



SPEECH OF
HIS EXCELLENCY PROF. EKMELEDDIN IHSANOGLU
SECRETARY GENERAL OF THE
ORGANISATION OF ISLAMIC COOPERATION
TO THE
ANNUAL COORDINATION MEETING OF
THE COUNCIL OF FOREIGN MINISTERS
OF THE OIC MEMBER STATES

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Honourable Ministers,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is my distinct pleasure to welcome you all as we are gathered at this “Annual Coordination Meeting of the Council of Foreign Ministers of the OIC Member States”, on the sidelines of the 67th Session of the United Nations General Assembly.

Our last regular Council of the OIC Foreign Ministers (CFM) meeting was held in Astana chaired by H E Foreign Minister Yerzhan Kazikhanov, under the auspices and able leadership of H.E. President Nursultan Nazarbayev. To the President, the government and people of Kazakhstan go our sincere gratitude and appreciation for the brilliant organization of the 38th session of CFM they so aptly managed.

Honourable Ministers,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Our meeting today provides an opportunity to examine and exchange views on the various issues inscribed on the agenda of the UN General Assembly that bear on our interests. As customary, our meeting also offers us a good occasion to explore the ways and means of enhancing the collective performance of the OIC group here.

But before I proceed any further, I would like to briefly inform you about some major events that took place in the last two months and carry some importance to our work.

First and foremost, I would like to convey our most sincere appreciation and gratitude to the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques King Abdullah Ben Abdelaziz for his lofty initiative to convene the Fourth Extraordinary Islamic Summit Conference held in Makkah Al Mukarramah, a few weeks ago. The Summit highlighted the concept of Islamic Solidarity, the importance of Joint Islamic Action, and the need to restoring unity and harmony in the Muslim world. It also sought to address the sources of differences and conflicts in the Muslim world, and called for dialogue among Islamic school of thought. The initiative of the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques also contained the establishment of a Centre for dialogue among Islamic Mezhab.

Mr. Chairman

I am happy to report to you that as we are in the General Secretariat engaged in daily contacts with our mission in New York, and through it, with the OIC Group, we can testify to the fact that the performance of our Group has proven to be efficient and potent. By closely surveying and keeping track of the voting pattern of our Member States on important issues that require a special attention within the framework of Islamic solidarity, we are today able to affirm that we have indeed managed to create a substantially strong voting power in the United Nations System to be reckoned with.

The various coordination meetings of the representatives of our Member States have been throughout the year instrumental in consolidating the cohesion of our Group. To be sure, for our Group to remain as strong, and hopefully stronger, as well as respected by the others, we also need to foster our unity and to constantly nurture our unison. Likewise, we have to be very careful and vigilant on how to use our strong position wisely in a way that will help us to scale up our benefits without alienating others.

Another indication of our newly acquired strength at the global level is what we have achieved at the UN Human Rights Council, when we convinced the Council to unanimously pass Resolution No. 16/18 which will help us defend Muslim rights and shield Islam and Muslims from discrimination on the basis of their religion.

One operative paragraph of this landmark resolution stipulates that [Quote “condemns any advocacy of religious hatred that constitutes incitement to discrimination, hostility or violence, whether it involves the use of print, audio-visual or electronic media or any other means” unquote. Eight relevant points which I proposed emphasizing the thrust of the above mentioned resolution which is Quote “adopting measures to criminalize incitement to imminent violence based on religion or belief” unquote -were also adopted by the UN Human Rights Council by consensus. We believe, this new instrument with its eight points will go a long way in legally protecting Muslims from attack or discrimination on the basis of religion or culture.

In order to ensure the implementation of this Resolution by our European and American partners, we launched another initiative. This initiative in the form of a high level meeting was co-chaired by the Secretary General of the OIC representing the Muslim world, and the U.S. Secretary of State representing America, and was attended by the High Representative of the EU Foreign Policy representing Europe. The meeting came to be known as “Istanbul Process”. A second meeting of this process was held at the U.S. State Department in Washington D.C. A third meeting is expected to be held in London to signify Europe’s involvement in the process.

The key objective of this process is to encourage the implementation of the 16/18 Resolution as well as to adopt necessary and required measures to ensure the respect of our religious beliefs, our sacred symbols, personalities and scriptures.

Honourable Ministers,

Nonetheless, if we look at the incidents that took place in the past weeks, we should feel alarmed that whatever our achievements are in this regard, they are being challenged by a very small group of misguided people on both sides. The Middle East and North Africa region has witnessed in the last few weeks a wave of violent agitation against U.S. diplomatic missions. The protestations were provoked by the production of a film about which the US administration at the highest level announced that it had nothing to do with it.

In the aftermath of the production of the said film, “*Innocence of Muslims*” that denigrates Islam and the Prophet Mohammad (Peace be upon Him) and the violent repercussions that followed causing numerous deaths, destruction of property, and culminating in the killing of the United States Ambassador in Libya, the question of Islamophobia and negative profiling of religion has come again strongly to the forefront and dominated the attention of Muslims, the world over.

I strongly condemned the tragic killing of the American officials and the attacks on the US diplomatic missions in Cairo because I do believe that expressing anger or outrage should by no means get to killing people or destroying property. We did not stop at

issuing statements on the OIC level only. We went further and issued joint statement along with EU, Arab League and the African Union condemning strongly both instigators and perpetrators of violence and calling for calm and restraint.

If anything, these incidents demonstrate the serious consequences of abusing the principle of freedom of expression at one side and the abuse of right to demonstration on the other side. These recent incidents brought again to the fore the dire need for respecting religions and their symbols.

Many Muslim quarters called for the adoption of a United Nations resolution denouncing the stigmatization of religion. In order to respond to these calls and ensure the implementation of the 8 point plan under Human Rights Council Resolution 16/18 and General Assembly Resolution 66/167, the OIC General Secretariat feels the need to develop measures to ensure filling the gaps of implementation of these Resolutions by national authorities. What is urgently needed now is the mobilization of the collective resources of all Member States, equipped with a well-considered comprehensive strategy, capable of defeating this hate campaign.

Having said the above, let me tell you that the exercises we have been involved in since 2005 starting immediately after the cartoon crisis and the successes and failures we have at the diplomatic level, would not produce any substantive result until and unless we address the root causes of this problem which can be described in a single word as 'ignorance'. In order to stop and break the vicious circle of hate mongering actions and violent uncalled for reactions we must relate our initiatives to the mass. I believe through only two ways we can address this 'ignorance' effectively i.e. by reaching out to the mass through firstly encouraging the mass Media to vigorously and diligently disseminate the true image of religion and beliefs focusing on their basic tenets of peace and tolerance and not on actions taken by some misguided people in the name of those religions or faiths. Secondly, we all should recognize that we all are the part of one single human race and possess same human values. Today's world is the result of the accumulated experiences of successive civilizations. Thus we should exert our all-out efforts to

develop an education system for our next generation promoting better understanding of these facts.

Honourable Ministers,

The establishment of the OIC Independent Permanent Human Rights Commission (IPHRC) constitutes a most important development. The Commission was launched at its first formal session in Jakarta where it elected a lady as its first Chairperson. The Commission's work would help mainstream the human rights dimension across the programs and activities of OIC. The Commission has met twice in Jakarta and Ankara this year and the Commissioners successfully met the first statutory stipulation of finalizing the rules of procedure in time for submission to the CFM in Djibouti for endorsement. We are actually working within an integrated approach aimed at enhancing cooperation among Member States in mainstreaming the Human Rights perspective in the activities of the Organization.

Honourable Ministers,

Distinguished Delegates,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Palestine's acceptance as a full-fledged member of UNESCO is an international recognition of the Palestinian cultural identity and it was possible because of joint cooperation among the OIC Group, regional groups and friendly States. I thank all for their cooperation.

Israel, recently, has escalated its illegal practices aimed at isolating the holy city of Al-Quds and altering its cultural and demographic character. In the face of this Israeli illegal practices, which targets the past, present and future of the holy city of Al-Quds, I would like to reiterate the appeal that I have launched at the conference 'In Defense of Al-Quds' held last February in Doha for an immediate and responsible action and to implement the strategic plan to develop the vital sectors in the city of Al-Quds. The blockade imposed by Israel on the Gaza Strip is illegal as well as a collective punishment of a civilian population, with serious humanitarian repercussions. It is our duty to work seriously

toward lifting this unjust blockade, ending the suffering of the Palestinian people and facilitating the reconstruction of the Gaza strip.

Over the past three decades, the Myanmar's Rohingya Muslim citizens have been subjected to gross violation of human rights, killing, and forced displacements by Myanmar security forces. Renewed violence against Rohingya Muslims on June 3, 2012 caused great alarm and concern to the OIC.

The United Nations declared that the Rohingya people are an ethnic religious and linguistic minority from Western Burma, and that the practices of Myanmar government vis-à-vis the Rohingya population violate international norms by stripping Rohingyas unjustly of their rights to a citizenship. In defence to the Muslim Minority in Rohingya we have managed to put pressure to bear on the government of Myanmar to restore the dignity and rights of the Muslim population of Rohingya, through many sources among which is the UN Human Rights Council at the United Nations.

We have also dispatched an OIC fact finding mission to Myanmar that succeeded in convincing Myanmar government to open an OIC humanitarian office in Rangoon. They have also invited me to visit Myanmar. I would like to add that I wish to visit as soon as the position of the government of Myanmar and their willingness to remedy the fundamental rights issues of the Rohingya Muslims are made clear through accepting signing a joint statement or communiqué to be issued in conjunction with my visit.

Honourable Ministers,

Distinguished Delegates

In a nutshell, I can say that our positions on different issues in the world affairs have a direct bearing on the Muslim world and have enlisted greater respect by the world's community. Today, our proactive actions have brought us to the position of a global actor with constructive approach to cooperation with other international actors.

On the other hand, the OIC with its forward looking vision for the twenty first century enshrined in its Ten Year Program of Action and the Charter has established itself as a trusted agent of moderation and modernization in the Muslim World.

The onus is now on all of us to continue to enhance these two roles of our Organization for an enlightened future of our own people.

I thank you.