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*Report of the Secretary General
on the Situation of Muslim Communities
and Minorities in non-OIC Countries*

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1. Over the past several years we have expanded our efforts to care for issues of Muslim Minorities around the World. We have put forward many initiatives and spoken to the concerned authorities on matters of relevance to the conditions of Muslim there and ways to help them overcome the existent difficulties and obstacles, our organization being the main vessel that brings together all the Islamic States and that has taken it upon itself to care for the issues of Muslims outside the Muslim World, living on an expansive part of the globe among non-Muslim majorities, which in many cases exposes them to complex difficulties and challenges that threaten their very existence and identity. Some of them are faced with killing, expulsion and dispersion as is the case in Myanmar. Yet these cases do not make us oblivious of the fact that many Muslim Minorities around the world actually enjoying their rights and a large degree of freedom, and are prospering in number as well as in political economic and social standing within their societies.
2. In following up the issue of the Rohingya Muslims, a fact-finding mission paid a visit to Myanmar in September 2012 and submitted its report to the past ministerial conference, whereby it confirmed that the conditions of Muslims there are getting worse day after day. Indeed the radical Buddhists have mobilized all their forces to root out the Rohingya Muslims from their homes and homeland, and are engaged in an ethnic cleansing process against them. I have emphasized our solidarity with and standing by the Rohingya Muslims and condemned the acts of violence against them. We insisted on the need for their repatriation, their protection and their compensation for their properties, not only as a way to achieve justice and preserve human rights, but also because we realize the risks and are keen to prevent this dispute from turning into an open conflict between Muslims and Buddhists there. I have alerted, on many occasions, the active parties in this issue to the gravity of the matter and the risks of being swept away by this dangerous situation.
3. Following the limited democratic changes in Myanmar in November 2010 and the completion of the second round of elections there, the schemes of oppression against the Rohingya Muslims are still ongoing to this day in Rakhan, previously known as “Arakan”. With this persistent situation, I called, on August 2012, for an extraordinary meeting of the OIC Executive Committee in Jeddah and the said meeting adopted a number of measures and important recommendations which were submitted to the Fourth Extraordinary Islamic Summit which came out with the decision to set up a ministerial level contact group on the Rohingya in Myanmar. I

also submitted a detailed report on the issue to the OIC conference of Foreign Minister held in Djibouti in November 2012 which adopted a resolution calling on the United Nations to promptly take the necessary steps to protect the Rohingya Muslims. Likewise, I intensified in Djibouti my contacts in favour of the implementation of the resolution adopted by the Council of Rohingya Muslims which called for a ministerial delegation to be dispatched to Myanmar for talks with the Government there on the Rohingya community's crisis. Also, after the Cairo Summit Conference, in February 2013, I contacted the heads of state and government directly and urged them to act and cooperate with the OIC to channel the necessary humanitarian aid to the distressed people there.

4. The OIC Contact Group entrusted to follow the situation of the Muslim Rohingya community in Myanmar, convened on 14 April 2013 at a ministerial level at the OIC headquarters to discuss the critical position endured by Muslims in Myanmar. It stressed the need to respect human rights and internationally acknowledged standards and condemned the spread of violence in these regions in Myanmar. It also condemned the continued disregard of international law, commended the Secretary General's efforts for the settlement of the issue and concluded its deliberations with recommendations on important issues including the need for the Myanmar Government to uphold its duty in protecting all the citizens, to assume its responsibility in this area, and to prosecute all those involved in acts of violence. It further underlined the need for continued dialogue with the Myanmar Government.
5. The Contact Group also stressed the importance of executing the proposal made by Turkish republic in its capacity as one of the sponsors of the alliance of civilizations in favour of convening a meeting for the concerned parties to resolve the issues still outstanding between the Buddhist and Muslim communities through dialogue. It also recommended the General Secretary to organize a dialogue-driven meeting between the adherents of Buddhism and Islam, the major scholars, and opinion leaders, with a view to consolidate interfaith dialogue. It further decided to set up a select committee for follow up, comprised of the summit and CFM chairmen, the headquarter state and the Secretary General, to work out a plan and work program to implement the resolutions and recommendations on the Myanmar Muslims. The said committee has already held its meeting on May 13th, 2013, at the OIC headquarters in Jeddah and undertook a full review of the issue of the Rohingya and its developments.
6. The follow-up committee stressed the need to keep in touch with the Myanmar Government and regional organization and to mount and information campaign to showcase the Muslim's ordeal there. It also stressed the need for OIC's continued

support for the Arakan Rohingya Union (ARU) and the International Information Center of Arakan Muslims which is seated in Holland.

7. Sending a message, on behalf of the Secretary General, to H.E the president of Myanmar, Mr. Thein Sein, delivered by my special envoy, Mr. Talal Daous, director of the Muslim Minorities Department, on 25th, June, 2013, H. E. the Foreign Minister of Myanmar, wherein I expressed my wish to open a constructive dialogue between the Muslim world and the republic of Myanmar, in favour of enhancing cooperation and consolidating links and mutual interests. I stressed that putting an end to the violence against Muslims and others is the Government's responsibility and that the protection of Muslims falls on its shoulders. I urged him to do his best to put an end to the wave of violence and hatred against the Muslim citizens, and to compensate the victims who lost their properties.

The Myanmar Foreign Minister affirmed that his government was doing everything possible to achieve security and stability in the region where the events had taken place, and he implicitly welcomed the anticipated visit of the Secretary General and the Ministerial Contact Group on the Rohingya issue. He promised the visit would take place soon.

8. Under the patronage of the Secretary General, the Arakan Rohingya Union (ARU) held a meeting at the OIC headquarters on 7-8 July 2013, at which the Union's Charter was adopted and a Director General, a Consultative Council and a regional 2-year Coordination Commission were elected.
9. In 1976 a peace agreement was signed in Tripoli between the Philippines Government and the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) under the terms of which Muslims agreed to relinquish their demand for cessation and independence in return for being granted an extensive self-rule over 13 provinces and 5 cities. However, the agreement was not implemented. The matter required on our part persistent efforts for another twenty years at the end of which a new final peace agreement was signed in 1996. Yet, the Philippines Government resorted to a referendum in a unilateral manner and self rule was established in only 5 provinces and one single city, a step which the MNLF saw as an act of commitment renegeing and a violation of the agreement.
10. As the negotiations reached a deadlock, I launched the tripartite talks between the Government of the Republic of the Philippines, the MNLF and the OIC, in 2007, in an attempt to resolve the problems standing in the way of the agreement's implementation.

The key issues have remained without a solution. These are: the extent of the self-rule area, the sharing of resources, the definition of the strategic minerals, and the transitional government. In order to overcome these differences, I will invite the two parties to a tripartite meeting as soon as possible.

11. I have indicated in my report to the Djibouti conference that the Philippine Government had opened separate negotiations with the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) under the sponsorship of Malaysia, and that the two parties had reached a framework agreement for peace between them which was signed on Oct. 15th, 2012.
12. When the ministerial conference examined the said agreement, it asserted that it had many shortcomings and did not meet the aspirations and rights of the Muslims in Southern Philippines. And it is my view that there is a need for action to ensure that all the rights and claims of the Muslims in Southern Philippines are honored, that the 1976 Tripoli agreement is updated as well as the 1996 final peace agreement, that the extent of the self-rule area is maintained as established in the said agreement, and that its provisions are not breached.
13. As for cooperation between the two fronts (MNLF and MILF) I have invited them both to many meetings and an agreement was reached in Djibouti on setting up a forum to coordinate between them (the Bangsamouro Coordination Forum, or BCF) which I chaired. The General Secretariat will call for another meeting to work out the guidelines of its future action.
14. Over the past years a fruitful dialogue has been set up with the Government of Thailand. In 2007 I paid a historic and unprecedented visit to Thailand and a joint communiqué was issued on the occasion which affirmed the need for efforts to continue and to improve the conditions of Muslims in the Southern border provinces and to allow them to run their own affairs by themselves. I submitted a detailed report on the matter to the Djibouti conference on these efforts, based on the report submitted to us by the high-level delegation that visited Thailand in mid-May 2012. Contacts have continued over the recent past with the Thai party to try and remove the obstacles impeding the implementation of the final communiqué's provisions, including action to end, progressively, the emergency state, introduce the Malay language as a second official language in the concerned provinces, and let the Muslims have their own Islamic courts.
15. Important developments took place when the Thai Government concluded a memorandum of understanding between Thailand and the representative of the BRN (National Revolutionary Front) in Kuala Lumpur on 28 Feb. 2013. The Government

of Thailand had appointed the Secretary General of the National Security Board to chair the support group for these efforts and to establish the necessary conditions for the achievement of peace in the southern border provinces. The said agreement represents a roadmap, rather, and we nurture the hope that in future this dialogue would involve all the parties representing the Muslims of Southern Thailand, based on a clear and well-defined program, and that the meetings will continue in an atmosphere of transparency to discuss all issues of interest to the Muslims in Southern Thailand.

16. On July , 2013, I met with the Thai Prime Minister, Nigolak Chinaoutara, in Istanbul and our meeting focused on the situation of Muslims in Southern Thailand and on bilateral relations.

The prime minister indicated that his Government was trying to lift the emergency state in five South-border provinces in consultation with the local communities, and to find peaceful solutions to the problems in the south, and also to secure the OIC's support in this framework. She also noted that the government had agreed with the Muslim groups to effect a cease-fire during the holy month of Ramadan. I welcomed these developments and affirmed that the OIC supported every peaceful initiative that seeks to guarantee human rights and consolidate the existing understanding, dialogue and cooperation in favour the promotion of the Muslim communities everywhere.

17. Regarding Muslims in Greece, the OIC has urged the Greek Governments to acknowledge the ethnic identity as well as religious and civil rights of the Turkish Muslim Minority in Western Thrace for many years. Since last year, the OIC also started to draw attention to the problems of the Muslim population of Turkish descent living in Dodecanese. Yet, no tangible progress has been observed. The ban imposed on the expression of cultural-ethnic identity in the names of the associations of the Turkish Minority as well as limitations on freedom of association and on political participation still continue. Turkish Minority also cannot make use of their waqf property, most of which was lost as a result of the mismanagement and confiscation by the appointed boards. The heavy fines imposed on the local minority press and radio stations constitute another means of intimidation upon the Minority. Acts of vandalism and destruction of mosques, shrines and Muslim cemeteries are a matter of serious concern.
18. Greece continues to deny recognition for the elected muftis of Komotini and Xanthi, in contravention of the 1913 Athens and 1923 Lausanne Peace Treaties. The Greek Governments also failed to implement five rulings of the European Court of Human Rights on this issue. Moreover, in January 2013, the Greek Parliament adopted a

legislative regulation as regards the appointment of 240 imams, despite the strong opposition of Minority. The OIC General Secretariat received many statements from the Turkish Minority associations in Western Thrace expressing their reaction. This constitutes another clear interference of the Greek State in the religious autonomy of the Minority stemming from the Lausanne Peace Treaty of 1923

19. On the other hand, education remains one of the main areas where Greece needs to take urgent steps given that the problems of education undermine socio-economic development in the region which is among the poorest areas within the EU. As a recent example, although pre-school education is mandatory in Greece, the Greek State does not allow the Minority to open their bilingual kindergartens in violation of the Article 40 of the Lausanne Peace Treaty which stipulates that the Minority “Shall have an equal right to establish, manage and control at their own expense, any charitable, religious and social institutions, any schools and other establishments for instruction and education,” As a consequence, Minority parents are forced to send their children to Greek kindergartens where they have no choice but to receive education based on Orthodox Christian faith and in a language other than their own.
20. Turkish Muslims of Rhodes and Kos, whose minority status is not recognized, continue to face many difficulties and restrictions in the field of linguistic and religious education, in administering their waqfs as well as the right of worship in all mosques on the islands. The deteriorating situation of the legacy of Ottoman architecture on these islands such as mosques and Muslim cemeteries, is another source of concern, as reflected in a report adopted by the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe in March 2012.
21. While I welcome the efforts of the Greek Government for the construction of a mosque in Athens which would serve approximately 200.000 Muslims living in the Greek capital, I regret to report the rise of extreme right in Greece which creates tension between Muslims and the rest of the country. More specifically, there is an increasing concern on the provocative statements by the members of the Golden Dawn Party that is represented in the Greek Parliament and with the violent actions of its supporters against Muslim populations living in Greece.
22. At the preceding conference I have submitted separate reports on the condition of Muslim in many other countries outside the Muslim world, and here I will touch briefly on the situation of Muslims in Ethiopia on account of the importance of the developments witnessed there over the past twenty years.

The Ethiopian society is comprised of multiple ethnicities (up to 83) speaking two hundred local dialects. Ethiopia accounts for a population of 83 million over half of whom are Muslim, mostly originating from Aromas, Afar and Somalia. The arrival of Islam in Ethiopia dates back to its earliest days in 615G, during the rule of King Ashama Bin Abjar Al Najashi.

23. Ethiopia today is a federal parliamentary republic according to its 1996 constitution. The provinces have been reconfigured on an ethnic basis, and ethnic minorities have been granted their constitutional rights. Muslims in Ethiopia represent a numeric majority, but historians and the West generally tend to perceive Ethiopia as a Christian country, a perception which may be due to the fact that Ethiopia was ruled by dominant Christian rulers who monopolized power and authority in that land for long periods. Muslims are spread in most geographic provinces and among most ethnic groupings, and they take an active part in the country's living affairs. Their history is in need of collecting and documenting and Muslims in fact are symbiotically intertwined with Christians in most regions of Ethiopia and they enjoy friendly relations with each other.
24. Muslims in Ethiopia today enjoy better conditions than before. They have been accorded larger religious freedom and the constitution is emphatic, under article 11, about the need to separate the state from religion. Also, the constitution stipulates, under article 12, that the state should not have a religion, and paragraph 13 of the same article notes that the state must not involve itself in religion and vice versa. This, in itself, represents an important development, as Christianity used to be considered as the State's official religion. The authorities have also preserved the Islamic courts which cater for the Muslims' civic affairs based on Islamic Shariaa, encouraged the teaching of Arabic and acknowledged the Muslims' official holidays. Also the supreme Islamic Council in Ethiopia has been allowed to handle religious education, to preach Islam and to build mosques.
25. Within the framework of interaction with the Muslim countries and minorities, the General Secretariat intends to hold a seminar under the title of "Islam and Muslims in North America" in the city of Washington by the end of this year in cooperation with the Islamic Federation of North America, with a focus on the political, cultural and religious conditions of Muslims and with the participation of an eminent elite of Muslim leaders and local Islamic organizations and institutions.

The present report is hereby submitted to the fourteenth session of the Council of Foreign Ministers for appropriate decision.

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