



**Speech of  
The Secretary General  
To  
The 7<sup>th</sup> Session of the Ministerial Conference on Women's Role in  
the Development of OIC Member States, Themed "Empowering  
Women in the Member States: Challenges and Prospects"**

***Ougadougou- Burkina Faso***  
**30 November – 1 December 2018**  
**(22-23 Rabiul Awal, 1440 H)**

**Your Excellency, President Marc Christian Kabore**

**Madam Sika Kabore, First Lady of Burkina Faso**

**Her Excellency Mrs. Helen Mary Laurence Elbodo Marshal,**

**Minister of Women's Affairs, National Solidarity and the Family in Burkina Faso**

**Her Excellency Dr. Zahra Zumurrud Saljuk, Minister of Family, Labour and Social Services in the Republic of Turkey, Chairman of the Sixth Session of the Conference on Women's Role in the Development of Member States**

**Honourable Ministers**

**Honourable Heads of Delegations**

**Distinguished Participants,**

**Assalamu Alaykom wa-Rahmatullahi wa-Barakatuh**

It is for me a distinct pleasure to address this inaugural session of the Seventh Ministerial Conference on Women's Role in the Development of the OIC Member States.

Allow me first to express my deepest appreciation to the State of Burkina Faso, its President, its Government and its people, for their gracious hosting of this session and for the diligent efforts and multiple arrangements taken for its success, along with my profound and cordial gratitude for the warm welcome and generous hospitality with which all participating delegations have been surrounded since we first set foot on the soil of this most amiable and hospitable country.

I wish also to welcome all the participating delegations, their Excellencies the ministers, the heads of delegations, the representatives of the various OIC institutions, and the OIC's guests who have all gathered today as a manifestation of their commitment to the agenda of empowering women and advancing women's role all across the Islamic world and even worldwide, and as a contribution to energizing women's full participation in the developmental process to evolve a more prosperous and more stable future for societies. May I here also pay tribute to the efforts put in by Turkey during its chairmanship of the Sixth session of this conference and its particular efforts in the area of women's empowerment as concretely evidenced by its hosting of the first and sixth sessions of the conference on women's

developmental role in the Member States, held respectively in 2006 and 2016, in addition to its generous support for the activities of the Consultative Committee on Women.

**Your Excellency, Mr. President**

**Excellencies**

**Ladies and Gentlemen**

Burkina Faso's hosting of this session which is being held for the first time in one of the OIC Member States from the African Group, after the adoption of the amended text of the OPAW plan at the sixth session in 2016, gives proof of the effective role it has been playing in supporting the OIC's activities and also of its interest in the issues relevant to women's promotion; and we hope that all other Member States are in no way different, since the developmental equation in the Member States cannot be complete without activating women's role and without women being endowed with the necessary skills, capacities, opportunities and support for them to play their role in the development of their societies in synchrony with the role they so competently play in the development of their families; and we are all aware of the size of the sacrifices and efforts undertaken by women in our societies and institutions, for which we are all duly appreciative.

Within the framework of the follow-up of the implementation of the OIC plan for women's promotion, the General Secretariat has held, in coordination with the Islamic Development Bank (IDB) and SESRIC a workshop for the consolidation of the capacities of national institutions involved in the empowerment of women in the Member States on 17-18 December 2018. Also, SESRIC has prepared, in coordination with the General Secretariat, a guiding principles document for the standardization of parameters in the preparation of national progress reports on the plan's execution and submission to the General Secretariat for the purpose of interim evaluation of the efforts of the OIC and its institutions in supporting Member States in women's empowerment and in implementing of OPAW, since a follow-up of the said plan's implementation is one of the mainstays of a successful integration of women in any encompassing developmental process in the Member States.

The orientation document has been reviewed and discussed by the senior officials and we hope to see it adopted and to see the necessary procedures examined for its effective use by the national institutions concerned with women's empowerment in the Member States, and to witness a collective action to incorporate the plan's objectives in the Member States policies and strategies for the benefit of women's empowerment and advancement.

Further, and within the OIC's efforts in the domain of women's economic empowerment, the Islamic Chamber of Commerce, Industry and Agriculture has prepared a proposal for a Family Bank with a view to provide funding for fledgeling enterprises and for families and young women entrepreneurs under Sharia-compatible terms, as successfully applied in Sudan. This proposal has been submitted and discussed at the senior officials' meeting, and the General Secretariat looks to your present meeting to issue a resolution to have the proposal circulated to the various Member States, particularly the Sahel countries where women are facing difficult circumstances due to the crises and harsh climatic conditions.

**Your Excellency, Mr. President**

**Excellencies**

**Ladies and Gentlemen**

The Sixth session of the ministerial conference on women's role in development approved the establishment of the Consultative Committee within the framework of the conference, to act as a consultative mechanism that is comprised of women experts that provide consultancy concerning the challenges and obstacles standing in the way of women's promotion and empowerment in the Member States. The Consultative Committee has already held three meetings respectively in May 2017 in Istanbul, in December 2017 at the OIC General Secretariat's headquarters, and in October 2018 again in Istanbul; and reports about the results of those meetings have been circulated to the Member States.

As you are all aware, the Council of Foreign Ministers adopted at its 44<sup>th</sup> session held in Abidjan, Cote d' Ivoire, in July 2017, the establishment of an OIC Award for Women's Achievements, as a token of appreciation for women's contributions and in support of the role of women assumed in the Member States' development process. The relevant resolution requested the General Secretariat to prepare a concept paper on the Award and to submit it to the permanent representatives; and the General Secretariat has indeed prepared the requested paper in coordination with the relevant OIC organs and institutions and had it submitted to the permanent representatives in September 2018.

Also, within the framework of the implementation of the resolutions issued by the Council of Foreign Ministers in respect to this Award, the General Secretariat has addressed the Member States and sought nominations. It also submitted the received nominations to the Consultative Committee on women in its capacity as the selection committee according to the provisions of the CFM resolution, and the Consultative Committee has recommended a list to be submitted to your present conference for an appropriate decision.

**Your Excellency, Mr. President**

**Excellencies**

**Ladies and Gentlemen**

Islamic history boasts a whole array of qualitative contributions on the part of women for the advancement of Muslim societies, and to this day and age many of our societies have a broad record of exemplary generous women that contribute efficiently to the development of their countries whenever they have a chance and wherever obstacles and hurdles are removed from their way; and also, the number of women holding leadership positions is rising in reputed institutions. Women also have come to assume positions at the head of governments, political parties, parliaments, as well as government and non-government institutions and organs, and they play an effective role in that regard.

Yet, and despite the significant progress achieved by women and the role they play, still a substantial proportion of women in our Member States continue to face harsh conditions and major deprivation of their fundamental rights. This is a segment that is in dire and urgent need for solutions that are commensurate with challenges and the ordeal they endure at all levels. And hence the importance of the theme carefully chosen by Burkina Faso for the seventh session, namely “Women’s Empowerment in the Member States: Challenges and Prospects”. It is our hope that the present session will constitute a watershed that would respond to women’s aspirations with their various situations and tracks in the Member States, such as to lead to a positive equation and more effective efforts in addressing and resolving women’s issues. It is our hope, too, that the resolutions will help realize the interests of women who are still suffering from marginalization, poverty and violence, under armed conflicts or under occupation.

Proceeding from this perspective, the present session’s agenda bears a particular importance for the achievement of the various goals laid out by our leaders to consolidate women’s role in the socio-economic development of the OIC Member States.

I would like here to pay a special tribute to the senior officials’ meeting for its efforts in preparing for the ministerial conference. We also appreciate the in-depth deliberations and the qualitative presentations made, which will, as we hope, give the required momentum to our collective effort in favour of women’s empowerment.

**Excellency Mr. President**

**Excellencies**

**Ladies and Gentlemen**

The OIC greatly relies on the role of the Organization for Women’s Development as a contribution to women’s empowerment and to the activation of women’s role in the developmental process in Member States. I have, in this respect, addressed messages to the

foreign ministers of those Member States that have not ratified the Organization's statute, and urged them to expedite their ratification process so as to allow the Organization to start its activities and to build up its role in the area of women's empowerment. And, thanks to our efforts in close cooperation with Member States, we are at the General Secretariat now on the verge of achieving this major goal, with only three additional states needed for us to bring you the good news that the quorum has been achieved for the Organization to start assuming its role.

On the other hand, and in implementation of the CFM resolutions issued by the 43<sup>rd</sup> session of the Council of Foreign Ministers and which request the Secretary general to designate goodwill female ambassadors in the area of women's empowerment, Her Royal Highness, Princess Lalla Meriem, daughter of King Hassan II, has been designated as a goodwill ambassador in the area of the defense of family values, the marriage institution, and combating underage marriage, on 8 March 2018 in Marrakech, Kingdom of Morocco. And the General Secretariat will see in future to the designation of more goodwill female ambassadors to popularize the Organization's efforts in favour of women's empowerment, child welfare, and the preservation of the marriage and family institutions as pivotal mainstays for the comprehensive development process in the Member States.

**Excellency Mr President**

**Excellencies**

**Ladies and Gentlemen**

Before I conclude, I would like to invite the Member States to work together and cooperate for the implementation of our resolutions and the achievement of our aspirations to the benefit of women. The Member States need to support the General Secretariat with human and material resources so that it may fulfill its role in this vital sphere of priority value. It will not be able to carry through this appreciated load of resolutions if the Member States fail to benefit of us their support, since a failure in implementing the resolutions would compromise our Organization's credibility and image. It would not be sensible to adopt resolutions on subjects chosen and agreed upon by the Member States and then fail to provide the required means and resources for their implementation.

The success of this conference will be the fruit of your dedicated efforts, your commitment to the consolidation of women's role, your effective contribution to overcoming difficulties, to availing greater opportunities for women and to the follow up of the implementation of the resolutions that you will come out with.

**May our present meeting be crowned with full success.**

**Wassalamu Alaykom wa-Rahmatullahi wa-Barakatuh**