

OIC/ACM-2011/SG-SP.

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**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**

**UNITED NATIONS HEADQUARTERS
NEW YORK**

23 SEPTEMBER 2011

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*Honorable Ministers,
Excellencies, Heads of delegation,*

It is a distinct honor for me to welcome you to this Annual Coordination Meeting held on the sidelines of the 66th Session of the United Nations General Assembly.

Our last regular Council of Minister (CFM) meeting was convened in Astana, under the Chairmanship of H.E. the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Kazakhstan, Mr. Yerzhan Kh. Kazykhanov. To him and to the Government and People of Kazakhstan we extend our sincere gratitude and appreciation for so brilliantly organizing the 38th session of CFM. Astana meeting has witnessed great achievements in terms of the ongoing reform process in the OIC, including the establishment of the Independent Commission of Human Rights, the adoption of the rules for the admission of observers, as well as the approval of the new name and emblem for the Organization.

*Honorable Ministers,
Ladies and Gentlemen,*

As we assemble today in this Annual Coordination Meeting of the OIC Foreign Ministers, I would like to reiterate the importance of this annual meeting convened at this international platform of the UN. Indeed, we value our engagement and cooperation with the UN and welcome the qualification of the UN-OIC relations as `strategic partnership` by the UN Secretary General. Our gathering seeks fundamentally to coordinate and harmonize our positions on the issues inscribed on the UN General Assembly's agenda, particularly those that carry an immediate bearing on the Muslim World.

It is here on this rostrum that the world's far-reaching decisions and policies are debated and adopted. This fact behooves us to put aside any divergent policy positions we may hold, and align our stands in a spirit of unity, and Islamic solidarity. The voting pattern of the OIC Member States in international fora, and UN meetings in particular represents a real test for our solidarity. The more unity we project through our collective stands, the weightier our clout shall be on the international scene.

The remarkable progress the OIC has achieved in recent years is due mainly to the fact that we managed to tap into the voting power of our Member States in international fora through injecting to this voting process responsibility and discipline. In order for us to continue benefitting from this power and attain our goals, we need to sustain this consensual trend, and in so doing we will ensure that our just causes and concerns are duly respected. In this context, I would like to thank the OIC Groups in both New York and Geneva and their coordinators for their excellent and dedicated efforts.

*Honorable Ministers,
Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen*

The question of Palestine continues to arouse the concern and apprehension of the international community. Its ramifications seriously endanger international peace and security, as Israel continues to insist on ignoring international laws and defying, with impunity, United Nations resolutions, and the will of international community. These violations are daily occurrences. They vary from consolidating Israel's grip on the Palestinian occupied territory, through uprooting its indigenous populations, confiscating their lands and properties and implanting foreign settlers in these lands.

In Jerusalem, Israel is engaged in a frenzy of activities to judaize this city, to the detriment of the rich historic heritage and rights of the Muslims and Christians of the world. These illegal and outrageous practices were declared illegal by the International Court of Justice in its advisory opinion, and have jeopardized peace efforts in the Middle East and pushed the peace process to a stalemate.

Given this protracted agony and frustration, the Palestinians have full right and justification to resort to the United Nations to exercise their inalienable right to self-determination and to establish their independent state on the Palestinian territory, within the lines of 4 June, 1967, with East Jerusalem as its capital. The OIC urges all countries to support the Palestinian bid for the UN Membership and recognize the State of Palestine on the borders of 1967.

Honorable Ministers,

Some parts of the Muslim World are going through an era of upheavals and convulsions of epoch-making proportions, springing from an awakening claiming real participation in public life under good governance, accountability, rule of law and transparency. The recent events have both shaken the world and provoked the admiration of many, as the people seems determined to live their epoch and time, and free themselves from the shackles of the past centuries.

It is fair to say that the demands voiced throughout these uprisings are long overdue, and should have been embraced long ago. Let us not forget that these demands were the core of what the OIC Third Extraordinary Summit held in Makkah Al Mukarramah adopted unanimously in 2005. That Extraordinary Summit engaged in a dual process of self-criticism and looking to the future. The Summit identified the weaknesses plaguing the Muslim World and prescribed the remedy for that untenable situation in the form of the Ten-Year Programme of Action which lays forth a road map to good governance, rule of law, and corruption-free societies.

While we congratulate legitimate aspirations of the peoples in Tunisia, Egypt, and Libya, we hope that wisdom and reason will prevail elsewhere and that peaceful solutions to the present stalemates be reached as prescribed in the OIC Ten-Year Programme of Action.

***Honorable Ministers,
Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen,***

As regards Libya, the OIC was perhaps the first international organization to declare openly its sympathy with the suffering of the Libyan people as they started their revolution against the former regime. At the same time, the OIC voiced publicly its support for the struggle of the Libyan people to claim democracy, human rights and the rule of law at the humanitarian level, the OIC dispatched a number of humanitarian missions to help the Libyan people in the plight they were facing. Throughout the events in Libya, it's worth noting that the OIC has not suspended the membership of Libya, taking into consideration the continuity of its statehood. Today, we reaffirm the full-fledged membership of Libya to the OIC under the leadership of the Transitional National Council.

The situation in Syria is a source of great concern. It is worth noting that from the first days of the eruption of the current events in Syria, we called for the

avoidance of violence and to resort to dialogue. Let me reiterate our firm position to oppose any foreign intervention in Syria. It is worth noting that we issued multiple statements and dispatched a special envoy urging restraint and the implementation of the reforms declared by the highest authorities. Given these circumstances and based on the guidelines enshrined in the OIC Ten Years Programme of Action, I would like to once more call for restraint and to actively engage in genuine dialogue with all patriotic forces in Syria with a view to reaching peaceful settlement on reforms to be agreed upon by the Syrian people. Being convinced that dialogue is the only safe option through which the overwhelming crisis could be contained such as to spare Syria the danger of slipping towards a deeper crisis and such as to avert the swelling international anger at this kind of approach, I hereby express once again OIC's readiness to play a constructive role in this framework.

On Afghanistan, we are all saddened and shocked with the assassination of President Rabbani. He was a man of wisdom and a great scholar. On this occasion, allow me to convey our deepest condolences to the Government and people of Afghanistan. Having heard this shocking development, I immediately issued a statement and condemned this brutal act. On that occasion, I also reaffirmed the OIC's support to the Government and people of Afghanistan in their quest to live in peace, security and stability. Taking this opportunity, I would like to reiterate the OIC's commitment to convene a Conference of Ulama in the next few months to contribute to the reconciliation process in Afghanistan. Meanwhile, in order to enhance regional cooperation, I would also like to recommend the inclusion of Afghanistan in the OIC Action Plan on Central Asia where there are many economic projects related to the development of the region as a whole.

The critical problems befallen Somalia were unfortunately accentuated recently by the adverse factors of drought, which caused conditions of severe famine and serious food shortages. As part of the efforts, we are mobilized to follow up the humanitarian situation in Somalia, and established a liaison office in March this year in Mogadishu to channel our assistance. Upon Turkey's call, the OIC Executive Committee convened an open-ended emergency meeting in Istanbul on 17 August 2011 at the Foreign Ministers' level where member states pledged around 350 million dollars as a relief to help the famine-stricken Somali people. In addition, a high-level OIC delegation led by my deputy for Humanitarian Affairs, visited Mogadishu on 6 September 2011 to take stock of the programmes implemented by the OIC Relief Coalition for Somalia in Mogadishu camps and in the southern parts of the country. The OIC and its

allies in humanitarian action are working to assist the Somali Government through a three-phase plan, namely: urgent relief, the return of displaced persons and refugees to their villages and homes, and finally the reconstruction phase. Allow me to appeal to all Member States to kindly consider helping in alleviating the effects of this devastating disasters we are facing. We believe that mere humanitarian response is not the right answer. What counts is to help the Somali people to acquire the means to allow them to reach a degree of sustained development.

*Honorable Ministers,
Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen,*

A major daunting challenge that we are confronting is the scourge of Islamophobia. It is symbolized by the scourge of vilification and distortion of the image of our faith.

Looking at this issue dispassionately and objectively, we see that we are facing a new form of xenophobia and racism, that is not limited to the right wing extremism elements in the west as it used to be before, but has permeated many ordinary citizens. This trend is gaining strength day by day, and unless we act quickly against it now and take proactive measures to stem this tide, the dangerous implication of this scourge will be beyond repair. In this regard, I was engaged in numerous activities with western governments and high officials as well as with academicians, religious and civil society activists. In the meetings I had with the Western leaders, many of them shared my concerns and took strong positions against Islamophobia. Unfortunately, these efforts appear to have made little impact. Our fears proved true by the recent terrible massacre in Norway that claimed many young innocent lives at the hands of a single man consumed by hatred of Muslims.

Honorable Ministers,

In the midst of this depressing situation, a ray of hope is emerging at the international front. The consensual adoption of March 2011 UN Human Rights Council Resolution 16/18 on combating intolerance and discrimination based on religion and belief, has brought an optimism. This resolution is considered a new achievement that we need to build on in the future. To that end, I have co-chaired a Ministerial level meeting together with Secretary Clinton last July in Istanbul on the implementation this particular Resolution. Due to the high level of engagement and the interest shown to that gathering, we consider that the meeting was considered as a breakthrough. To this end, the statement issued after the deliberations calls upon relevant stakeholders throughout the world to go beyond mere rhetoric and to take seriously the call

for actions set forth in resolution 16/18, which contributes to strengthening the foundation of tolerance and respect for religious diversity.

It is to be recalled that the passing of this resolution was made possible based on the suggestions I have put forward during the last session of the UN Human Rights Council which resulted in a consensus among the OIC, the EU and the US. The end result in the eye of the observers is that this resolution will pave the way to overcome the false divide, which pits religion against freedom expression.

Distinguished Ministers,

The OIC's Commission on Human Rights has been further reinforced by the recent establishment of the Independent Permanent Human Rights Commission. The 18 members of the Commission were elected by the 38th CFM and will meet in Jeddah on October 16 for their orientation meeting. Whereas, the first official session of the Commission to be held in Jakarta shortly will be the starting point for the Commission to begin its work towards fulfilling their mandate as stated in the Statute.

Excellencies,

In my short remarks, I tried to highlight some of the recent issues of concern. Without doubt, there are number of other political issues which concerns our Member States. We are committed to address and resolve those issues within our responsibility and capacity. However, allow me to underline the fact that the effectiveness of an intergovernmental organization is measured by the support of its own members. To this end, I would like to appeal to all Member States to maintain their valuable support to this Organization in order to live up to the expectations of the Muslims throughout the world.

In concluding my remarks, allow me to underline the fact that with our unshakeable solidarity and our common and unified action, we have managed in the past few years to score good results. I trust that we will keep the same spirit in reclaiming our rights and defending our causes. With your help and active cooperation, and with the grace of Almighty God, we will be able to rise to this challenge.

Thank you for your attention.
