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**REPORT  
OF THE TWELFTH SESSION OF THE STANDING COMMITTEE  
ON INFORMATION AND CULTURAL AFFAIRS(COMIAC)**

*(Session on : What Role for Muslim Youth in Promoting Islamic Values of  
Peace, Solidarity and Tolerance?)*

**Dakar, Republic of Senegal  
2-3 Rabi' Al-Thani 1445H  
17-18 October 2023**

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OF THE TWELFTH SESSION OF THE STANDING COMMITTEE  
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1. At the kind invitation of the Government of the Republic of Senegal, the 12<sup>th</sup> session of the Standing Committee on Information and Cultural Affairs (COMIAC) was held in Dakar, Republic of Senegal, on Tuesday and Wednesday, 17 and 18 October 2023 (2-3 Rabi' Al-Thani 1445H).

**I. Opening Session**

2. The session was opened with a beautiful recitation of verses from the Holy Qur'an.
3. His Excellency Ambassador Tarig Ali Bakheet, Assistant Secretary General for Humanitarian, Cultural and Social Affairs, delivered a speech on behalf of the Secretary General of the OIC, H.E. Mr. Hissein Brahim Taha, in which he expressed his sincere thanks and deep gratitude to the President of the Republic of Senegal and his Government and people for their warm welcome, successful organization and generous hospitality. He then commended the efforts of the Standing Committee on Information and Cultural Affairs (COMIAC), under the chairmanship of His Excellency Mr. Macky Sall, President of the Republic of Senegal, and reiterated his support for him and for COMIAC's programs and activities, before highlighting the new dynamism it is currently experiencing. The current session, he said, is taking place against the backdrop of dangerous developments in the occupied Palestinian territories, including the barbaric aggression against the Gaza Strip, with its toll of Palestinian civilian casualties and destruction of infrastructure, as well as the blockade imposed on the Gaza Strip and the attempts to expel its inhabitants, which amount to crimes against humanity. In light of this situation, Ambassador Bakheet called for the mobilization of political, legal and media efforts to achieve a just solution to the Palestinian cause in accordance with international law and relevant UN resolutions. He also stressed the role of COMIAC in protecting the Islamic heritage of Al-Quds Al-Sharif and preserving its Arab-Islamic character. The unprecedented technological revolution that has led to the development of media and social networks, he said, requires COMIAC to accompany it by developing its working methods in the information and cultural sectors with the sole aim of addressing the challenges facing the Islamic world, particularly those related to Islamophobia, hate speech, and racist and populist tendencies. In conclusion, he commended the efforts of the General Secretariat of the OIC to strengthen cultural activities through the organization of festivals and cultural weeks in Member States, and announced that these efforts would be continued in the coming years, in coordination with the COMIAC Bureau and the relevant institutions of the Organization, in order to implement the recommendations and resolutions on cultural and media affairs issued by the various Islamic Summits and Conferences.
4. For his part, President Macky Sall, President of the Republic of Senegal and Chairman of the Standing Committee on Information and Cultural Affairs (COMIAC), delivered a speech in which he welcomed the participation of Member States in this session, before reviewing the challenges facing the Islamic world in

general and the Palestinian people in particular. Expressing his concern over the unbearable tragedy following the resumption of hostilities in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, he, in his capacity as Chairman of the UN Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, called once again for de-escalation and reaffirmed his commitment to a peaceful settlement of the conflict based on the two-State solution, which would allow the establishment of an independent Palestinian State with East Al-Quds as its capital. He also expressed his condemnation of the phenomenon of Islamophobia and the repetitive improper use of copies of the Holy Quran, calling on the Islamic Ummah to redouble its efforts to curtail such phenomena and defend Islamic values based on mutual respect, tolerance, cooperation and solidarity. He also emphasized the crucial role of the youth in addressing the challenges of sustainable development and the eradication of poverty and social inequality, in countering extremist currents and in spreading the principles of moderate Islam. He furthermore emphasized the need to build the capacities of young people, provide them with quality education, and offer them training opportunities and technology-based educational pathways. He called on the OIC and its various institutions and partners to enhance cooperation in the fields of culture and information and to share successful experiences in order to achieve the goals set by Member States and to convey a positive image of Islam as a force for peace, coexistence and dialogue among civilizations and nations. The Senegalese President concluded his remarks by expressing his gratitude and appreciation to the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques King Salman bin Abdelaziz Al-Saoud and HRH Crown Prince Mohammed Bin Salman Al-Saoud for their valuable and assiduous support to the Organization of Islamic Cooperation and the Standing Committee on Information and Cultural Affairs.

5. The Committee adopted the agenda and programme of work, as well as the report of the meeting of Senior Officials, held in Dakar on 16 October 2023 (1 Rabi' Thani 1445 H).
6. The Bureau of the 12<sup>th</sup> Session was elected as follows:
 

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|-----------------------------|------------|
| - Republic of Senegal       | Chair      |
| - Kingdom of Saudi Arabia   | Vice Chair |
| - Islamic Republic of Iran. | Vice Chair |
| - State of Palestine        | Vice Chair |
| - Brunei Darussalam.        | Rapporteur |

## II. Working Session

7. The Committee noted with satisfaction the reports prepared by the General Secretariat on the various matters submitted to the present session.
8. Heads of delegation and representatives of Member States took the floor to express their strong condemnation of the horrific and recurrent killings of unarmed Palestinians in their territories, in the Gaza Strip and in the rest of the Occupied Palestinian Territories, resulting in a high number of deaths and injuries. The participants also expressed their deep concern at the growing phenomenon of Islamophobia through violent attacks against Islam and its religious symbols. They

then paid warm tribute to the OIC Secretary General for his commendable efforts and firm commitment to counter these campaigns, stressing the urgent need for Member States and all people of goodwill in the information and cultural sectors to support these efforts. Speakers emphasized the need to use reasoning, argumentation and logic to combat dissenting opinions, which would not preclude taking vigorous stands against parties that seek to harm Islam. Participants stressed the need to maintain dialogue with the Western world to prove that Islam is a religion of tolerance and moderation, while emphasizing this dialogue in the media of Member States to refute allegations that the media in Islamic countries do not respect freedom of expression, which is sacred but not absolute. Speakers stressed the need to focus on the positive aspects of culture, Islamic heritage and the radiant image of Islamic civilization in its various manifestations and expressions, using innovative media and new means of information.

9. The participants reiterated their support for the cause of Palestine and Al-Quds and urged all OIC Member States and institutions to provide all forms of assistance to the State of Palestine to help it develop the capacities of its media and cultural institutions and to share with it programmes and experiences in this field. They welcomed the initiatives taken by the countries that have signed agreements with the State of Palestine in this regard.
10. The participants called on the COMIAC to effectively combat Islamophobia through its media and cultural initiatives to promote Islamic values of tolerance and peaceful coexistence among different cultures, religions and beliefs, in cooperation and coordination with relevant OIC institutions.
11. The meeting underscored the importance of the theme chosen for the 12<sup>th</sup> session of the COMIAC, namely: "*What Role for Muslim Youth in Promoting Islamic Values of Peace, Solidarity and Tolerance?*", which highlights the compelling need to support the youth of the Islamic world by adopting innovative training and apprenticeship programmes to develop their skills and abilities and enable them to contribute effectively to the progress and prosperity of the Islamic Ummah and achieve development in their national societies.
12. The Participants welcomed the role played by the OIC in promoting culture as a lever for economic development and as a job-creating sector for young people and women by assisting Member States in their specific cultural development initiatives and organizing festivals and cultural weeks, in addition to promoting and facilitating the circulation of goods and the mobility of cultural operators within Member States.
13. The Meeting recommended the establishment of a Follow-up Committee to the 12<sup>th</sup> Session of the COMIAC, mandated to monitor the implementation of the COMIAC resolutions and composed as follows :
  - Representative of the Chairman of COMIAC, President of the Republic of Senegal;
  - Representative of the President of the Islamic Summit Conference (Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, then Republic of Gambia);

- Representative of the OIC Headquarters Country (Kingdom of Saudi Arabia);
- Two representatives of the Arab Group (Islamic Republic of Mauritania and Kingdom of Saudi Arabia);
- Two representatives of the African Group (Republic of Sierra Leone and Republic of Cameroon);
- Two representatives of the Asian Group (Islamic Republic of Iran and Brunei Darussalam);
- Representative of the Secretary General of the OIC; and
- Representative of the COMIAC National Coordination Office.

### **III. Closing session :**

14. At the end of the general debate, the Standing Committee on Information and Cultural Affairs (COMIAC) adopted the Resolutions on Cultural Affairs and Information, together with the Report of the Meeting.
15. The participants welcomed the efforts of the General Secretariat of the OIC and the Government of Senegal to reactivate the work of the Standing Committee on Information and Cultural Affairs and to support its Coordination Office in Dakar, thereby enabling it to play an effective pioneering role in the follow-up of activities and resolutions related to information and cultural affairs.
16. The participants also expressed their gratitude and appreciation to the Republic of Senegal, the President, the Government and the people, for the excellent organization of the twelfth session of the COMIAC and for the successful results achieved.

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