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**Report of the  
Senior Officials Preparatory Meeting for the Eighth Session of the Ministerial  
Conference of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation on Women in Member States  
Session of “Preserving the Gains of Gender Equality and Empowering Women  
Under COVID-19 and Beyond”**

**Cairo - Arab Republic of Egypt**

**6 7-July 2021**

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1. The Senior Officials Preparatory Meeting for the Eighth Session of the Ministerial Conference of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation for Women in the Member States was held in Cairo, Arab Republic of Egypt, on Tuesday and Wednesday 6-7 July 2021 (26-27 Dhu al-Qa’dah 1442 AH).

**Opening session:**

2. The meeting was opened with a recitation of *Ayat* from the Holy Qur’an. Thereafter, a statement was delivered by Mr. Seydou Soulama, the representative of Her Excellency the Minister of Women, National Solidarity, Family and Humanitarian Action in Burkina Faso, Ms. Helen Marie Lawrence Elbodo/Marshall, in Burkina Faso, Chairperson of the seventh session of the OIC Ministerial Conference on Women in Member States.
3. In his statement, the representative of the Minister reviewed the activities carried out during the chairmanship of Burkina Faso during the last session in cooperation with the OIC General Secretariat and other relevant organs and institutions. He expressed his thanks to the governments of Member States, the General Secretariat, the relevant OIC organs and institutions and the Women Advisory Council for their contributions to the implementation of the resolutions taken by the seventh session of the Conference. He also expressed his country’s thanks to the government of the Arab Republic of Egypt and congratulated it for hosting the eighth session of the Ministerial Conference on Women.
4. 4. His Excellency Ambassador Mahmoud Afifi, Assistant Foreign Minister for Social Affairs and Human Rights in the Arab Republic of Egypt made the opening remarks. He spoke about choosing the theme of the eighth session, “Preserving the gains of gender equality and empowering women in light of the COVID-19 and beyond”. He expressed his country’s gratitude to the Member States for the trust they placed in Egypt, by accepting the offer to host this session. He also expressed Egypt’s thanks to Burkina Faso for chairing the seventh session of the Ministerial Conference on Women.
5. He also pointed out that the current session was held with the world suffering from the social, health and economic repercussions resulting from the outbreak of COVID-19, provided a platform for discussing ways to confront these repercussions from a gender and human rights perspective. The Conference also furnished evidence of the keen interest of Member States in issues of women development, whatever the circumstances, as the development equation in Member States remained incomplete without activating the role of women and providing them with the skills, capabilities, opportunities, and support necessary to carry out their role in the development of society on an equal basis with men.
6. Ambassador Afifi pointed out that fifteen years after the adoption of the first OIC plan of action for the Advancement of Women (OPAW) in Cairo, Member States created an appropriate legal and institutional environment for recognizing the basic rights of women, hence the importance of finding ways to preserve the gains of Member States in gender equality and justice. In conclusion, Ambassador Afifi welcomed the various delegations to Cairo and called on them to ensure the smooth running and success of the meeting.

7. His Excellency Ambassador Tariq Ali Bakheet, Assistant Secretary-General for Humanitarian, Cultural and Social Affairs, spoke on behalf of the OIC General Secretariat. He welcomed the selection by Egypt of the theme of the conference, noting that the session was held under the social, economic and health repercussions of COVID-19 for vulnerable groups, in particular women and girls. He indicated that the conference provided an opportunity to search for ways to preserve the gains of gender equality, justice and respect for women rights and empowerment in Member States in these difficult times and beyond. It also offered an opportunity to study ways to enhance the role of women in the development of the societies of OIC Member States and promote the values of justice, equality and equal opportunities guaranteed by our true Islamic religion for women. The Assistant Secretary-General called on all participants to exert more efforts to translate respect for women rights into a reality, especially for women living in situations of war or displacement where they were exposed to all forms of violence. Finally, he urged Member States to intensify efforts towards empowering these women, noting that no development could be achieved in any country without empowering women.
8. The Assistant Secretary-General indicated that the Statute of Women Development Organization, was established under Resolution No. 4/36-A issued by the thirty-sixth session of the Council of Foreign Ministers, held in Damascus in 2009, attained the quorum for entry into force, in July 2020, and that the organization started to carry out its tasks. He called on OIC Member States that had not yet ratified the statute of the Organization for the Development of Women to expeditiously finalize the ratification procedures and to join this specialized organization, which was hoped to contribute to the empowerment of women and activate their role in the development process in OIC countries.

Election of the Bureau:

9. The meeting unanimously elected the Arab Republic of Egypt as the Chairman of the Senior Officials Meeting. Other members of the Bureau were as follows:

Vice Chairperson:

- The Republic of Niger
- The Republic of the Maldives
- State of Palestine

Rapporteur:

- Burkina Faso

10. The meeting adopted its agenda and work program (Annex No. 1)
11. The meeting formed an open-ended drafting committee to discuss the draft resolutions submitted to the Conference prior to their submission to the Senior Officials Meeting
12. The meeting expressed its gratitude and congratulations to the Arab Republic of Egypt for assuming the Chairmanship of the conference and wished it success:
13. Dr Amina al-Hajri, Director-General of Cultural, Social and Family Affairs reviewed a report on its efforts to follow up the implementation of the decisions issued by the Seventh Ministerial Conference on Women in coordination with the OIC relevant organs and institutions and in cooperation with Member States.

14. The OIC Women Advisory Council reviewed a report on its activities since the holding of the Seventh Session of the Ministerial Conference on Women in the Member States in Burkina Faso in December 2018.
15. The meeting followed with interest the presentations made by the OIC subsidiary organs and specialized and affiliated institutions on their efforts to support Member States in the area of women empowerment and in implementing the resolutions issued by the Seventh Ministerial Conference on Women and their future work plans, which dealt with various aspects of the session's topic as follows:
  - a. Study of the Independent Permanent Human Rights Commission (IPHRC) on justice and gender equality from an Islamic perspective and human rights, and on the efforts made by the Commission in the field of women development advancement
  - b. The IDB policy on empowering women in the member countries.
  - c. OIC Women and Development Report 2021: 'OIC Women and Development Report 2021: Progress towards the Implementation of the OIC Plan of Action for the Advancement of Women (OPAAW)' (SESRIC)
  - d. E-Marketing Training Program for Women Heads of Institutions of the Islamic Center for the Development of Trade (ICDT).
  - e. Efforts of the Research Center in Islamic History, Arts and Culture (IRCICA) in the field of women empowerment.
  - f. Efforts of the Islamic Solidarity Fund (ISF) in financing projects aimed at women empowerment in OIC Member States.
  - g. Efforts of the Union of OIC News Agencies (UNA) in empowering women in the media and promoting their cause and training female media professionals in news agencies.
  - h. The status of promoting the family bank and microfinance project in the five Sahel Group countries by the Islamic Chamber of Commerce, Industry and Agriculture.
  - i. ISESCO efforts to support Member States in the field of women empowerment.
16. The meeting took note of the status of ratification of the WDO statute within the OIC framework. It noted that 22 states had signed this statute and that 15 states had ratified it. Thus, the statute entered into force in July 2020 and that the organization has embarked on carrying out its business. The meeting congratulated Ambassador Ihab Fawzy from the Arab Republic of Egypt on his appointment as Deputy Executive Director of the organization and wished him success.
17. The meeting listened with interest to the presentations made by 17 OIC Member States regarding its efforts in the field of women empowerment and the implementation of the OPAAW.
18. The participants expressed their appreciation for the contents of the presentations made and emphasized the quality and importance of the topics developed as well as the programs and activities undertaken by the various relevant OIC organs and institution in order to support and enhance the empowerment of women in the Member States.

They also called on Member States to share experiences and good practices developed in their countries in the field of women empowerment.

19. The meeting expressed its appreciation for the documents to be submitted to the conference, namely:
  - a. Concept paper on the status of the OIC Gender Policy prepared by the Women Advisory Council in coordination with the General Secretariat and SESRIC;
  - b. The study on gender justice and equality from an Islamic and human rights perspective prepared by the (IPHRC);
  - c. OIC Women and Development Report 2021: Progress towards the Implementation of the OIC Plan of Action for the Advancement of Women (OPAAW)' (SESRIC).
20. The meeting discussed the formation of the Steering Committee for the Study and Evaluation of National Reports submitted on OPAW implementation. It was agreed to form an open-ended meeting of government experts to establish the Steering Committee, its working mechanism, and its functions.

Draft Resolutions:

21. The Drafting Committee established by the Senior Officials Meeting reviewed and adopted the outcome of its deliberations on the following draft resolutions and recommended them for adoption by the Eighth Ministerial Conference on Women (Annex No. 2):
  1. Draft Resolution No. 1/8-W (Eighth Ministerial Conference on Women) On Development of the Palestinian Women (Proposed by the State of Palestine)
  2. Draft Resolution No. 2/8-W (Eighth Ministerial Conference on Women) On Women Protection and Empowerment in Member States for Resilience and Recovery under the Pandemic and Exceptional Circumstances (Proposed by the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates, Bahrain, and Kuwait)
  3. Draft Resolution No. 3/8-W (Eighth Ministerial Conference on Women) On Ensuring Sustainability of Gains in Women's Empowerment and Gender Equality in OIC Member States (Proposed by Burkina Faso)
  4. Draft Resolution No. 4/8-W (Eighth Ministerial Conference on Women) On Developing a Gender Policy for the OIC (Proposed by Burkina Faso)
  5. Draft Resolution No. 5/8-W (Eighth Ministerial Conference on Women) On Mainstreaming the Gender Perspective in COVID-19 Response and Recovery Strategies and Policies in OIC Member States (Proposed by the Arab Republic of Egypt, the People's Republic of Bangladesh, and Burkina Faso)
  6. Draft Resolution No. 6/8-W (Eighth Ministerial Conference on Women) On Women Advisory Council of OIC Ministerial Council on Women (Proposed by Burkina Faso)
  7. Draft Resolution No. 7/8-W (Eighth Ministerial Conference on Women) On Promoting Economic Empowerment of Women (Proposed by the Arab Republic of Egypt and the Republic of Gabon)

8. Draft Resolution No. 8/8-W on Directing of Religious and Media Discourse towards Protection and Promotion of Women's Rights (Proposed by the Arab Republic of Egypt)
9. Draft Resolution No. 9/8-W on Coordinating Gender Equality Mainstreaming throughout the OIC System (Proposed by the Arab Republic of Egypt)
10. Draft Resolution No. 10/8-W (Eighth Ministerial Conference on Women) On Promoting Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) Education for Women and Girls (Proposed by the Republic of Turkey)
11. Draft Resolution No. 11/8-W (Eighth Ministerial Conference on Women) On Joint Action to Support and Empower the Refugee and Displaced Women (Proposed by the Republic of Turkey)
12. Draft Resolution No. 12/8-W (Eighth Ministerial Conference on Women) On OIC Awards on Women Achievement (Proposed by the Republic of Turkey)
13. Draft Resolution No. 14/8 (Eighth Ministerial Conference on Women) on the Date and Venue of the Ninth Session of the Ministerial Conference on Women.

Draft agenda and work program of the Ministerial Conference:

22. The meeting adopted the two draft agenda and work program for the Eighth Ministerial Conference on Women (Annex No. 3) and recommended their submission to the Ministerial Meeting.

Date and venue of the ninth session of the conference:

23. The meeting welcomed the offer made by the Islamic Republic of Pakistan to host the ninth session of the Conference in 2023. It requested the General Secretariat to follow up on the matter to finalize the date of the session in cooperation with Pakistan and to inform Member States there on.
24. The meeting took note of the offer made by the Republic of Mali ...to host the tenth session of the OIC Ministerial Conference on Women.
25. The meeting expressed thanks and appreciation to the government and people of the Arab Republic of Egypt for the excellent organization of the conference and for their generous hospitality. It commended the professionalism in which the work of the conference was carried out, and the role played by the OIC General Secretariat to ensure its success.

Cairo, 7 July 2021.