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**REPORT OF
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ON
CULTURAL, SOCIAL AND FAMILY AFFAIRS
PRESENTED TO THE
36TH SESSION OF ISLAMIC COMMISSION FOR ECONOMIC,
CULTURAL AND SOCIAL AFFAIRS**

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INTRODUCTION

The issues and new challenges falling in the spheres of Cultural, Social and Family Affairs within the framework of the OIC Ten Year Program of Action (TYPOA) and the amended OIC Charter impacted on the course of activities of the General Secretariat and its relevant bodies to devote more attention and committed efforts. I have been following-up these issues with sense of priority. The OIC General Secretariat's activities were supplemented by those of the OIC subsidiary organs, specialized agencies and affiliated bodies.

The unabated rise in Islamophobia and discrimination against Muslims in the western societies has reached alarming levels and poses a great threat to international peace and security. The phenomenon has found its place in the agenda of the right wing political parties in Europe and also has become more visible in the USA recently. However, its encouraging to note that the OIC was able to engage with its partners in the West including governments and civil society institutions in sensitizing the international community to the dangers of the phenomenon. To bridge the divide and remove mistrust and misunderstanding, the OIC's activities and programs were focused on strengthening the engagement and intercultural, intercivilizational and interfaith dialogue between the Muslim world and the West which included some policymakers, leaders and reputed institutions. Preservation and promotion of the Islamic cultural heritage always remained high in the agenda and programs of the OIC.

Family is the basic nucleus of the society and forms an important institution in the life of a human being. Women as an important component of our society are faced with a host of daunting challenges and issues to bring about their overall development. In this context, the OIC has been focusing on some key areas of the development and empowerment of women, at various levels with its partners in order to promote the status of women and protect their rights. Similarly, the OIC is committed to bring children and youth into the mainstream of the society and make sure that they are empowered with education and conducive conditions for their access to the basic needs are created.

The present report starts with a review of the items of the chapter on the General Cultural and Social Matters, such as Islamophobia, Dialogue among Civilizations, Establishment of a Unified Hijri Calendar and Rapprochement among Muslim Sects. Then the chapter on the Protection of Islamic Sanctities deals with the Protection of International Islamic Heritage, as well as Mosques and Holy Places and related issues.

The Chapter on the Family Affairs addresses the Role of Muslim Women in the Development of the Islamic Society, the Situation of the Child and Child-Care, and Cooperation on Youth Activities.

The Chapter on Islamic Centers provides updates activities of centers in Mali and Pakistan and on the project to establish an Islamic Center in Guinea Bissau, in addition to the Translation Institute in Khartoum and Project for the establishment of an Islamic Authority for the Holy Quran.

Lastly, I have devoted a Chapter to the Cultural Affairs of Palestine, which includes subjects such as the Educational Situation in the Palestinian Territories, Preserving the Civilizational Heritage of Al-Quds Al-Sharif, and the Teaching of the History and Geography of Palestine as Part of the Curriculum of the Member States.

The Report is hereby submitted to the 40th Session of the Council of Foreign Ministers.

GENERAL CULTURAL AND SOCIAL MATTERS

A. ISLAMOPHOBIA

Islamophobia continues to be a major challenge to the Ummah. The OIC Islamophobia Observatory since its inception, has been closely monitoring Islamophobic acts and these are reflected in the monthly reports posted in the OIC website. Our actions were not limited to just issuing statements but were followed up with diplomatic demarches and bilateral meetings with the government leaders of European countries and other actors.

I would like to mention here that the OIC Islamophobia Observatory has been successful in its efforts to sensitize the governments and civil society institutions in the west to the scourge of Islamophobia as a global issue that needs to be addressed by the International Community.

Our strategy in containing Islamophobia is: (i) to raise global awareness of the basic tenets of moderation and modernization in Islam; (ii) to sensitize the international community on the dangerous implications of the phenomenon of Islamophobia on the entire global community irrespective of religion, culture or state; (iii) to issue rejoinders and rebuttals on Islamophobic publications; and (iv) to condemn Islamophobic acts calling on the governments and authorities to take appropriate actions. To implement this strategy effectively we took upon ourselves to engage with Western governments and institutions where Islamophobia is most visible and rampant.

In my meetings with western political leaders, academics, opinion makers, media personalities as well as religious leaders, I made it a point to raise the issue of Islamophobia in my interactions. I have in particular engaged my counterparts in seminars and conferences to work together in working towards an historical reconciliation between Islam and Christianity as it happened between Judaism and Christianity.

We need to take some more effective measures at the political level and I propose that the issue of Islamophobia be included in the agenda of official bilateral meetings of the Member States with western countries. I believe that the my 08 points as framework of action, which were the basis for the successful adoption of the Human Rights Council Resolution 16/18 on *Combating intolerance, negative stereotyping and stigmatization of, and discrimination, incitement to violence, and violence against persons based on religion or belief*, had delivered an appropriate political message to the western countries on the necessity to reach a compromise on the need to common strategies in addressing various forms of intolerance and discrimination based on faith, religion, etc.

While political leaders and academics at conferences and seminars have expressed their concern on Islamophobia, there was, regretfully, little development on the ground to effectively contain the malaise. The primary reason for the situation is due to inadequate legal mechanisms to ensure responsible use of the right to freedom of expression. The situation was further accentuated by insufficient implementation of existing national and international instruments against incitement and provocation on religious grounds.

The OIC Observatory prepared and issued the 6th Annual Report on Islamophobia at this 40th CFM being held in Conakry. This report dwelt on the phenomenon of Islamophobia in depth besides collating the incidents of hatred, incitements and discrimination against Muslims and defamation of Islam and its sacred symbols. The Observatory which has been consistent in remaining alert to the rising trend of Islamophobia has noted an anti Islam and Muslim attitude in the agenda of the right wing political parties in Europe.

The mounting negative stereotyping and racial discrimination of Muslims in western societies could get even more intense in the days ahead. In 2010 I constituted the 1st Panel of Eminent Persons including Muslim jurists and Human Rights practitioners to look into the international legal aspects of the issue. Their deliberations in Istanbul lend a legal confidence to the OIC position on Islamophobia and combating defamation of religions. However, the release of the obnoxious film ‘The Innocent Muslims’ showed that the challenges were far from being fully addressed. In this regard, the OIC, in coordination with the host country of the 39th CFM, convened a Ministerial Brainstorming Session on “An OIC Approach for Combating Discrimination and Intolerance against Muslims”, with the participation of Foreign Ministers and delegates of OIC Member States. During this Session, a related Resolution was adopted, tasking the OIC to convene an Eminent Persons Panel to provide with legal advices on how to counter the issue of Islamophobia. The Panel met in Istanbul on 07-08 January 2013 and produced a set of recommendations that were submitted for consideration by the Head of State and Governments during the 12th Summit held in Cairo.

There have been some encouraging developments in the west when European countries and the US Government have taken certain measures against those involved in religious incitement and have taken initiatives to engage politically and culturally to bridge the gap between the West and the Muslims World. This constructive approach had an impact on the political leadership and other stakeholders in western governments and prompted them to distance themselves from the Islamophobes through official statements and public speeches. These however, were not enough in deterring those involved in the smear campaign against Islam and in discrimination against Muslims in societies.

During the period 2012/2013, some major Islamophobic incidents took place. The Observatory followed them and took necessary actions thereupon. The following are of major significance:

a) Funding of Islamophobic Propaganda

Following a six-month long investigative research project, the Center for American Progress released a 130-page report titled “Fear Inc.: The Roots of the Islamophobia Network in America” on 26 August 2011, which revealed that more than \$42 million from seven foundations over the past decade had helped fan the flames of anti-Muslim hate in America. The authors — Wajahat Ali, Eli Clifton, Matt Duss, Lee Fang, Scott Keyes, and Faiz Shakir — worked to expose the Islamophobia network in depth, name the major players, connect the dots, and trace the genesis of anti-Muslim propaganda.

b) Qur’an Burning in Afghanistan & Florida

On 22 February 2012, copies of the Quran and Islamic religious material, from the library that is used by inmates at the Bagram Air Base’s detention facility in Afghanistan, were burned by soldiers from the United States of America. International condemnation followed, and a series of protests took place, including domestic riots which caused several deaths and injuries. Protesters expressed sentiments against the United States, a country that had been witnessing growing anti-Muslim sentiments.

In a separate development, Dove World Outreach Center pastor Terry Jones 28 April 2012 burned copies of the Quran and an image depicting Muhammad in front of his church. Moments later, Gainesville Fire Rescue issued the church a citation for violating the city’s fire ordinances.

c) Geert Wilder's Book

The anti-Islam Dutch parliamentarian, Geert Wilders, published a book on 1st of May 2012 titled *Marked for Death: Islam's War against the West and Me*. It was nothing more than a reiteration of his well known agenda to incite hatred and intolerance to Muslims in western societies. In fact, the publication of the book was an ill-intended initiative on the part of Wilders to provoke the West against Islam and Muslims.

In this regard, a Spokesman of the OIC Islamophobia Observatory expressed dismay on the development, and reiterated that the new book is nothing but a repetition of Wilders' campaign of hate mongering against Islam and an abuse of his right of freedom of expression. His activities have been denounced and disavowed by the Dutch Government, Dutch Parliament, the European Parliament as well as the Council of Europe.

d) Other OIC activities related to Islamophobia

The OIC raised its concerns on Islamophobia with Western leaders and officials on several occasions.

The OIC organized a Workshop on *Media Misrepresentations of Islam and Muslims: the Search for Remedies*, held in Brussels on 15-16 February 2012

The OIC General Secretariat, as a partner of the UN Alliance of Civilizations Fellowship Programme, hosted in Jeddah 12 European & North American Fellows on 10 - 14 April 2012.

i) Human Rights Framework

The OIC has been taking a leading role at the United Nations Human Rights Council to bring the international community to adopt a common position on combating intolerance and incitement based on religion or belief. While addressing the Human Rights Council Session in September 2010, I proposed eight points enumerating some practical steps towards facilitating a consensus between the OIC and the Western Group.

As stated earlier, these eight points served the as the basis for the consensual adoption of the historic HRC Resolution 16/18. I however believed that the Resolution needed an implementation mechanism, and with this in mind, I co-chaired with the US Secretary of State Hilary Clinton a meeting in Istanbul on 15 July 2011, and participated by a number the Foreign Ministers of both the West and the OIC Member States. The Conference reiterated the importance of the implementation of the Resolution 16/18 in letter and spirit. However, this was not just any conference but a significant achievement given that it has probably put the first stone to pave the way for creating a legal mechanism on national as well as international level which would result into lessening the tension between the West and the Muslim World in terms of religion and faith. The joint statement of the co-chairs already is an expression of political will in this line.

This conference launched what came to be known as the "Istanbul Process" aimed at facilitating the implementation of 16/18, which has already been addressed in two separate meetings at the level of experts in Washington, December 2011, and London, December 2012. The approach embedded in resolution 16/18 forms the least common denominator and a consensual basis for further work. It was accordingly endorsed by the brainstorming session

on combating intolerance and discrimination against Muslims requesting the Secretary General to convene a Panel of Eminent Persons with a view to advising on the legal viability of the available options on this matter of vital concern to OIC. The Panel has been convened and its report would be presented to the SOM preparatory to the 12th Summit.

Establishment of an Independent Permanent Human Rights Commission (IPHRC), based on the mandate of the Ten-Year Programme of Action and the new OIC Charter, is a singularly significant landmark. The statute of the Commission was adopted during the 38th CFM held in Astana in June 2011 and entered into force following its adoption. The 38th CFM also elected 18 independent experts composing the Commission, which would constitute an important pillar of the ongoing process of reform at the OIC.

The IPHRC held 2 ordinary Sessions in the year 2012, in Jakarta, Indonesia, in February, and in Ankara, Turkey, in August respectively. The Rules of Procedures were adopted by the 39th CFM held in Djibouti in November 2012, allowing the Commission to be fully functional. The Commission has commenced its work on an efficient and positive note. Towards discharging the mandate of integrating into the international human rights circuit, the IPHRC Commissioners conducted two field visits to UN Institutions, respectively in Geneva and New York with a view to marketing the Commission, expanding its network, and looking for partnering within the other human rights mechanisms.

B. DIALOGUE AMONG CIVILIZATIONS

The OIC continued to give highest priority to dialogue among civilizations and cultures and that it stood ready to take up joint ventures with the any government in organizing workshops and conferences in this area. I reiterated the call for a historical reconciliation between Islam and Christianity as was done between Christianity and Judaism in past as one of the practical results for such a dialogue.

The initiative undertaken by the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques King Abdullah bin Abdul Aziz of Saudi Arabia on interfaith dialogue that was acclaimed globally marked a significant step forward in promotion of dialogue among civilizations. The establishment of the King Abdullah Bin Abdulaziz International Center for Interreligious and Intercultural Dialogue (KAICID) in Vienna was recognized and welcomed in the consensual adoption of the OIC sponsored UN General Assembly Resolution No 66/167 of 2011 and 2012. I participated in the inaugural ceremony of the Center in Vienna, Austria, on 26 November 2012 to underscore the OIC's strong commitment to combat religious intolerance through interfaith dialogue.

One of the important western actors to which the OIC has partnered in this area of dialogue among civilizations is the UN Initiative of Alliance of Civilizations (AoC), with which the OIC is playing an active role in furthering its cooperation. In this spirit, a MoU between the OIC and the AoC was signed on the sidelines of the 2nd AoC Global Forum held in Istanbul in April 2009, and as follow-up, during the 3rd AoC Global Forum, held in Rio de Janeiro in May 2010, I signed, on behalf of the OIC, with the AoC High Representative, President Sampaio, an Action Plan aimed at setting out joint projects and programmes to be implemented by the two institutions over the period from 2010 – 2012. In that context, many joint activities were held, including the hosting, in Jeddah, of 12 European & North American Fellows on 04-10 April 2012 within the UN Alliance of Civilizations Fellowship Programme. The following are activities related with the AoC:

The OIC participated in the 5th Annual Meeting of the Focal Points of the Alliance of Civilizations (AoC) Group of Friends, held in Tunis on 12-14 December 2012.

The OIC convened the *3rd Meeting of the AoC Focal Points of the OIC Member States*, hosted by the State of Kuwait on 12 January 2013.

A delegation of the OIC attended the *AoC Fifth Annual Forum*, in Vienna, Austria on 27-28 February 2013.

The OIC General Secretariat, as a partner of the UN Alliance of Civilizations Fellowship Programme, hosted in Jeddah 12 European & North American Fellows on 10-4 April 2012.

C. ESTABLISHMENT OF A UNIFIED HIJRI CALENDAR AND UNIFICATION OF ISLAMIC FESTIVALS

All the CFMS have considered this subject and resolutions adopted in this regard have called on all the Member States of the OIC to accede to the Ad-hoc Committee on the Unified Hijri Calendar emanating from the Istanbul Conference of 1978. The 8th Session of this Committee was held in Jeddah from 18 to 20 Rajab 1419H (7-9 November 1998) with the participation of the members of the previous committee in addition to the Islamic Republic of Iran, Chairman of the 8th Islamic Summit Conference (ISC), and the Arab Republic of Egypt, which took part in the meeting by providing a study on the project for an Islamic satellite to monitor the appearance of the new moon. The 10th Islamic Summit Conference in Putrajaya requested the Ad-hoc Committee to prepare during its 9th Session a Unified Hijri Calendar which Muslim countries would abide by on the basis of sighting the new moon before sunset and on condition the new moon waned after sunset in accordance with Makkah Al-Mukarramah Time (MMT) or any Muslim country with which Makkah Al-Mukarramah shares a sufficient part of the night to complete the Sharia sighting of the new moon by a specialized committee that would prepare this unified calendar.

The Egyptian Fatwa Institution (Dar Al-Ifta) in cooperation with the Cairo University and the Center for Studies and Consultations on Space Sciences has prepared the project for the Islamic satellite whose main function would be to sight the new moon in order to unify Islamic festivals at an estimated cost of USD 9 million. The Egyptian Fatwa Institution hoped that all the Member States and Islamic institutions and associations will contribute to covering this cost and supporting this institution of the Arab Republic of Egypt with the necessary funds so as to optimally implement the project.

The General Secretariat circulated the Note received from the Arab Republic of Egypt on the project of the Unification of the Hijri Calendar informing the Member States, in particular officials in charge of information, development and scientific research that the signature of the contract with the company in charge of implementing the project of the Islamic Satellite will take place in November 2009 and requesting the Member States willing to benefit from this project to send the following information to the Arab Republic of Egypt:

1. Number of reception stations which will be entrusted to receive data and photos of Hijri months moon and other astronomical phenomena, as well as information on environment pollution in every area.
2. Payment of € 200.000 to cover software costs for data and photos analysis.

I participated in the Joint Scientific Symposium on the Unification of the Hijri Calendar (Tunis, 11 June 2009) convened by the Ministry of Religious Affairs of Tunisia in coordination with

the OIC General Secretariat and International Islamic Fiqh Academy

I requested the International Islamic Fiqh Academy to consider the standardization of the Hijri Calendar, which will reflect the unity of Muslims during the feasts and celebrations. The International Islamic Fiqh Academy provided us with a working paper on the subject on 1 November 2009. Preparations are underway to hold a meeting of the Scholars and astronomers preparatory to the grand conference of Scholars from the member states. The mechanism for these conferences has to be worked out.

In my statement issued on the occasion of the Blessed Eid Al-Adha on 24/10/2012, I expressed that the advent of Eid Al-Adha and the concomitant congregation of millions of Muslims in Mount Arafah in a grandiose religious scene is a reminder for Muslims of the ordinances of unity, solidarity and mutual support while keeping away from all forms of discord, rivalry and difference. In unity lie the elements of power and empowerment, whereas in discord lie the seeds of weakness and humiliation.

In my press statements on the occasions of the blessed Eidul Fitr, I mentioned that the different dates at which the Islamic world celebrates this happy occasion does not reflect the aspired unity in feelings and stands on such a blessed event, but is rather an indication of dispersion and disunity and creates confusion in the public opinion, not to mention the fact that it is uninspiring civilizational state of affairs at a time when scientific and technological progress has made it so easy to determine the dates of our religious occasions that are meant to unite all Muslims.

I underlined the importance for all the Member States to abide by the resolutions issued by the Organization on Unified Hijri Calendar, such as to eliminate traits of divergence and dispersion and to project rather an image of the Muslim's unity in their feasts and celebrations. In this context I would like to mention that in my message of greetings on the occasion of Eid ul Fitr, I had urged on the Members States that this greatest festival of the Muslims should be observed all over the world on a single day. I would like to reiterate this message to your Excellencies at this CFM.

D. RAPPROCHEMENT AMONG MUSLIM SECTS

The first preparatory meeting of the Group of Muslim Scholars representing different schools and religious sects held on 24 May 2008 under the chairmanship of the OIC Secretary General within the framework of the International Fiqh Academy (IIFA) to exchange views on the rapprochement among Muslim sects. The meeting focused on the articulation of visions and ideas on the need to deepen dialogue among Muslim sects and promote the value of tolerance while rejecting intolerance, extremism and the practice of apostatizing Muslims (Takfir) and the need to embrace a clear-cut approach to issuing religious edicts (Fatwas).

The 2nd Meeting of the Group of Muslim Scholars, held on 28th June, 2008 discussed the follow-up of the issues approved at the first preparatory meeting on the rapprochement of Islamic Sects (Madahib) and made proposals on the detailed Plan of Action on the issue, submitted by the International Islamic Fiqh Academy to be discussed and approved for implementation at the upcoming Grand Conference of the Group of Muslim Scholars to be held in the foreseeable future. The conference will bring out common denominators among the followers of the various Islamic sects and pinpoint the differences that lead to dissension and divergence in light of the Quran's and the Prophet's guidance, both of which call for the unity

of the ranks of the Umma, the need to avert religious discord, and the necessity to reconcile differences and promote a culture of unity among the Muslim masses.

Following the two above mentioned Meetings of Muslim Ulema, I have started consultations toward convening the Grand Conference of the Muslim Scholars.

First Conference of African Ulema and Scholars preparatory to the Conference of the Ulema of the Muslim World scheduled in a near future, was held in Dakar, Senegal from 7 to 9 June 2010 at the initiative of His Excellency Abdoulaye WADE, President of the Republic of Senegal and Current Chairman of the OIC Summit.

PROTECTION OF ISLAMIC HOLY PLACES

A. DESTRUCTION OF AL-BABRI MASJID AND PROTECTION OF ISLAMIC HOLY PLACES IN INDIA

The unspeakable crime perpetrated by Hindus in India on 6 December 1992 of destroying the historic Al-Babri Mosque in Ayodhya provoked feelings of indignation and outrage all over the Muslim world because of the heinous attack on one of God's houses of worship and its destruction to build a Hindu temple on its site.

The OIC made many appeals to the Indian Government to prevent any violation of the sanctity of the mosque and underlined the responsibility of the Indian government to safeguard the mosque. Yet, Hindu extremists destroyed the five-century old mosque with the authorities failing to provide the necessary measures to protect it. During the 22nd Session of the Islamic Conference of Foreign Ministers (ICFM) held in Casablanca, Kingdom of Morocco, from 13 to 15 December 1994, the OIC Secretary-General submitted a report on the destruction of Al-Babri Mosque in India and its repercussions and the conference adopted Resolution No. 18/22-C, which strongly condemned the destruction of the historic mosque in Ayodhya at the hands of armed Hindus.

Since that date, all OIC Conferences of Foreign Ministers and Islamic Summit Conferences (ISCs) have been calling on the Indian Government to ensure the safety of Muslims, protect all Muslim holy shrines throughout India, and honor its commitment to rebuild Al-Babri Mosque at its original site and punish the perpetrators of the crime of its destruction.

B. DESTRUCTION OF THE COMPLEX OF THE ISLAMIC CHARAR-E-SHARIF MOSQUE AND OTHER ISLAMIC SHRINES

Indian forces waged one of their most vicious attacks against the Kashmiri people as Muslims around the world were celebrating Al-Adha festival. As a result of this action, fire destroyed over 1,500 homes in addition to wrecking places of worship. The mosque and complex of Charar-e-Sharif was simply razed to the ground, 35 worshippers met their death, prominent Kashmiri leaders were placed under house arrest, a curfew was imposed over the whole valley, and Indian security forces were issued shoot-on-sight orders.

Feelings of dismay swept over the Muslims of south Asia and all Muslims around the globe as a result of this reprehensible act.

The 10th and 11th Session of the Islamic Summit Conference and Islamic Conferences of Foreign Ministers requested the Secretary-General to accelerate the necessary contacts in order to provide urgent assistance to rebuild the Complex of the Islamic Charar-e-Sharif and submit a report thereon. I have also been requested by the 9th session of the COMIAC to continue the necessary contacts.

C. DESECRATION OF THE ISLAMIC HISTORICAL AND CULTURAL RELICS AND HOLY SHRINES IN THE OCCUPIED AZERBAIJAN TERRITORIES AS A RESULT OF THE REPUBLIC OF ARMENIA'S AGGRESSION AGAINST THE REPUBLIC OF AZERBAIJAN

During the Armenian aggression of the Azerbaijan territories, everything even remotely related to Islamic history and civilization including countless Islamic rare historical relics, architectural sites, holy shrines—was vandalized and destroyed, with over 500 architectural sites laid waste, more than one hundred architectural excavation sites, and 22 museums, 4 art

exhibitions housing over 40,000 historical relics, 808 cultural clubs, around 900 training institutions, 92 public libraries, 85 music schools, scores of public cultural parks and four government theaters razed to the ground. In addition, rare relics, Islamic civilization, history, art, and architectural sites were wholly or partially destroyed while large quantities of cultural treasures and millions of historical books and manuscripts were smuggled or destroyed.

The subject has been submitted to the 29th and the following sessions of the Islamic Conference of Foreign Ministers. The conferences reaffirmed all the relevant paragraphs adopted by earlier sessions of the ICFM as well as sessions of the Islamic Summit Conference and called on OIC subsidiary organs and affiliated institutions to consider the possibility of developing an assistance program to help rebuild the mosques, educational institutions, libraries, and museums in the liberated parts of the Azerbaijani territories. The conference also commended the Secretary-General for reporting the OIC position to the United Nations, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), and other international organizations. The General Secretariat also carried out the necessary contacts in this respect and as a response to the appeals made by the General Secretariat to the Member States and the OIC Subsidiary Organs. IDB and ISESCO have included in their programs the protection of Islamic architectural sites and shrines in the Azerbaijan. I was entrusted by the 9th session of the COMIAC to follow-up the matter closely and report thereon.

**D. DESTRUCTION OF MAUSOLEUMS AND ISLAMIC SITES,
MOSQUES AND HOUSES OF WORSHIP IN IRAQ**

The 33rd and the following sessions of ICFMs adopted Resolutions on the subject, and expressed its deep concern over the terrorist acts of vandalization witnessed by the Republic of Iraq. It urged the international community and more particularly the OIC Member States to do their utmost in extending every possible assistance to protect the religious sites, particularly as they represent one of the key landmarks of Islamic history. The 9th session of COMIAC also requested me to follow-up the implementation of the resolution.

FAMILY AFFAIRS

A. ESTABLISHMENT OF FAMILY AFFAIRS DEPARTMENT

Various sessions of the CFM and Islamic Summit Conferences took note of the proposed mechanism to cater for family affairs that was presented by the State of Qatar and took into account the teachings of our magnanimous religion, which give special priority to the family as the foundation of Muslim society and its moral and religious structure. The 36th Session of the Council of Foreign Ministers held in Damascus, Syrian Arab Republic on 23-25 May 2009 adopted resolution No.8/36-ORG on the Establishment of Department Family Affairs.

The Department has recently been created within restructuring of the General Secretariat. The 37th Session of the Council of Foreign Ministers held in Dushanbe, Tajikistan and 9th Session of COMIAC noted with appreciation the establishment of Family Affairs Department. The Department has been particularly tasked to undertake programs and activities to promote the status of women, children and youth in the Member States. The newly established Family Affairs Department in the General Secretariat will devote itself to this goal in close cooperation with relevant and concerned OIC bodies as part of Joint Islamic Action.

The establishment of the new Department of Family Affairs was a milestone event for the OIC and hailed by all member states as a concrete achievement of the TYPOA. This new Department that would be devoted to further strengthen the basic family institution with noble and lofty Islamic values. The Department would need to be expanded with material and financial support to fulfill its objectives.

B. WOMEN ISSUES

The issues concerning women have been among the top priorities in the General Secretariat's agenda. Although they still face enormous difficulties, women are coming forward and playing their positive and constructive roles in various spheres of life including decision making, corporate sector, poverty alleviation, education, intercultural dialogue, human rights, and maintaining peace.

The 10th and 11th Sessions of the Islamic Summit Conference (ISC) and the subsequent Sessions of the ICFMs and CFMs reiterated their call to the Member States to take adequate steps to organize the activities of women at national and international levels and in all fields, in line with the nature of women and Sharia standards. These conferences also entrusted the General Secretariat to coordinate with the governments of the Member States in order to support direct and ongoing relations between Muslim women's associations in the Member States and to cooperate with existing international organizations of Muslim women in Islamic countries.

These conferences also called on the General Secretariat to undertake necessary efforts with the Member States in order to convene a ministerial conference on women, which would study how to strengthen women's role in the development of Muslim society and provide them with greater opportunities in all walks of public life.

The 3rd Extraordinary Summit called for greater efforts to be devoted to women's education and to eliminating illiteracy among women. It further called for the creation of a department dedicated to family affairs within the framework of efforts to restructure the OIC General Secretariat.

In line with the vision of the TYPOA, women were appointed in various departments of the

OIC General Secretariat, for the first time.

The 1st Ministerial Islamic Conference on Women's Role in the Development of OIC Member States, hosted by Turkey on 20-21 November, 2006 provided an excellent opportunity for coordination among Member States in order to find out ways and means to prepare strategies, standards, programs and goals to advance the status of women. I attended the conference.

The 2nd Ministerial Islamic Conference on the Role of Women in the Development of the OIC Member States was held in Cairo, Egypt on 24-25 November 2008. It was a landmark event by the adoption of OIC Plan of Action for the Advancement of Women (OPAAW) also known as "Cairo Plan of Action for Women". I attended the conference.

The Conference deliberated intensively on the issues and challenges faced by women in the OIC Member States particularly creating opportunities and promoting their equal access to labour markets, sustainable employment and adequate social security, eliminating gender inequalities in education and all forms of discrimination and violence against women and girl children, promoting increased participation of women in decision-making bodies, including through ensuring their equal opportunity to participate in the political and decision-making process. The Conference underscored the need for appropriate legislations and their implementation through setting indicators for assessment and follow-up. It called for the continuation of the progress made with regard to women's advancement in the Member States.

The Specialized Organ for Women Development with its Headquarters in Cairo was established in accordance with 36th CFM decision and the Statute of this institution was adopted by the 37th CFM in Dushanbe. The OIC General Secretariat has been urging Member States to sign and ratify the Statute of this institution in order to start its functions.

I issued messages on various occasions commemorating the International Days related to women for the Elimination of Violence against Women calling for greater action and concerted efforts based on joint responsibilities to combat this evil phenomenon. I continued to issue press releases and message on Women's Day and United Nations Day for Women's Rights and International Peace, in which I underscored the need to promote and empower women and protect their rights and ensure their full enjoyment of these rights.

The 3rd Women Ministerial Conference on the Role of Women in the Development of the OIC Member States was held on December 19-21, 2010 in Tehran, Islamic Republic of Iran. The meeting was significant by adopting the Mechanism for the implementation of the OPAAW. It entrusted the Department of Family Affairs with the mandate to implement of the OPAAW and other decisions related to women in coordination with the Member States.

The Third Session of the above-mentioned Ministerial Conference was also a landmark by issuing Tehran Declaration which has set new innovative themes and mainstreamed women empowerment issues. The conference also explored new avenues to achieve the aspired goals set by the Member States in this field. I firmly believe that the vision and the mission of the OIC reflected in the above-mentioned documents of the 3rd Ministerial Conference on the Role of Women in the Development of the OIC Member States could be best accomplished through further bilateral as well as multilateral consultations and exchange of views, expertise and good practices and through holding conference, seminars and workshops.

The International Seminar on the Eminent Ladies of Divine Religions was convened by the Islamic Republic of Iran as the Chair of the 3rd Ministerial Conference on the Role of Women

in the Development of the OIC Member States, in coordination with the OIC General Secretariat from 1st to 2nd February 2012 in Tehran, Islamic Republic of Iran which adopted a Final Declaration.

I dispatched a high level delegation to actively participate and deliver statement on my behalf in the proceedings of the Third NAM Ministerial Meeting on the Advancement of Women held in Doha, Qatar from 12 to 14 February 2012.

The 4th Session of the Ministerial Conference on Women's Role in the Development of OIC Member States, was held from 4-6 December, 2012 in Jakarta, Republic of Indonesia. The fourth Ministerial conference took stock of the achievements in the advancement of women and focused on the implementation of the decisions taken and documents adopted particularly the OPAAW. It was remarkable by its action-oriented approach.

The 5th Session of the Ministerial Conference on Women's Role in the Development of OIC Member States would be held in 2014 in Azerbaijan.

The OIC General Secretariat also participated in the International Expert Meeting on the Roadmap on the Revival of the Rights of Human Beings and the Covenant on Rights of Women in Islam held in Tehran, Islamic Republic of Iran on 12-14 February 2013 within the framework of Tehran Declaration which was adopted by the 3rd Ministerial Conference on the Women's Role in the development of OIC Member States.

In addition to that, some relevant OIC bodies such as ISESCO, ICCI and SESRIC have also been active in the field.

C. CHILD-CARE AND PROTECTION IN THE MUSLIM WORLD

Children are our future and we are duty bound to ensure their proper upbringing so that they can be developed into responsible citizens and leaders of the future. The OIC General Secretariat together with the ISESCO, IRCICA and other relevant institutions are devoted to the task of creating access to their proper education and social and recreational amenities. We are cooperating closely with the UNESCO and UNICEF to involve the international community's support to our efforts.

I have been persistent in my efforts to promote childcare and protection in the Muslim world in pursuance of the provisions of the Cairo Declaration on Human Rights in Islam, and the OIC Covenant on the Rights of the Child in Islam which stresses on the importance of the rights of the child, as well as Ten Year Program of Action and Putrajaya Summit decisions on children.

1st Islamic Conference of Ministers in-charge of Children's affairs, which was held in Rabat on 7-9 November, 2005, in coordination between the General Secretariat, ISESCO and UNICEF, adopted Rabat Declaration on the issues of Children in the Islamic World.

OIC General Secretariat along with its Subsidiary, Affiliated and Specialized bodies as well as Member States continued to have a fruitful cooperation with UNICEF for the benefit of child's survival, protection and development in the Muslim world.

I followed up with commitment to eradicate polio in the Muslim world. During the OIC-UN meeting, OIC and WHO agreed to undertake specific steps to consolidate cooperation to

reinforce the campaign to eradicate polio in the OIC-Member States.

The General Secretariat has been very active since the beginning in providing assistance, shelter, education, living houses etc to the Children victims of Tsunami in Indonesia. It has been providing assistance to twenty five thousand orphans there and an OIC Office was established to follow the project.

The OIC has been helping the victims of the earthquake in Pakistan that are basically families and children. Some hundred houses have been rendered out of 600 houses to be built and given by the OIC.

The OIC General Secretariat and the US Government initiated to implement the OIC-US Government Cooperation Framework on an Emergency Global Response “Reaching Every Mother and Baby in the OIC with Emergency Care” signed on 1 December 2008 by piloting in two OIC member states countries namely Mali and Bangladesh. The project will be implemented with full participations of the governments of the two selected countries and focusing on capacity building to assist the two member states to resolve the issue of high mortality rate of mother and child during delivery. On the basis of success of these two countries the project will be expanded to other Member States.

The 3rd Islamic Conference of Ministers in Charge of Childhood (ICMCC), in Tripoli, Libya on February 7-11, 2011 was organized by ISESCO, in coordination with the OIC General Secretariat and under the motto “Reinforcing Development: Meeting the Challenge of Early Childhood Promotion in the Islamic World”.

The Conference issued the “Tripoli Declaration on Accelerating Early Childhood Development in the Islamic World”, voicing commitment to accelerating pace of development of early childhood in the Islamic world on the level of national policies, healthcare, nutrition, the pre-education, supporting the local society, developing family education programs, and the protection of the early childhood in emergency cases. The declaration also touched upon the necessity of enacting binding legislations and setting up tangible strategies and national plans for benefiting from the social care and the health care services.

The 4th Session of the Islamic Conference of Ministers in Charge of Childhood (ICMCC), is scheduled to be held in Baku, Republic of Azerbaijan in 2013.

D. YOUTH AFFAIRS

The 1st Islamic Conference of Youth and Sport on Muslim Youth hosted by Saudi Arabia welcomed and adopted the Working Paper presented by the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia on future challenges and the mechanisms included on promoting and protecting Muslim Youth and enhancing its status in the society included therein.

With the establishment of the Department of Family Affairs in the General Secretariat, the issues related to youth would be followed with priority and some new programs and projects have been developed in this regard.

The OIC General Secretariat’s Department of Family Affairs is involved in the preparations of the 3rd round of the Islamic Solidarity Games to be held in Indonesia in 2013. In this connection some meetings including the signing ceremony for hosting the games have been held. Coordination and consultations are underway between the OIC, the Government of

Indonesia, and the Islamic Solidarity Sports Federation to hold this grand event.

A delegation of the OIC participated in the *First Convention of the Global Youth Movement for the Alliance of Civilizations (GYMAOC)*, held in the Baku, Republic of Azerbaijan on 09-10 April 2011. The event was organized by the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations (UNAoC) and Islamic Conference Youth Forum for Dialogue and Cooperation (ICYF-DC), with the support of the government of Azerbaijan.

On the occasion of Message of International Youth Day on 12 August 2012, I issued a statement in which I underscored the importance of partnering with youth and involving them in bringing positive changes. I also reiterated my call upon all the Member States of the OIC to do their best in implementing the OIC Ten Year Programme of Action by invest in the youths and by strengthening and reforming the existing educational institutions and curricula and creating equal opportunities and equal access to social and education facilities and employment.

The OIC General Secretariat continues to coordinate between various OIC institutions active in the field of youth.

ISLAMIC CULTURAL CENTERS AND INSTITUTES

A. REGIONAL INSTITUTE FOR ISLAMIC RESEARCH AND STUDIES IN TIMBUKTU, MALI

The General Secretariat has circulated a Note Verbale to the Member States urging them to extend every possible assistance to this institute. A further memorandum was sent out to those Member States that have technical potential in the field of the preservation of manuscripts, urging them to offer scholarships for the benefit of raising the level of the Institute's staff in that sphere. Also the ICFMs and the CFMs and 9th COMIAC Session called on the Member States to provide teachers for the Institute and to assist the latter in completing its structural and technical outfit so that it may be able to receive students in the areas of science and technology.

Within the framework of implementing Res. 5/32-C adopted by the 32nd Islamic Conference of Foreign Ministers held in Sana'a Republic of Yemen from 28-30 June 2005, I dispatched a delegation to Timbuktu between 4-9 March 2006 to undertake a field assessment of the necessary facilities to develop the Institute.

The General Secretariat has sent documents relating to these needs to Member States as well as OIC Cultural institutions and bodies in order to extend material, financial and academic support to the Institute. Accordingly, it has addressed a message to the specialized and affiliated Cultural institutions of the OIC, namely IRCICA, ISESCO in addition to the Islamic University of Technology in Bangladesh and the Islamic University in Malaysia, inviting them to extend material and academic assistance to the Institute.

B. REGIONAL INSTITUTE FOR COMPLEMENTARY EDUCATION, ISLAMABAD

The 10th and 11th Sessions of the Islamic Summit Conference, the ICFMs, CFMs and the 9th COMIAC Session paid tribute to the efforts of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan for the establishment of this institute and for its running. They also expressed thanks to the KSA for its financial assistance to the institute and hailed the Arab Republic of Egypt for sending a number of teachers of Arabic language and religious studies, as well as the ISF for its financial assistance to the institute.

The General Secretariat addressed the IDB, the ISF and the World Federation of Arab and Islamic Schools to extend their assistance to the Institute.

C. ISLAMIC CENTRE IN GUINEA BISSAU

The 10th and 11th Sessions of the Islamic Summit Conference, the ICFMs, the CFMs and the 8th COMIAC Session requested the Secretary General to take the necessary measures to take stock of the Center's present position, in cooperation with relevant authorities in Guinea Bissau.

Res. C-5/34-C issued by the 34th ICFM held in Islamabad, Pakistan and the 8th Session of COMIAC paid tribute to the implementation of the Islamic Centre project in Guinea Bissau. They expressed thanks to the ISF for its extension of the required financing for the Center's construction, as well as to the Direct Assistance Organization for its supervising the project's construction works.

It called on the Member States, the IDB and Islamic institutions to extend material assistance

to the Centre. The General Secretariat has addressed these parties and invited them to extend their assistance to the Institute.

D. ISLAMIC TRANSLATION INSTITUTE IN KHARTOUM

The General Secretariat is of the view that it would be useful to open the Institute's doors to students from all Member States so that all may profit from it. This calls for financial and technical assistance to the institute from the donor countries and parties to be kept up.

The General Secretariat addressed a Note Verbale to all Member States urging them to extend every possible assistance to the Translation Institute in Khartoum. A similar Note Verbale was addressed to the IDB for the same purpose. The ICFMs, CFMs and 8th COMIAC Session stressed on the support and assistance to this center.

E. PROJECT FOR THE CREATION OF A HOLY QUR'AN ISLAMIC AUTHORITY

The General Secretariat has received a Note Verbale dated 1/7/2000 from the relevant authorities in Qatar expressing the wish to set up an international authority to care for the Holy Quran, and requesting that the project be referred to the relevant bodies for their comment and additional views or other suggested appropriate changes in its formulation such as to help towards its realization in a manner commensurate with its importance.

Accordingly, the General Secretariat sent out the documents concerning this issue to the International Islamic Fiqh Academy to seek their opinion as the relevant body in the OIC system. The Fiqh Academy decided to submit the matter to its Twelfth Session, held in September, 2000. The Session, having examined the substance of the working paper relevant to the establishment of the said Board, issued its Res. No. 117 (12/11) which calls for coordination between the Ministry of Endowments and Religious Affairs in the State of Qatar, the KSA Ministry of Endowments and Religious Affairs, King Fahd Complex for the Printing of the Holy Quran in Madina Al-Munawara, and the Muslim World League. The General Secretariat has circulated the Note Verbale received from the State of Qatar, referred above, to all Member States under Doc No. ICECS/24-2001/CS/D.1.

The 31st Session of the ICFM examined the provision of the Working Paper submitted by the Qatari Ministry of Endowments and religious Affairs on the project for the establishment of an Islamic International Board for the Holy Quran, and endorsed the implementation of Res. 117 (12/11) issued by the 12th Session of the International Islamic Fiqh Academy, with the provision that among those involved in the consultations, there should be, in addition to the parties enumerated in the Fiqh Academy resolution, the OIC General Secretariat, Al Azhar Al-Sharif/Cairo, and the Muslim World League.

All subsequent ICFMs following recommended that consultations be completed between the above mentioned relevant parties.

**PALESTINIAN
CULTURAL AND SOCIAL AFFAIRS**

**A. PRESERVATION OF THE ISLAMIC IDENTITY, HUMAN HERITAGE,
AND RELIGIOUS RIGHTS IN AL-QUDS AL-SHARIF**

Throughout its history, the city of Al-Quds Al-Sharif has acquired unique religious, cultural and spiritual importance by virtue of its connection with the three divine religions, particularly with Islam and the Islamic faith. This city has been subjected to many invasions, the last and most dangerous of which is the Jewish settlement invasion campaign which started in the second half of the Nineteenth Century and which is still continuing.

Israel has persisted in its inhuman and illegitimate measures and practices designed to judaize the City of Al-Quds Al-Sharif and obliterate its Arab-Islamic features. Israel has also continued to blockade the City of Al Quds, using military barriers and the racial separation wall, with the aim of isolating the City from its Palestinian surroundings. In addition, Israel has continued to confiscate land and property, to demolish the Palestinians' homes, to impede the Palestinian institutions' work, to withdraw citizenship from the inhabitants of Al-Quds and deport them, to desecrate holy sites and confiscate Muslim and Christian waqfs (endowments). The Israeli occupation authorities have also continued to prevent Muslim and Christian worshipers in the West Bank and Gaza from gaining access to the Holy sites in the City of Al Quds Al Shareef.

Israel has started building several synagogues in the vicinity of the Blessed al-Aqsa Mosque. Numerous reports have revealed that the Israeli archeological authorities have made new excavations underneath the Blessed al-Aqsa Mosque.

Israel has been preventing the entry of construction materials to renovate the Al-Aqsa Mosque and Marwani Prayer area. On more than one occasion, it threatened to invade the Al-Aqsa Mosque to stop the renovation work. At the same time, the Israeli Ministry of Religions and the Israeli Antiquities department have been proceeding with excavation works and digging of tunnels beneath Al-Aqsa Mosque. In addition to the danger for Al-Aqsa Mosque these excavation works have led to the destruction of several Islamic relics that date back to the Ummayad and Mamlouki periods in Al-Quds Al-Sharif. While these were going on, extremist Jewish groups continue to intrude into the blessed Al Aqsa Mosque, under the protection of the Israeli occupation forces, provoke the Palestinian worshipers, and desecrate the sanctity of holy sites in East Jerusalem. Therefore, Israeli police officers attacked Christian worshipers, at the gates of the Old City of Jerusalem, whereas clergymen get beaten brutally and indiscriminately and be denied access, during Holy Saturday at the Church of Holy Sepulcher. In regard of that, I condemned all Israeli violations including the Israel's arrest of Sheikh Mohammed Hussain, the Grand Mufti of Jerusalem, and the escalation of settlers' aggression against the holy sites in Al-Quds. Moreover, I discussed the issue of Israeli violations and aggression against Al-Aqsa Mosque with the United Nations Secretary General.

The Israeli authorities bulldozed a good part of the Ma'man Allah Cemetery in the occupied Al Quds, which contains the remains of a number of the Prophet's companions (Allah be pleased with them), in order to establish a museum it has called Museum of Religious Tolerance. I warrant the international community against the serious Israeli violations and requesting that pressure be brought to bear on Israel in order to deter it from proceeding with its plans.

The OIC General Secretariat including our Liaison Office to UNESCO and myself were actively involved since the beginning in the process of admitting Palestine as full Member of

the UNESCO. I discussed the issue in my various meetings and talks with some stakeholders and leaders and representatives of UNESCO Member States to pool support for Palestine. I also attended the General Conference of UNESCO last year, whereas I delivered my speech and urged the representatives of the UNESCO Member States to support resolutions on Palestine.

B. ISRAELI AGGRESSION AGAINST ISLAMIC HOLY SHRINES, HERITAGE SITES IN AL-KHALIL (HEBRON), BETHLEHEM, NABLUS AND THE GAZA STRIP:

Israel has continued its attempts to judaize Islamic sanctities, having seized a number of shops, the central vegetable market and Palestinian homes in the Old City of Al-Khalil (Hebron) and beside the Blessed Ibrahimi Mosque, a big portion of which it has cut to be used as a Jewish worshipping place following the hideous massacres perpetrated by a Jewish extremist settler inside the precincts of the Ibrahimi Mosque in the month of Ramadan 1414H, (1994) in which scores of Muslim worshipers were killed or wounded. Israel has also continued to deny Muslims access to the bigger part of the Mosque in order to pray there. Israel has recently announced inclusion of the Blessed Ibrahimi Mosque to the list of Israeli heritage sites with constitute a flagrant violation of international laws and Geneva Conventions.

During its last aggression on Gaza, Israel has bombarded demolished dozens of mosques and churches in different parts of the Gaza Strip. In Bethlehem, likewise, the Israeli occupation forces seized the Bilal Ibn Rabah Mosque and converted it to a synagogue, cordoned it with fences and declared it as part of Israel and also announced its addition to the list of Israeli heritage. I addressed a letter regarding the issue to the Director General of UNESCO asking her to take action to stop these violations that are considered as the piracy of the Islamic heritage. I also requested the OIC Group in UNESCO to stand against these dangerous violations. Accordingly, in October 2010, the OIC group succeeded in passing five resolutions at the UNESCO Executive Council in support of the Palestinian rights including their title to the mosques of Al-Haram Al-Ibrahimi and Bilal Ibn Rabah.

The Israeli occupation forces targeted cultural and religious sites in the City of Nablus many times in the past. According to a report by the UNDP in Al Quds, the Israeli occupation army had destroyed 149 cultural and religious sites in Nablus and damaged about 2000 other sites, mostly in the historic old City of Nablus. Those sites included historic mosques, tombs, churches, traditional bathrooms, traditional soap factories, including the Kharaz Mosque whose construction dates back to the 12th century, the tomb of Sheikh Muslim and the Roman Catholic Church which was built in 1882, as well as the Turkish Shifaa bathroom that was built in 1720.

Inevitably, the Israeli measures and the financial blockade imposed on the Gaza Strip has led to a serious deterioration in the economic conditions of the Palestinian people. Unemployment and poverty increased sharply and the health conditions in the West Bank and Gaza Strip has deteriorated, with a major segment of the Palestinian population there now unable to get access to services as a result of the embargo.

Similarly, the Israeli war against Gaza exacerbated all aspects of life in Gaza. The increasing poverty and unemployment, and the continuing damage sustained by infrastructure, educational institutions and health facilities as well as the environment have caused untold prejudice to the Palestinian population's health, particularly women and children.

C. TWINNING OF PALESTINIAN UNIVERSITIES IN THE OCCUPIED TERRITORIES WITH UNIVERSITIES IN MEMBER STATES

Successive Islamic resolutions adopted by the Foreign Ministers have stressed the necessity of strengthening Islamic solidarity with the Palestinian people and students, including the twinning of Palestinian Universities in the occupied territories with the Universities of the Member States, and extending material and academic support to them, as these Palestinian Universities are among the most important pillars of the steadfastness of the Palestinian people against the Israeli occupation and play currently an important role in the stage of construction and rehabilitation. As part of this orientation, the 3rd Extraordinary Islamic Summit adopted a resolution for the establishment of the Al Aqsa University in the City of Al Quds Al Sharif.

Successive sessions of the Islamic Commission for Economic, Cultural, and Social Affairs have urged the Member States to implement these resolutions and draw up an appropriate mechanism, which will ensure its application by the concerned institutions of those Member States. This will enable the universities in the Palestinian territories to perform their tasks within the context of reconstruction and the rehabilitation of Palestinian youth.

The General Secretariat has continued to address the Member States, urging them to implement the resolution on the twinning of Palestinian Universities with the universities of the Member States. The resolution calls upon the latter universities to sign twinning agreements with the universities and institutes in the Palestinian territories, particularly in Al-Quds Al-Sharif and to provide them with material and academic assistance in order to enable them to continue their national and educational role.

D. EDUCATIONAL SITUATION IN THE OCCUPIED PALESTINIAN TERRITORIES, THE SYRIAN GOLAN, AND THE OTHER OCCUPIED ARAB TERRITORIES

The policy of aggression pursued by the Israelis has inflicted massive damage on the educational process in Palestine due to the blockades and incursions that affected not only humanitarian and material aspects of life but also the psychological states of the students. Many students, teachers and employees were martyred. Some of them were imprisoned and humiliated while many others suffered from occupation through military roadblocks erected between Palestinian cities and villages in many provinces. All this is to say nothing of those who were wounded by bullets of occupation soldiers, or the difficulties faced by the Palestinian students on their way to and from school, or of their exposure to various kinds of psychological traumas, all of which have serious impact on their future and education.

The Israeli measures, the blockade imposed on the Gaza Strip and the Israeli incursions have caused serious damage to the sector of education in Palestine. Plans for the construction and development of schools where study has been suspended because of the unjust embargo imposed on the Palestinian people.

Since its occupation in 1967, education in the City of Al Quds Al Sharif has been subjected to continuous distortion and gradual erosion of the Arabic curriculum as part of a plan aimed at changing the civilisational status of the City of Al Quds, removing evidences of spiritual affiliation and obliterating the record of Arab cultural heritage of this Holy City. Palestinian citizens were also prevented from renovating their schools and building new ones. The bad conditions in the schools due to paucity of financial resources for most of the Palestinian

schools have led many Palestinian students to transfer to Israeli government schools. As a result, Israeli authority schools in East Jerusalem have attracted about 40% of Palestinian students because of their sound financial situation, facilities and equipment which made them better than national private schools.

The Extraordinary meeting of the Executive Committee, which was held at the Ministerial level on November 1st 2009, invited the OIC Member States members of the Executive Council and General Conference of UNESCO to make the latter issue a resolution to stop the measures being undertaken by the occupying power in a bid to alter the cultural character of the City of Al Quds and its historical and civilizational landmarks, including the excavations and the stealing of the Holy City's artefacts. The OIC Group of Ambassadors to the UNESCO met more than a time and discussed possible actions.

Furthermore, the Extraordinary meeting of the Executive Committee decided to establish a technical committee from the Member States to assess the urgent needs of the vital sectors in Al-Quds. Accordingly, an OIC-IDB joint mission was dispatched to Al-Quds to do the initial assessment. The findings of the joint mission in the field of education were shocking. The city is in urgent need to be provided with at least 20 schools with the capacity of 2000 classrooms in order to meet the growing demands in its schooling needs.

The General Secretariat calls upon the Member States to expeditiously extend all kinds of financial and academic support and assistance to schools and universities in all Palestinian territories and particularly in Al-Quds Al-Sharif; to increase the number of Palestinian students enrolled in their respective universities to study medicine, dentistry, engineering, agriculture, and law; to also increase the number of scholarships and twinning with Islamic universities, in implementation of the resolutions of successive Islamic Conferences; and strengthen Islamic solidarity with the people of Palestine so that these educational institutions may continue to be one of the main pillars of establishing the national authority of the Palestinian people over their homeland, Palestine.

E. THE EDUCATIONAL SITUATION IN THE OCCUPIED SYRIAN GOLAN

The Israeli occupation authorities continue their acts of repression and the closure of the educational institutions in the Occupied Syrian Golan and particularly in the form of laying off Syrian teachers, banning of Syrian textbooks and curricula from the schools; barring Syrian students from pursuing their higher studies in Syrian universities; depriving Syrian students who pursue their higher education abroad of their right to return; and imposing the Hebrew language on Syrian students - all of which constitute flagrant violations of the Fourth Geneva Convention on the Protection of Civilians in Times of War.

The aforesaid Israeli practices in the occupied Syrian Golan aim at the obliteration of the Arab cultural identify and the imposition of the Israeli educational curricula which incites hatred and religious fanaticism - a state of affairs that calls upon the Member States and the relevant international organs and institutions to face up to this Israeli policy that violates the international laws and conventions as well as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.