equally stress the

significance of the outcome of the Executive Committee's meeting, which convened here in New York, alongside the current session of the UN General Assembly.

Bringing together the international will, in an earnest endeavor to advance the peace process, and to find a just solution to the Palestinian cause, in keeping with the international law and the relevant UN resolutions, and along with the Arab Peace Initiative and the vision of a two-State solution, will effectively help meet the aspirations of the Palestinian people and fulfil their right to establish an independent and sovereign State of their own, along the 4 June 1967 borders, with east al-Quds as its capital.

And I would like here to express the OIC's regret over the US decision to stop funding UNRWA, which will make the economic, social and human situation of Palestinian refugees even more precarious. We therefore reemphasize that refugees are the responsibility of the whole international community, and we call for an increase in funding for UNRWA to maintain its mandate to aid the Palestinian refugees, whose plight has worsened recently.

### ***Excellencies,***

We are working hard today, both countries and organizations, to confront the phenomenon of terrorism and violent extremism, and ours is an earnest desire to boost cooperation between all parties involved in the combat against terrorism and its underlying causes.

In this regard, the OIC will, alongside current UNGA meetings, sign a memorandum of understanding with the UN on combating terrorism and extremism. The MoU will pave the way for continuous cooperation on this crucial issue. Indeed, we look forward to greater cooperation with the international community to develop a comprehensive approach addressing security, economic, cultural, social and intellectual dimensions of the matter. But I have to say, in the same time, the OIC is working in earnest to counter erroneous and malicious ideas about Islam. The OIC Sawt al-Hikmah (Voice of Wisdom) Center, located within the General Secretariat, has as a mission to help establish a tolerant discourse via social media, debunk extremist narrative online, blazon forth the word of reason and wisdom, and disseminate the values of moderation and tolerance inherent to the Islamic religion. The OIC "Wisdom's Voice" Centre also aims to refute suspicions about Islam, to sensitize the youth to the risk of joining criminal, *takfiri* "expiatory" groups and to guide them to the best ways to serve their countries and promote the public good.

Also significant, the OIC remains attentive to the needs of Muslims in Europe and the West, through its Contact Groups on Muslims abroad. The Organization is also

actively engaged in countering Islamophobia; and the role of the OIC Islamophobia Observatory, located at the General Secretary, is no mean feat.

***Ladies and gentlemen,***

The old and still vexing plight of the Rohingya refugees wants a real solution, amid a complex situation in Myanmar. Our intensive meetings in New York certainly form an appropriate platform to exhaustively discuss this crisis. In fact, members of the international community present here need to take urgent action, and to seize this opportunity to apply enough pressure to put an end to the ordeal of these refugees, and to ensure refugee return to their villages in Myanmar. The call is also for exerting real effort to restore Rohingya refugee rights to citizenship and dignity.

And I want to seize this opportunity to gratefully thank the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia for taking the initiative to convene a meeting on the issue of the Rohingya, on the sidelines of the UN General Assembly's current session. The level of personalities in attendance resonated the significance of the event. Equal thanks go to all Member States that have contributed to easing the plight of the Rohingyas. We set great store by our Member States and the international community to further support this issue.

The OIC is serious in its concern for the conditions of Muslim communities in the Philippines, Thailand and elsewhere. It focuses on building the basis for dialogue and consultation with the governments of these countries, to further improve conditions for their Muslim citizens and continue to recognize for them the right to unrestricted worship, in keeping with the laws in force in their places of residence, and to provide greater space for them to exercise fully their citizenship rights, committed to serving the communities to which they belong and to provide the best possible reflection of the true image of Islam and Muslims.

We also reaffirm our support for the people of Kosovo and for peace and stability in the Balkans, and we call on those countries that have not yet recognized Kosovo to do so, in support of the country's free will and sovereign right.

***Excellencies,***

Last summer the OIC witnessed a remarkable, historic event. With the unstinting help and great support of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, the Seat Country, the OIC held the International Ulema Conference for Peace and Security in Afghanistan, as a precursor to comprehensive, national reconciliation.

We are all the more grateful to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, as this conference, held on its initiative, was the fruit of long work and continuous effort to help people in Afghanistan come to common ground and steer their country into a safe harbor. Important and practical recommendations have transpired which we hope will very soon be translated into action.

On the Iraqi issue, and in a bid to foster national reconciliation between all components of Iraqi society, the OIC in coordination with the Iraqi government held the Iraqi elite conference, in preparation for the National Iraqi Reconciliation (Makkah 2) Conference. Held in Baghdad in December 2017, the preparatory conference made recommendations for submission to the Makkah 2 meeting, to be held following the formation of the new Iraqi government.

### ***Excellencies,***

The OIC, your organization, is deeply engaged in countless issues of great importance, mainly women, family and children. A number of projects and programs have been put in place to attend to the needs of these constituent elements of society, with particular focus on women's empowerment and women's advancement.

Let it be noted, here, that the OIC is organizing a ministerial conference on Women's Role in Development for the OIC Member States. The Republic of Burkina Faso has gracefully offered to play host to this event in late November this year.

Besides, the OIC will not relent in its effort to implement its Ten-year Plan of Action (2015-2025), which was adopted at the Islamic Summit level. The Plan of Action forms the framework within which are carried out sector-specific activities, in the areas of peace, security, counterterrorism, anti-extremism, anti-poverty, human rights promotion, higher education, Science and Technology, and cultural exchange between the Member States. In this regard, the OIC welcomes the initiative by the Arab Republic of Egypt to host, next October, the OIC Ministerial Conference on Water. We also congratulate the UAE for the Dubai EXPO 2020 which we are confident will be a landmark festival of trade opportunities and innovation. Therefore, I urge upon all governments, companies and international institutions to partake in this major world event.

Our Organization is moving into its 49<sup>th</sup> year of existence, only one year from our half century on the international arena.

We are preparing for the celebration, September next year, of the Organization's golden jubilee (50<sup>th</sup> anniversary). We hope this anniversary will mark a monumental turning point in the history of the OIC, a catalyst for greater Islamic solidarity, and

an opportunity to carry forward reform for the Organization, in conformity with the resolutions of the Council of Foreign Ministers. The ultimate aim is to enable the OIC to rise up to present challenges and cope with all changes.

I wish you all success in your endeavors, and to Allah we turn for guidance and assistance.

*Wassalamu alaikum warahmatu Allah wabarakatuh.*