

**EIGHTH ISLAMIC CONFERENCE OF
INFORMATION MINISTERS**

KINGDOM OF MOROCCO

Rabat, 27-28 January 2009

RABAT DECLARATION

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The 8th Islamic Conference of Information Ministers, held in Rabat, Kingdom of Morocco, on 27-28 January 2009;

- Aware of the extent of the challenges facing the Islamic world in the information field, and which must be addressed to ensure an appropriate place for the Muslim communities in a world that lives according to the rhythm of successive developments in the field of information, communication and information technologies, and the wide variety of media used;
- Aware of the vital tasks entrusted to information, as an effective tool to promote the civilisational edifice of peoples, and follow development changes and modernization, progress and democratization projects;
- Believing in the importance of the plans and programs through which the OIC seeks to contribute to the development of its information system;
- In view of the fact that information and communication technology is becoming one of the most prominent expressions of global competition, and one of the most influential tools to shape national and international public opinion;
- Feeling the growing risks posed by the hostile campaigns against Islam and Muslims in some international media, which aim to distort the reality of our religion based on moderation and tolerance;
- Considering the necessity to convey the civilizational message of the Islamic Ummah, based on dialogue, coexistence and cohabitation, which calls for sound argumentation, in order to establish an international community that is founded on justice, peace and stability.
- Considering the role of information in supporting the just causes of the Islamic Ummah, particularly the Palestinian cause and the cause of Al-Quds Al-Sharif.
- Drawing inspiration from the message addressed by His Majesty Mohammed VI, King of Morocco, Chairman of the Al-Quds Committee, to the participants in the Conference, in which His Majesty called upon them to strive doubly hard to enable the media in OIC Member States to improve their performance, taking into account pluralism and diversity, to act responsibly and to observe ethical standards. His Majesty further stressed that the implementation of the

objectives of the Organization, from a media perspective, requires the formulation of an objective, constantly evolving message, the adoption of modern means of communication and the preparation of efficient plans to make the voice of the Islamic world heard, explain its stances, uphold its just causes and enable it to contribute to cultural dialogue in ways which serve the lofty ideals of mankind.

- And besides the decisions and recommendations of the final communiqué of this session, which are meant to promote joint Islamic action in the field of information, and strengthen the information presence of OIC;

The Islamic Conference of Information Ministers:

1- Hails the remarkable role of media in the Islamic countries in revealing the despicable Israeli aggression against the Palestinian people in the Gaza strip, and urges them to pursue their efforts to highlight and back the legitimate struggle of the Palestinian people, until the establishment of an independent state with Al-Quds Al-Sharif as capital, and the withdrawal of the Israeli occupying force from the Arab territories.

It also decries the arbitrary harassment perpetrated by Israel against journalists to prevent them from covering the killing of humans and the destruction of homes and trees, especially during the latest Zionist attack against Gaza, stressing the need that Arab media outlets expose the Judaisation schemes carried out by Israel in Al-Quds Al-Charif, and the repeated violations of sanctities in this occupied city.

It also calls on media in the Islamic countries to support all endeavors aiming to achieve the national unity of the Palestinian people, and avoid any information practice that could heighten disputes and divisions within its ranks.

2- Considers that winning the challenges of development and progress in the Member States requires endeavors to acquire new information technology, expand its use, and step up the pace to engage into the society of information and knowledge, provide all the necessary tools to achieve this goal, and endow the executives and competences of the Member States in the field of information and communication with advanced training and refresh programs.

3- Confirms the need to counter, also through media, all forms of extremism, racism, hatred and intolerance, considering the role of media in advancing the democratic construction of societies, upholding the values of citizenship through education, spreading the culture of human rights and the mechanisms of good governance, and promoting the practices of transparency and accountability. To achieve this goal, information in Islamic countries should become a platform for discussing issues related to the management of public affairs, and for securing the rights of access to information and to public media and all its services, without exclusion nor discrimination.

4-Stresses the role played by the Islamic media in firmly and efficiently confronting the media campaigns that seek to undermine Islamic sanctities, spread hatred and prejudice against Muslims, associate Islam, the religion of peace and mercy, with violence and terrorism, a phenomenon that we utterly reject and vehemently denounce.

5-Commends the constant information action undertaken by the Secretary-General of the Organization of the Islamic Conference and his sustained relations with the media inside and outside the Islamic world. This contributed, to a large extent, to making the Islamic voice heard in the international arena. The Conference endorses the current reforms introduced in the Islamic information system and calls for pursuing action to enable the International Islamic News Agency and the Islamic Broadcasting Union to enjoy the required efficiency and effectiveness and to further support the information department at the OIC General Secretariat in serving the causes of the Islamic world.

6-Considers that efforts to restore the image of Islam in foreign media outlets, display its lofty values, its rich cultural heritage and ancestral civilization, and highlight its contribution in the long course of human history and its creative achievements, can only be fruitful by a wise media interaction with the outer world through adequate message and appropriate communication mechanisms. This requires auto-qualification of the media in Islamic countries and pooling their efforts and expertise for the success of the joint action programs, within the framework of the OIC bodies. It also requires opening up to the orientations in favour of the dialogue of cultures, religions and civilizations, while insisting in this respect to recall the prominent status enjoyed by the Initiative of King Abdullah Bin Abdul Aziz, the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques, King of Saudi Arabia.

7- Stresses the need to question oneself with the necessary sincerity and strictness with the aim to hoist the Islamic media discourse to the required level, and avoid the traps of theories trying to lure the Islamic world into the logic of clashes of civilisations and of cultures, besides the dangers of narrow confessional categorization. It also stresses the need to consider the conflict with Israel as a political conflict to end the occupation of Arab lands, and retrieve the inalienable and legitimate rights of the Palestinian people, rather than a religious or ethnic conflict.

8- Calls for making the media in the Member Countries serve the truth and express the concerns of the citizens of Islamic countries and have a high sense of professionalism and objectivity, within the framework of the full respect of the principles of opinion diversity and openness, while clinging to the tenants of the Ummah and ensuring permanently a wide practice of liberty with a high sense of responsibility.

Rabat – Kingdom of Morocco
28 January 2009