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**ORIGINAL: ARABIC**

**DAMASCUS DECLARATION  
ADOPTED BY  
THE THIRTY-SIXTH SESSION OF THE  
OIC COUNCIL OF FOREIGN MINISTERS  
SESSION FOR  
(ENHANCING ISLAMIC SOLIDARITY)**

**DAMASCUS – SYRIAN ARAB REPUBLIC  
23-25 MAY 2009**

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We, Foreign Ministers and Heads of Delegation of OIC Member States, participating in the Thirty-sixth Session of the Council of Foreign Ministers (CFM), meeting in Damascus under the motto “*For Enhancing Islamic Solidarity*”, at a time when Islamic States are facing substantial political and cultural challenges that prompt them to search for a way to coordinate their efforts to confront these challenges, and to achieve an effective presence in the international arena to enable them to protect their interests and preserve their identity; declare the following:

On the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the establishment of the OIC, which was directly instigated by the burning of Al-Aqsa Mosque, we emphasize the necessity for the OIC to assume an effective role in protecting the interests and rights of Muslim States and peoples; reiterate our firm commitment towards the aims, objectives and principles of our Organization; reemphasize our support to it so as to be able to confront, in the best manner, the challenges facing the Ummah in the twenty-first century; and acknowledge that effective cooperation and coordination among the Islamic States are essential to ensure the good of our Muslim peoples.

The past few years were replete with extensive political and economic developments that have engulfed and destabilized the world. The Islamic States were directly impacted by their repercussions, either as a party or target, especially that those developments coincided with a feverish campaign against Islam, aimed at distorting its image as a civilizational and doctrinal reference of our peoples, and against Muslims in general in order to malign them. The theme of “*Clash of Civilizations*”, whose practical manifestation has been to stigmatize Islam and Muslims with terrorism, has been adopted as axiomatic in policy-making, thus causing deep frustration in Muslim psyche. But it is incumbent on us not to put the responsibility for the Muslim condition solely on the shoulders of others; we bear the major part of the responsibility. We need to have a sincere and direct pause with ourselves in order to discover the necessary stance and method of action that open for us horizons of a better future.

Our faith calls on us to unite and avoid disunity; to shun encapsulation and maintain positive openness. In order to succeed we have to concentrate on developing the reality, and search for the means of power. We are living today in a world of the powerful where there is no place for the weak. Power is acquired and not granted. We can gain

power through strengthening our economic relations and break existing barriers in this regard, as well as by way of mastering science, knowledge; by political cooperation and mutual support of our national causes. Indeed possessing the will and determination is a basic condition for developing and advancing our reality. This will must be enhanced by the insistence on resolving our problems ourselves, as well as by the ability to develop visions and implementing plans for the complex issues which we are facing.

Our Organization was basically established to defend Al-Quds Al-Shareef which is today facing a critical situation that threatens to obliterate its spiritual character and historical diversity. Added to that are the construction of a racist separation wall in the West Bank, the inhuman blockade imposed on Gaza, the intensification of land grabbing and settlement building. All of this requires us all not compensate Israel over its crimes but to ensure that any development in relations – if any exist at all – is tied to the concrete expression of Israel’s commitment to just and comprehensive peace, which would guarantee the restoration of legitimate national rights and withdrawal from occupied lands in Palestine, Golan and Southern Lebanon.

We have all cooperated to confront terrorism as a dangerous global phenomenon. This however does not mean that we should allow it to be exploited, made an open manipulation tool to call resistance a form of terrorism and to resort to intimidation and browbeating under the title “Security in Combating Terrorism”. Terrorism, to be sure, is not a security issue but rather an ideological one with its political, security and even cultural manifestations. Combating it therefore cannot be by fighting the manifestations but by addressing its core and causes.

The journey of the Organization of the Islamic Conference over the past forty years and the critical phase in which the world finds itself today underscore the importance of enhancing the solidarity of our States to confront the current political and economic developments and the viability of our Organization and its awareness of the challenges facing its Member States, in consonance with the Ten-Year Programme of Action. In this regard, we express our gratitude to the Secretary General, Professor Ekmeleddin Ihsanoglu, for his sincere efforts to enhance the important role of the Organization of the Islamic Conference at the global level.

We express our deep appreciation to His Excellency President Bashar Al Assad, President of the Syrian Arab Republic and to the people and Government of the Syrian Arab Republic for their efforts to ensure the success of the 36<sup>th</sup> Session of the Council of Foreign Affairs.