

**SPEECH OF  
HIS EXCELLENCY PROF. EKMELEDDIN IHSANOGLU  
SECRETARY GENERAL OF THE  
ORGANISATION OF THE ISLAMIC CONFERENCE**

**AT THE  
ELEVENTH SESSION OF THE  
ISLAMIC SUMMIT CONFERENCE**

**DAKAR – REPUBLIC OF SENEGAL  
13-14 MARCH 2008**

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Your Majesties,  
Your Highnesses,  
Your Excellencies,

I am deeply honoured and privileged to address your august assembly as you meet by the help of God Almighty, in your Eleventh Ordinary Summit, in the beautiful city of Dakar, the capital of the Republic of Senegal, whose gracious and historic contribution to Islam and the joint Islamic action is highly valued and appreciated.

I seize this opportunity to salute the people of the Republic of Senegal and the visionary and honourable leader of Senegal, His Excellency President Maitre Abdoulaye Wade. I would also like to extend to him a special word of gratitude and acknowledgement for the enormous efforts deployed by him personally to ensure the smooth running of the proceedings of this Summit as well as the success of its outcome.

Four and a half years have elapsed since the last Tenth Ordinary OIC Summit which was held in Putrajaya. I feel duty-bound to express my profound thanks and gratitude to His Excellency Prime Minister Abdullah Badawi of Malaysia, Chairman of the Tenth Summit, for his wise steering of the affairs of the Presidency in such an effective, innovative, and intelligent manner.

I am also duty-bound to express our high esteem and thanks to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia which hosts the Organisation Headquarters, for the perennial support, and care provided by the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques King Abdullah Bin Abdul Aziz and his Government, to the General Secretariat.

In this context, I would like also to express my sincere thanks and gratitude for the gracious gesture which the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques King Abdullah Bin Abdul Aziz has reserved to the OIC in granting a spacious piece of land in Jeddah for the construction of the new OIC Headquarters, which he will kindly build.

The historic Third OIC Extraordinary Summit which was held in Makkah Al-Mukarramah on the initiative of the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques has proven to be a watershed in the history of the Organisation as it came, at a much needed time, and allowed the Islamic Ummah to define the daunting challenges facing it, and to prescribe the remedies and solutions to confront.

Taking this opportunity, I would like to express our deep gratitude and appreciation to the Chairmen of the four OIC Standing Committees, His Majesty King Mohammed VI of the Kingdom of Morocco and Chairman of the Al-Quds Committee; His Excellency Mr. Pervez Musharraf, President of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan and Chairman of the Standing Committee on Scientific & Technological Cooperation; His Excellency Dr. Abdullah Gul, President of the Republic of Turkey and Chairman of the Standing Committee on Economic and Commercial Cooperation; and His Excellency Maitre Abdoulaye WADE, President of the Republic of Senegal and Chairman of the Standing Committee on Information and Cultural Affairs, for their praiseworthy wisdom and enlightened leadership in guiding these Committees to the best benefit of the Islamic Ummah.

**Your Majesties,  
Your Excellencies,  
Your Highnesses,**

The Muslim world today stands at cross roads, amidst global changes and challenges, with immense bearing for its future. We, in the OIC, are aware and conscious that a heavy and historic responsibility is placed on our shoulders. We have always had the firm conviction that the Muslim world is duty-bound to be one of the pioneers and shapers of this era of time, by working hard to shape its future, through commanding the basic components of autonomous efficiency, competence and ability to perform. We are fortunate that you have laid down in the last extraordinary Islamic Summit held in Makkah Al-Mukarramah in 2005 the agenda and the vision to do that.

We, in the OIC, have made it possible for the standard of the Organisation to increase and to broaden in scope, extent and amplitude during the last few years. The long awaited reforms of the Organisation has already taken roots. Those new and practical reforms were based on a concept of new work ethics, new perspectives, goals and vision. As a result, the OIC performance has witnessed an instant rise, and the services rendered to the OIC Member States have enhanced qualitatively, to match international standards.

**Your Majesties,  
Your Highnesses,  
Excellencies,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,**

To deal with these challenges of this century, we are called upon to summon our potentials to deal with overdue and chronic issues that continue to plague our lives and torment our conscience in Palestine, Iraq, Lebanon, Jammu and Kashmir, Afghanistan, Azerbaijan, Darfour, Cyprus, Cote d'Ivoire, Somalia, Comoros and elsewhere. All those are matters of serious concerns to the Ummah and require urgent remedies through concerted efforts beyond mere rhetorics. There can be no hope in an individual way out of the crisis we are suffering from. Living experience has demonstrated that – even for the advanced superpower the solutions lies in collective actions.

The situation in Palestine remains deplorable, due to the successive crisis fabricated by Israel to stall the peace process and to thwart the many peace plans and initiatives proposed by the international community. We have condemned these practices. We firmly believe that it is becoming indispensable that these aggressions and heinous crimes be officially documented and that their perpetrators be brought before international justice authorities designed for this kind of acts committed in impunity, such as the International Criminal Court.

As for the situation in Iraq, we take note of the relative improvement of the security situation in Iraq, and call on Member States to extend all possible help and assistance to the Government in Iraq, to help the Iraqi people to move beyond this critical and perilous transition period and ensure the recovery of their sovereignty, independence, territorial integrity and national unity. We also reiterate our call for the Iraqi people to abandon the sectarian strife and to abide by the contents of the Makkah Document agreed upon and signed by the highest Iraqi religious authorities who, met under the auspices of the OIC, in Makkah Al-Mukarramah on 20 October 2006.

In Kashmir, we note with satisfaction the improvement in Pakistani-Indian relations in recent years. We pray that the prevailing lull in tension will help to reaching a settlement to the issue of self-determination in Jammu and Kashmir taking into account the resolution of international legitimacy.

We are hopeful that the Cyprus issue will enter into new phase, after the change of the political scene there as a result of the outcome of the elections which took place. We look again to the resumption of the efforts of the United Nations.

The OIC also reiterate its solidarity with the Republic of Azerbaijan on recovering its territories that was illegally occupied by Armenia in defiance of the UN Security Council resolutions.

In Somalia, we regret the fact that the security situation there remains a matter of great concern. We hope that the Government of Somalia will be able to achieve progress in putting an end to the dramatic and distressing situation there.

As the Independence of Kosovo became a real fact on the ground, after a long and determined struggle of its people, the Muslim Ummah wishes them success in their future endeavours to build up their State. We declare our solidarity with them for the achievement of their aspiration and we would like to welcoming them in the folds of the Ummah.

Your Majesties,  
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Ladies and Gentlemen,

In our relations with the Western World, we are going through difficult times. We strongly feel that our religion, its sacred symbols, and on both community and individual levels Muslims are being targeted by a campaign of defamation,

denigration, stereotyping, intolerance and discrimination. It seems that ignorance about Islam and also calculated animosity with deep historic roots on the part of a minority in the West, as well as our failure to disseminate the true values of Islam are the reasons of this increasing wave of Islamophobia. We are confronted by hatred and bigotry of radical marginal groups of people who believe that it is only through insulting Muslims and their religious symbols that they can demonstrate their commitment to freedom of speech. Combating Islamophobia is one of the main priorities for our organization in the Ten Year Program of Action. On the account of this fact and particularly following the print of insulting caricatures of our beloved Prophet (PBUH), first by a Danish newspaper in September 2005, we have placed the countering of Islamophobia, among the political affairs agenda of all OIC meetings due to our understanding that Islamophobia cannot be dealt with only through cultural activities but a robust political engagement was necessary with political interlocutors in the West, and through the support of the public opinion and civil society organizations.

The OIC General Secretariat gave utmost support to the roles of the OIC Ambassadorial Groups particularly in Geneva and New York towards more concerted action. Our Organization has assumed, with a deep sense of responsibility, the role of the legitimate representative and voice of the Muslim World on issues of dialogue among civilizations, interfaith dialogue, and combating the dangerously increasing trend of Islamophobia through dynamic interaction with the international community, particularly with the UN, OSCE, Council of Europe, EU and Western governments. We have established strong ties with the centers of “think-tanks” in Europe and the USA to expose our views and values and defend our causes. We have laid down bridges of communication with the international media and press centers to project and propagate the voice of the Muslim world to the Western societies in particular and to the world public opinion in general.

Here, I would particularly like to highlight an important document that has been prepared and circulated by the General Secretariat, the first ever Report of the OIC Islamophobia Observatory. As has been exhibited clearly with some recent negative developments in some western countries, promotion of dialogue and mutual respect and combating Islamophobia is and will continue to be one of the biggest challenges faced by the Muslim World and we need concerted efforts in this area now more than ever. This Summit should give an unequivocal message to the Muslim World, to the Western World and to the international community at large that irresponsible attacks targeting our religion, our Prophet and our Muslims brothers will and cannot be condoned and that serious political engagement, dialogue and cooperation is necessary between the Muslim and Western Worlds including at the UN platforms. This is exactly what I have discussed with His Excellency the UN Secretary General yesterday.

Despite the unstable economic situation prevailing in the world, most of the OIC Member States are experiencing accelerated growth in their respective economies. The share of the OIC Member States in the world’s trade is increasing and reached the level of 9.5 per cent in 2006.

Despite these relative achievements, one can note that although the total population of the Muslim world exceeds 20 per cent of the inhabitants of the Planet, the aggregate GDP of the OIC Member States hardly reach 10 per cent of that of the worlds population.

The OIC Standing Committee for Economic and Commercial Cooperation (COMCEC) has proven to be a very effective tool in strengthening and streamlining economic and trade ties among the Member States.

The OIC was very keen to deploy substantive effort in combating poverty. It is, in this context, that the Third Extraordinary Islamic Summit has decided to establish a OIC Poverty Alleviation Fund deposited at the Islamic Development Bank under the name of Islamic Solidarity Fund for Development. The Fund has, so far, received a total pledge of U.S. Dollars 2.6 billions: One billion from the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, 300 million from the State of Kuwait, 100 million from the Islamic Republic of Iran in addition to contributions from other OIC Member States.

I would like to thank the Islamic Development Bank for the great efforts it is deploying to help the OIC Member States in all walks of economic endeavours. The impact of the IDB's contribution at the level of building the infrastructures of Member States, and other development projects has won the praise and admiration of many countries.

Your Majesties,  
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The domain of science and technology occupies a prominent place in our work. We consider this matter as the corner stone of the development of our Member States and the real asset from which we can draw resources to realize our renaissance.

In this domain, I have started the process of OIC university ranking, based on criteria, procedures and mechanisms specifically developed for the OIC. This report shall be issued annually and will be used to identify the 20 universities to be strengthened and elevated to the rank of Top 500 world universities.

In the cultural domain, I would like to put on record the commendable work of the ISESCO and IRCICA in showcasing Islamic culture and organizing events and meetings in this field. The General Secretariat has been a close partner of these two important organizations and has rendered its full support and cooperation for successful implementation of their various commendable programmes.

The First Islamic Ministerial Conference on Women held in Istanbul in 2006 had generated the momentum for the advancement of Muslim women. We have also promoted the development of youths and children by cooperating actively with the Islamic Conference Youth Forum for Dialogue and Cooperation, the Islamic Solidarity Sports Federation and polio eradication programme in some member states in Africa.

Your Majesties,  
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On the humanitarian level, we have been able to create the Tsunami Orphan Children Programme in Indonesia which took the responsibility to take care, lodge, feed, and educate 20,000 orphans of the victims of Tsunami tidal wave.

Upon the initiative of His Excellency President Abdoulaye Wade, the first ever Conference of NGOs from OIC Member States convened in Dakar last week and this Conference came up with very constructive recommendations that will develop the cooperation between civil society organizations and the OIC, making them viable tools of consultation and exchange experiences in OIC Member States.

We have focussed our attention, inter-alia, on the cases of the Muslim minorities in Myanmar, the Western Thrace, Thailand, the Philippines and the Balkans.

The financial position of the General Secretariat of the OIC has improved significantly during the recent years as compared to the past as a result of the noticeable progress made by the General Secretariat and the increased confidence of the Member States in utility and effectiveness of the Organisation

Your Majesties,  
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Excellencies,  
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The Meeting of this august assembly on the African soil for the second time in OIC history is indicative of the importance that the Muslim world gives to Africa and to our African brothers. The OIC has devoted many initiatives in the domain of the development in Africa. Besides establishing two Universities in Niger and Uganda with a view to enhancing higher and technological education in Africa, many development projects in the agricultural domains mainly cotton production were inaugurated. Moreover, a big project for combating desertification and for ensuring food self-sufficiency was launched to help Niger, through a donor conference which managed to collect more than 300 million Dollars in pledging. With establishing other funds for fighting against poverty and enhancing development, the OIC, with the help of its Member States, is embarking on a big scheme to help our brothers in this rich Continent in a befitting way.

I seize this historic occasion to call for joining this worthy endeavour, and turning the slogan of “*Solidarity in Action*” into a concrete reality.

Thank you.