

OIC

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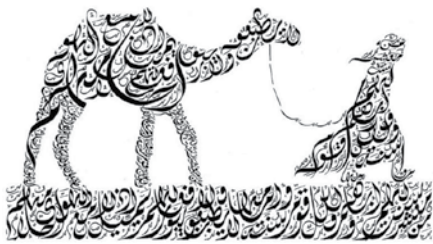
Journal



OIC is Mobilizing Global Effort to Combat Islamophobia



ICC Launches Investigation into the Situation in Palestine



An Electronic App for Learning Arabic Poetry in Malaysia



40% Increase in Demand for Food Humanitarian Assistance Due to COVID-19

Secretary General: Inauguration of WDO is a Quantum Leap towards Meeting Women's Aspirations



About OIC

The Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) is the second largest inter-governmental organization after the United Nations with a membership of 57 states spread over four continents. The Organization is the collective voice of the Muslim world. It endeavors to safeguard and protect the interests of the Muslim world in the spirit of promoting international peace and harmony among various people of the world.

The Organization was established upon a decision of the historical summit which took place in Rabat, Kingdom of Morocco on 12th Rajab 1389 Hijra (25 September 1969) following the criminal arson of Al-Aqsa Mosque in occupied Jerusalem. In 1970 the first ever meeting of Islamic Conference of Foreign Minister (ICFM) was held in Jeddah which decided to establish a permanent secretariat in Jeddah headed by the organization's secretary general. Dr. Yousef Ahmed Al-Othaimeen is the 11th Secretary General who assumed the office in November 2016.

The first OIC Charter was adopted by the 3rd ICFM Session held in 1972. The Charter laid down the objectives and principles of the organization and fundamental purposes to strengthen the solidarity and cooperation among the Member States. Over the last 40 years, the membership has grown from its founding members of 30 to 57 states. The Charter was amended to keep pace with the developments that have unraveled across the world. The present Charter of the OIC was adopted by the Eleventh Islamic Summit held in Dakar on 13-14 March 2008 to become the pillar of the OIC future Islamic action in line with the requirements of the 21st century.

The Organization has the singular honor to galvanize the Ummah into a unified body and have actively represented the Muslims by espousing all causes close to the hearts of over 1.5 billion Muslims of the world. The Organization has consultative and cooperative relations with the UN and other inter-governmental organizations to protect the vital interests of the Muslims and to work for the settlement of conflicts and disputes involving Member States. In safeguarding the true values of Islam and the Muslims, the organization has taken various steps to remove misperceptions and have strongly advocated elimination of discrimination against the Muslims in all forms and manifestations.

The Member States of the OIC face many challenges in the 21st century and to address those challenges, the third extraordinary session of the Islamic Summit held in Makkah in December 2005, laid down the blue print called the Ten-Year Program of Action. It has successfully concluded with the close of 2015. A successor programme for the next decade (2016-2025) has been adopted.

The new programme OIC-2025 is anchored in the provisions of the OIC Charter and focuses on 18 priority areas with 107 goals. The priority areas include issues of Peace and Security, Palestine and Al-Quds, Poverty Alleviation, Counter-terrorism, Investment and Finance, Food Security, Science and Technology, Climate Change and Sustainability, Moderation, Culture and Interfaith Harmony, Empowerment of Women, Joint Islamic Humanitarian Action, Human Rights and Good Governance, among others.

Among the OIC's key bodies: the Islamic Summit, the Council of Foreign Ministers (CFM), the General Secretariat, in addition to the Al-Quds Committee and three permanent committees concerned with science and technology, economy and trade, and information and culture. There are also specialized organs under the banner of the OIC including the Islamic Development Bank and the Islamic Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, as well as subsidiary and affiliate organs that play a vital role in boosting cooperation in various fields among the OIC member states.

For more details, visit the OIC website at
www.oic-oci.org



منظمة التعاون الإسلامي
OIC - OCI

OUR MESSAGE



Yousef A. Al-Othaimen

*Secretary General of the
Organisation of Islamic Cooperation*

I want to emphasize that at the General Secretariat, we look forward to the WDO carrying out its tasks with confident steps and on solid foundations to play its role in empowering women in the Member States

Well-Deserved Women's Day

Women occupied the front seat of the scene in the General Secretariat of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), especially recently forming a qualitative addition. The OIC is proud of their kindness and standing side by side with men to present an excellent example for Muslim women who can prove their competence in the international field.

The OIC participated in many events, conferences, and seminars that accompanied, preceded, and followed International Women's Day on March 08, 2021. Thus, the celebration comes parallel to the tremendous effort that the OIC's Member States have made to push the Women Development Organization (WDO) into action with a strong start from Cairo as its permanent headquarters. The WDO can now address women's issues and empower them in the Islamic world.

The WDO was established per a resolution issued by the thirty-sixth session of the Council of Foreign Ministers (CFM) in 2009. Since the adoption of its statute by a CFM resolution in 2010, the CFM has urged the Member States to speed up the ratification process for it to start its work to activate the role of the OIC in the advancement of women and following up the implementation of its Plan of Action for the Advancement of Women (OPAAW). The statute came into effect on July 31, 2020, and the WDO held the first session of the Ministerial Council in October 2020, which adopted the WDO's rules of procedure and modus operandi.

In this context, I extend my profound thanks and appreciation to the Arab Republic of Egypt, the WDO's headquarters country, for the arrangements and efforts it has made to make this mission successful in preparing the WDO to commence its activities. I also thank the government of Burkina Faso for its efforts in following up on the implementation of the resolutions issued by the Seventh Ministerial Conference on the Role of Women in Development in the Member States it hosted in 2018.

I want to emphasize that at the General Secretariat, we look forward to the WDO carrying out its tasks with confident steps and on solid foundations to play its role in empowering women in the Member States and advancing their status in light of the challenges they face in our societies due to political, economic, or social conditions in addition to some cultural concepts, customs, and traditions that negatively impact women and limit their role in the development of society. Add to this the fact that the repercussions of the coronavirus pandemic have increased women's concerns and pressures.

The past few weeks have witnessed many activities, events, programs, and seminars. The OIC celebrated the International Day of Women and Girls in the field of science and technology. The General Secretariat launched an electronic platform for two weeks, starting from February 11, 2021, through its official website as well as via social networking sites, to review the biographies and pictures of model women and girls who have made valuable achievements in the field of science and technology in the Member States.

The General Secretariat hosted on its electronic platform many female researchers and experts from different parts of the Islamic world, such as Dr. Haifa Jamal Al-Layl, President of Effat University in Jeddah, who gave a lecture entitled: (Higher Education and COVID-19: Opportunities and Challenges), in addition to Dr. Rahma Ahmed Haji Othman, former Director in the Malaysian Ministry of Higher Education, former Vice President of the International Islamic University for Research and Innovation in Malaysia, who gave a lecture on "Adopting 21st Century Technologies and Innovations in Learning and Teaching Islamic Studies: Exploring the Future Proactively through Planning and Not by Chance." Add to this the virtual seminar on "The Role of Women in Promoting Peace and Security," in which female speakers from Senegal, Sudan, and Afghanistan participated.

The OIC General Secretariat participated in the virtual ministerial round table meeting held on the sidelines of the sixty-fifth session of the Commission on the Status of Women of the United Nations devoted to introducing the OIC's WDO.

As I indicated in a previous speech to the women working in the General Secretariat, the OIC's movement in this field derives its strength and effectiveness from the support of the Member States, especially Saudi Arabia, which has adopted plans and implemented initiatives and strategies that significantly advance Saudi women through access to leadership positions and high rates of education and work. In this context, I value the efforts made by all Member States to raise the status of women and pass the necessary legislation to ensure this.

On this occasion, I would not fail to extend my sincere thanks and appreciation also to the headquarters state, Saudi Arabia, for its constant support to the General Secretariat to carry out its tasks to the fullest and facilitate its work.

OIC Journal

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OIC Related Links

Subsidiary Organs

The International Islamic Fiqh Academy (IIFA) www.iifa-aifi.org
The Statistical, Economic and Social Research and Training Center for
Islamic Countries (SESRIC) www.sesric.org
The Research Center for Islamic History, Art and Culture
(IRCICA) www.ircica.org
The Islamic Center for the Development of Trade (ICDT) www.icdt-oic.org
The Islamic University of Technology (UIT) www.uitoic-dhaka.edu

Specialized Institutions and Organs

The Islamic Development Bank (IDB) www.isdb.org
Union of OIC News Agencies (UNA) www.una-oic.org
The Islamic Broadcasting Union (IBU) www.ibuj.org
The Islamic World Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization in
Rabat (ISESCO) www.isesco.org.ma
Islamic World Academy of Sciences (IAS) www.iasworld.org

Affiliated Institutions

Islamic Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ICCI) www.iccia.org
Organization of Islamic Capitals and Cities (OICC) www.oicc.org
Organization of the Islamic Shipowners Association
(OISA) www.oisaonline.com
World Federation of Arab Islamic International Schools
(WFAIS) www.wfais.org
Islamic Cooperation Youth Forum
www.icyforum.org
Islamic World Academy of Sciences (IAS) www.iasworld.org

OIC Calendar: May – August 2021

2 June 2021 - Meeting of the Open-ended Governmental Expert Group in charge of the review of the rules governing the tasks, duties and modus operandi of the Permanent Representatives Committee (CPR) – General Secretariat Headquarters.

7 June 2021 – Meeting on Principles and Procedures of granting OIC Awards - General Secretariat Headquarters.

9 June 2021 - Preparatory meeting of the second session of the OIC Summit on Science and Technology - Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates

16 June 2021 - Second Summit of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation on Science and Technology - Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates

20 June 2021 – Meeting to review and update the Rules of Procedure of CFM meetings –General Secretariat Headquarters.

27 June 2021 - Open-ended Meeting of the Intergovernmental Group of Experts to study, revise and finalize the draft modes of operation of OIC contact groups –General Secretariat Headquarters.

4 July 2021 – Meeting of the Intergovernmental Group of Expert to prepare Draft Rules Governing the Appointment of Special Envoys to the OIC by Non-Member States –General Secretariat Headquarters.

6 July 2021 - Seventh sessions of the Ministerial Conference on the Role of Women in the Development of OIC Member States.



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Al-Othaimeen Calls on Countries to Support Declaration of March 15 as International Day to Combat Islamophobia

Secretary General: “We must not give religious intolerance and hatred the slightest space”

The Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) organized a high-level meeting on March 17, to highlight the efforts aimed at declaring March 15 of each year as an international day to combat Islamophobia, as part of the activities of the Islamic Group at the United Nations in New York.

OIC Secretary General, Dr. Yousef bin Ahmed Al-Othaimeen, called on all Members of the United Nations and international and regional organizations to support the designation of March 15 as the International Day to Combat Islamophobia. He stressed that this would be an opportunity for the international community to reiterate its commitment to fight anti-Muslim hatred and religious discrimination and to promote the values of tolerance, understanding, inter-faith harmony and solidarity.

Al Othaimeen conveyed this message on the day of Commemoration of 15 March 2019 Terrorist Attack in Christchurch, New Zealand. He stated that: “On behalf of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation and on my own behalf, allow me, first of all, to pay tribute to the martyrs, victim of the tragic incident that occurred in Christchurch, New

Zealand, on March 15, 2019. May Allah provide their families, who until today must bear such a dreadful loss, with continued solace and perseverance”.

The Secretary General continued in the speech delivered on his behalf by Ambassador Tarig Ali Bakheet, Assistant Secretary-General for Humanitarian, Cultural and Social Affairs that : “on 15 March 2019, a lunatic extremist launched a heinous attack against defenseless Muslims performing their prayers in peaceful places of worship and ambushed two mosques. The tragedy made it clear to the entire world that terrorism has no religion, that terrorist acts could be perpetrated by anyone regardless of their faith. So much pain followed, as 40 were injured and 51 lives were claimed by the brutality of the perpetrator.”

Secretary General added that, “Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern, her government and the people of New Zealand voiced outright condemnation of that heinous crime. Their support for and solidarity with the families of the victims and the Muslim community were remarkable. I would like to reiterate to them the OIC’s highest consideration.”

Dr. Al-Othaimeen said: “We must not forget the lesson learned out of this incident, that we must not give religious intolerance and hatred the slightest space in our societies, even the most peaceful countries in the world, are not immune to such danger.”

He added: “It is sad to note that many Muslims today continue to suffer from violent acts brought by far-right supporters, especially in countries where their ideology is soaring. We noted with concern that in some cases anti-Muslim ideology is becoming popular, in parallel with attacks against Muslims and anything associated with Islam.”

Al-Othaimeen pointed out that Islamophobia around the world has reached an alarming level. Therefore, hatred and intolerance based on religion or belief are simply unacceptable. They must be contained through collective efforts of the international community, through dialogue, cooperation, and solidarity. The OIC is strongly committed to contributing to those efforts as it is committed to fighting terrorism and any form of violence on the basis of religion or belief.

A Call for Tolerance after the Exacerbation of Discrimination against Muslims



A sign with words "Love Requires Courage and Determination" appears on the window of the Lynnwood Islamic Center in Christchurch, which was attacked on March 15, 2019.

Pakistani Foreign Minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi called on the Secretary General of the United Nations, to hold a global dialogue to address the rising wave of Islamophobia and promote harmony between religions, as a step to enhance international engagement in addressing the issue.

Qureshi said, "Dialogue and understanding are our way forward. The only way to create peaceful and harmonious societies is through understanding each other better, the United Nations is the best platform to build this kind of understanding."

This came during a speech he delivered virtually, to a meeting to adopt the International Day for Combating Islamophobia.

Qureshi thanked the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) Group in New York for organizing this event, noting that it will send a clear message against contemporary challenges of racism, ethnic discrimination, xenophobia, and negative cases of stereotyping and stigmatization.

He pointed out that commemoration of this day contributes to raising international awareness about Islamophobia and anti-Muslim sentiments, in addition to promoting the message of tolerance, peaceful coexistence, and religious and cultural harmony.

Qureshi said: "The purpose of commemorating this day is to show absolute solidarity

with humanity, to convey a strong message of respect for human dignity, in addition to renewing our common commitment to the principle of (unity in diversity)." He noted that this day is for unity, not for discrimination, and warning against those who want to sow discord, and portraying this day as directed against a region, religion, or country. The permanent representative of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia to the United Nations, Ambassador Abdullah bin Yahya Al-Muallami, participated in the high-level meeting organized by the Organization of Islamic Cooperation in New York to commemorate the International Day against Islamophobia.

In a speech delivered at the beginning of the meeting, he welcomed the interest shown by the Special Rapporteur, which appears in his report on freedom of religion or belief entitled "Combating Islamophobia - Hatred against Muslims to eliminate discrimination and intolerance based on religion or belief." Al-Mouallimi pointed out that Islamophobia - unfortunately - is rampant everywhere, and campaigns based on hate speech and disinformation that are engulfed in social media have made it increasingly difficult to confront and eliminate the phenomenon.

He stated that it is important to realize that the threat to freedoms in a society threatens religious freedoms on a large scale, high-

lighting the "Makkah Document" issued by the International Conference on the Values of Moderation, organized by the Muslim World League, in Makkah Al-Mukarramah 27 - 29 May 2019.

He explained that this document provides instructions that help Muslims clarify the true meaning of Islam based on a number of principles, that highlight the relationship between Islam and the various laws and philosophies, among those principles is, that it is innocent of the sins committed by its followers and those who are affiliated with it, and that a true understanding of Islam requires an objective point of view, free from stereotypes and bias.

Ambassador Al-Muallami expressed his grave concern about the escalation of individual attacks against Muslims, and that these personal behaviors should not be attributed to any religion or nationality, stressing that spreading hate speech endangers the security of society and serves the extremists' agenda by feeding their idea of hatred. He stressed on the negative impact of disproportionate measures that target Muslims and lead to restricting their rights, which will increase racial and religious intolerance, discrimination and violence, calling for the abolition of these measures and the protection of Muslims' intellectual freedom.

Guterres: Muslim Women Face “Triple Levels of Discrimination”



António Guterres during a visit to Islamic Cultural Centre in New York 22 March 2019

UN Secretary-General António Guterres participated via a pre-recorded video broadcast in a commemorative event held online, organized by the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), to mark the International Day to Combat Islamophobia.

The 57 Member States of the OIC designated the 15 March as the International Day to Combat Islamophobia.

The UN Secretary-General cited a recent report to the UN Human Rights Council which found that suspicion, discrimination and outright hatred towards Muslims has risen to “epidemic proportions”.

Examples listed included disproportionate restrictions against Muslims manifesting their beliefs, limits on accessing citizenship, and widespread stigmatization of Muslim communities.

The study also highlighted how Muslim women face “triple levels of discrimination” because of their gender, ethnicity and faith, he added, while the media and some persons in power have further compounded stereotypes.

“Anti-Muslim bigotry is sadly in line with other distressing trends we are seeing globally - a resurgence in ethno-nationalism, neo-Nazism, stigma and hate speech targeting vulnerable populations including Muslims, Jews, some minority Christian communities as well as others”, the UN Secretary-General

said.

He stressed that “discrimination diminishes us all”, the UN chief called for safeguarding the rights of minority communities, many of whom are under threat.

“As we move toward evermore multi-ethnic and multi-religious societies, we need political, cultural and economic investments to strengthen social cohesion and tackle bigotry,” he stated.

The UN Secretary General underlined that “diversity is a richness, not a threat”, and called for greater investment in promoting social cohesion and tackling bigotry.

“We must continue to push for policies that fully respect human rights and religious, cultural and unique human identity”, he said

“As the Holy Quran reminds us: nations and tribes were created to know one another.”

The Secretary-General underscored that fighting discrimination, racism and xenophobia is a priority for the United Nations.

Following a fall-out in relations between many Muslim countries and some Western nations in the wake of the September 11 terrorist attacks in the United States - and subsequent attacks in London, Madrid and Bali - the Organization established the UN Alliance of Civilizations (UNAOC) in 2005.

Miguel Ángel Moratinos, the current UNAOC High Representative, recalled the initiative was launched as a “political soft power

tool” whose objectives include promoting mutual respect among diverse cultures.

“Despite progress made in building bridges of understanding through the promotion of intercultural and interfaith dialogue, manifestations of anti-Muslim hatred persisted and morphed into different forms”, he said.

“Islamophobia cannot be seen in isolation from the worrying increase in xenophobia and hate speech against minorities including immigrants and other faith communities.”

Mr. Moratinos said mutual respect, interfaith harmony and peaceful co-existence can be achieved “when there is broad space for everyone to practice the rituals of their religions or beliefs freely and safely.”

For the President of the UN General Assembly, Turkish diplomat Volkan Bozkir, any form of discrimination, including based on religion or belief, “is a deeply personal attack”.

He urged countries to re-commit to the UN Charter, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and other related instruments, expressing hope that they will lay the foundation for national laws to end hate speech and hate crimes.

“Today our conversation is focused on Islamophobia, but the source of this scourge is a source that imperils us all. The answer is solidarity, equality, and respect for the equal dignity and entitlement to fundamental human rights of every individual”, he said.

Major Terrorist Attacks against Muslims in the World



New Zealand Massacre

54 people were killed on April 15 in a gun attack on two mosques in Christchurch, New Zealand. A right-wing extremist carried out the attack. New Zealand Prime Minister described it as a terrorist attack.



Targeting Migrants

In September 2018, a German ran over a group of migrants in the Ruhr region, Germany, wounding 8 people. The Minister of the Interior in North Rhine-Westphalia said that the attacker had an intention to kill the migrants.



Quebec Attack

A gunman killed 6 people when he opened fire on worshipers at a mosque in Quebec, Canada, on 29 January 2017. The Prime Minister of Canada said at the time that it was a terrorist attack against Muslims.



Truck Run-Over

A man used pickup truck to run over Muslim worshipers as they leave the Finsbury Park Mosque in Britain on 19 June 2017. The attack was classified as anti-Muslims.



Gun Attack

On July 22, 2016, a young man shot at migrants in Munich, Germany, killing 9 of them before he committed suicide. Reports indicated that the attacker was a right wing, racist and extremist.



Butcher of Norway

In July 2011, the extremist Anders Breivik killed 77 young Labor Party members in a horrific massacre. Breivik said that he carried out his crime to protect Norway from what he claimed the Islamic invasion.

Source: DW Website.

The Organisation of Islamic Cooperation



International Human Rights Council adopts the OIC Resolution and Commemorates the 10th Anniversary of 16/18

The International Human Rights Council in Geneva adopted a resolution submitted by the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, condemning the persistence of serious cases of stigmatization of persons, based on religion or belief, and the increase in incidents of religious intolerance and related violence. The resolution also condemned any call for hatred based on religion or incitement to discrimination, hostility or violence, whether through print, audio, visual, electronic or any other means.

The resolution welcomed the international, regional and national initiatives, aimed at promoting harmony between religions and cultures, especially the series of expert meetings held in Washington, London, Geneva, Doha, Jeddah, Singapore and The Hague, within the framework of the Istanbul Process to implement Human Rights Council Resolution 16/18, and regional workshops and the Rabat Plan of Action regarding the prohibition of advocating for national or religious racial hatred.

The resolution referred to the speech of the OIC Secretary General, Dr. Yousef bin Ahmed Al-Othaimeen at the 15th session of the Council, and his call for states to take measures to create a local environment dominated by religious tolerance, peace and respect, and to adopt measures to criminalize incitement to violence based on religion and belief, to promote religious freedom and pluralism, and to train Government officials on effective outreach strategies.

OIC had joined the international community in celebrating the tenth anniversary of the historic Human Rights Council resolution entitled: "Combating intolerance, negative stereotyping, stigmatization, discrimination and incitement to violence and violence against persons on the basis of religion or belief," which was adopted for the first time unanimously on March 24, 2011.

A report issued by the OIC Islamic group at the International Human Rights Council - Geneva stated that Resolution 16/18 remains a unique document that formulates a globally agreed plan of action, consisting of eight points to combat the growing problem of religious intolerance, xenophobia, discrimination and violence.

The report continued that, since 2011, the unanimous adoption of Resolution 16/18



in the United Nations General Assembly on the one hand, and the Human Rights Council on the other hand, has shown a united front for the international community against this scourge.

The report explained that, the Istanbul Process was a mechanism for implementing resolution 16/18, and served as a useful platform to deepen dialogue, enhance mutual understanding and exchange best practices between states, civil society and other relevant stakeholders. OIC welcomed Pakistan's announcement to host the next (8th) meeting of the Istanbul process in its capital, Islamabad.

The group's report indicated that the tenth anniversary of Human Rights Council Resolution 16/18 provides an appropriate opportunity for all parties, to assess progress made, as well as the multifaceted challenges that all parties face today, in order to reduce violence, and religious intolerance.

In this regard, OIC has expressed its regret that the systematic spread of Islamophobia, especially in the aftermath of the events of September 11th, has led to an increase in discriminatory laws, policies and state practices that target Muslims as belonging to minorities, whether they are individuals, societies or institutions.

The latest report issued by the United Nations Special Rapporteur on freedom of religion or belief emphasized the global escalation in Islamophobia and its wide-ranging effects on human rights. The COVID-19 pandemic has also led to an increase in anti-Islamic sentiments and actions, which can be seen in the sharp rise in, hate speech and hate crimes against Muslim societies, including the organized campaigns to stigmatize Muslims as spreaders of the virus

and a reason for the spread of death among people.

In this context, we note that the wave of populism, racism and extremist nationalism is working to fuel hostility against Islam and Muslims, as some representatives of states and government officials distort Islam and Muslims through the false link between Muslims with terrorism and extremism to achieve political gains.

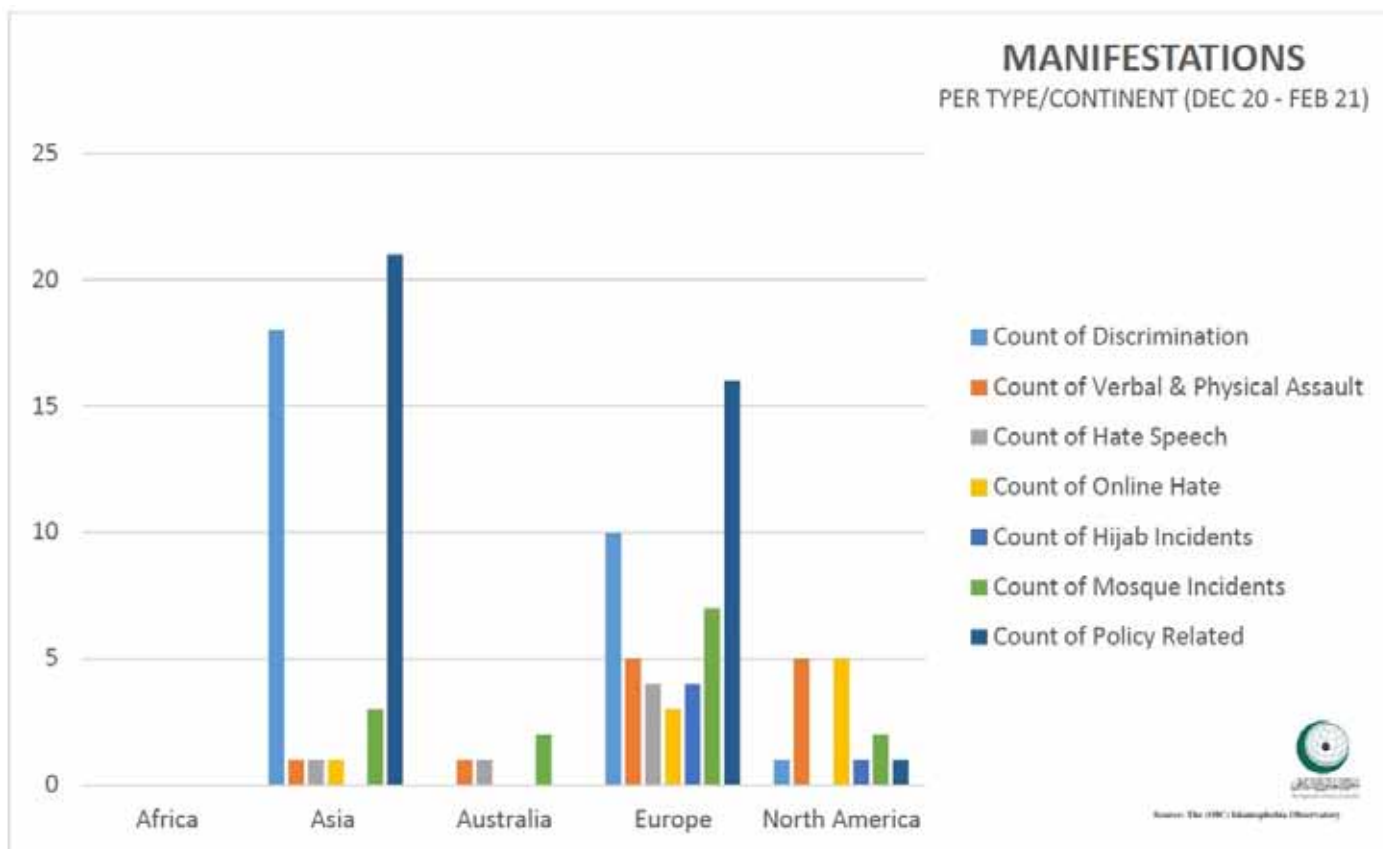
Certain types of mainstream media, think tanks, and academia emerged as advocates of such xenophobic ideologies and the process of exclusion. Unregulated social media platforms have also served to amplify negative stereotypes and stigmatize Muslim individuals and communities.

OIC reiterated that contempt and hostility to Islam has led to provocative incidents of deliberate defamation of Islam, distortion of the image of the Holy Prophet (PBUH), and desecration of religious books under the pretext of freedom of expression or freedom of the press.

The report stated that the right to freedom of expression and opinion is not an absolute right, and no one has the right to deliberately provoke and harm the feelings of billions of Muslims. Therefore, on this occasion, OIC reaffirmed its firm determination to combat religious intolerance, xenophobia, discrimination, and Islamophobia in all its forms and manifestations.

The group's report echoed the call made by the OIC foreign ministers, that the United Nations General Assembly proclaim on March 15 as the "International Day to combat Islamophobia" in order to increase public awareness about this clear issue in the field of human rights.

IPHRC Calls for International Commitment to Preserve Multiculturalism



The Independent Permanent Human Rights Commission (IPHRC) of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) joins the international community in observing the 'International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination 2021' and reiterates the importance of recognizing, addressing, and eradicating all forms of racism and ethnic oppression across the world.

To deal with the evolving challenges of racial discrimination, IPHRC also welcomes this year's apt theme, i.e., "Youth Standing up Against Racism," which affirms the important role of youth in any society and the need to mobilize their power to foster a global culture of tolerance, equality, and non-discrimination.

The Commission underscored that Islam categorically prohibits all forms of racism, discrimination, and intolerance. It is among the fundamental principles of Islam that all people are equal and enjoy equal rights and responsibilities regardless of their caste, creed, color, or faith.

Combatting racism entails respect for di-

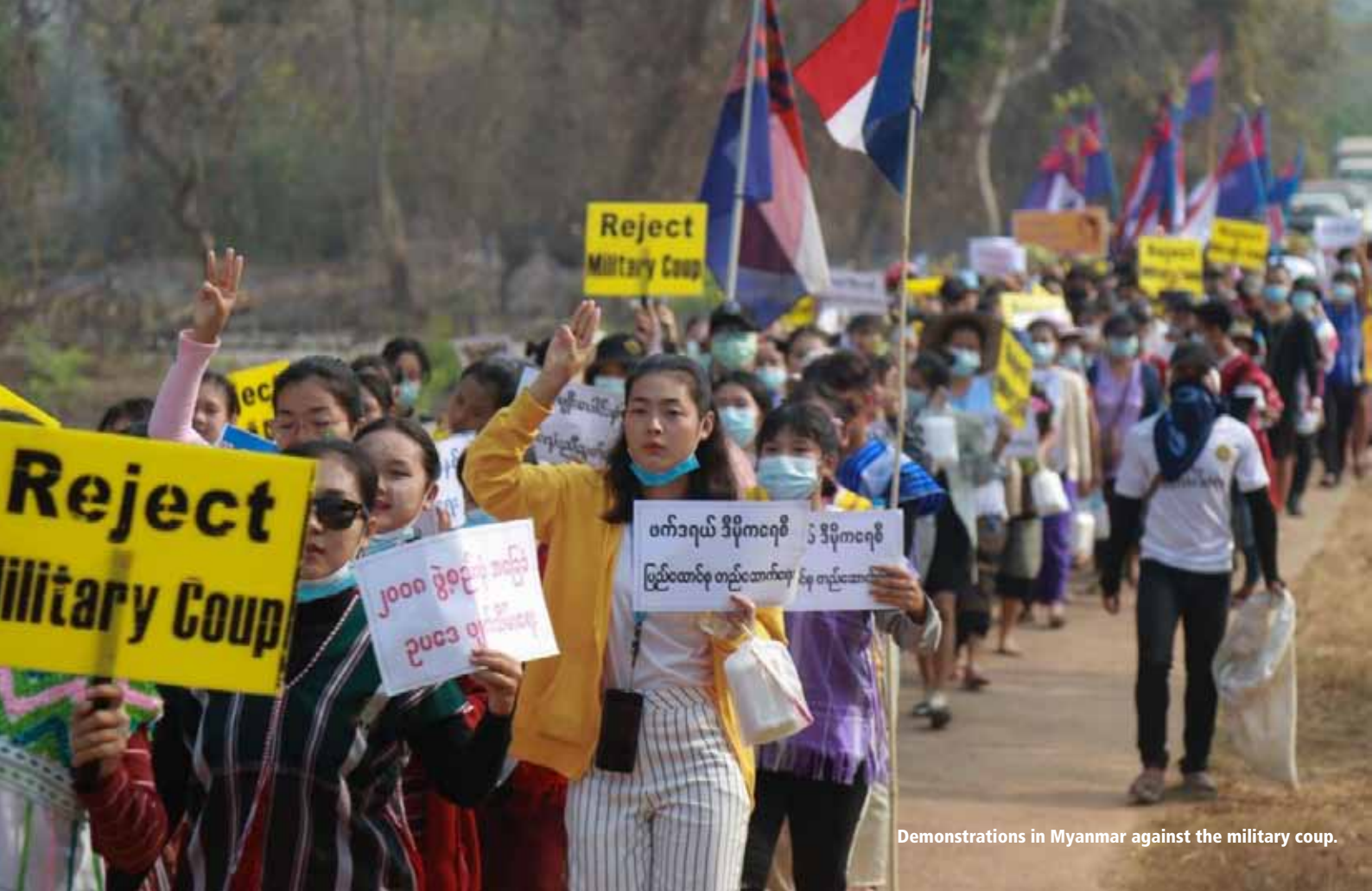
versity, multiculturalism, inclusiveness, democracy, and the rule of law, which are core values needed to enjoy human rights and fundamental freedoms by all. Unfortunately, however, racial prejudice and intolerant attitudes continue to adversely affect people's human rights around the world, in particular against minorities, which needs to be countered with all available tools and by everyone, including the youth.

The Commission warned that the intellectual and political resistance to multiculturalism, seen in the growing populism and right-wing movements, is one of the underlying causes of the resurgence of racism and xenophobia in recent years, duly manifested in the form of Islamophobia, which is against all norms, values, and obligations of International Human Rights Law.

Highlighting the linkage between Islamophobia and racism, the Commission stressed that hate crimes and discrimination against Muslims across the world are associated with the fact that Muslims are being portrayed as racially distinct. The social con-

struction of racial categories is at the heart of the process through which Islamophobia affects anyone who "looks Muslim," hence, the racialization of Muslims. Consequently, Islamophobia, as a form of racism, is being developed by the same means as all the social structures that involve race and have been built into the mindset of people. This fact is aptly explained in the recent report of the UN Special Rapporteur on freedom of religion, where the term "Islamophobia" is used to characterize the complex and diverse set of processes that accommodate exclusionary paradigms, which are anchored in the misperceptions of Islam to stigmatize Muslim individuals and communities.

To strategically combat racism, the Commission stressed the need to engage with the media to address negative stereotyping and involving all sectors of civil society as well as religious leaders, minorities, and ethnic groups in framing public policies aimed at safeguarding and promoting cultural diversity, eradication of all forms of racism and creation of resilient societies.



Demonstrations in Myanmar against the military coup.

Rohingya Suffer More in the Troubled Myanmar

Myanmar military leaders carried out a coup d'état, following which senior leaders in the country, including President Win Myint and Chancellor Aung San Suu Kyi, were arrested in early February.

The UN special envoy to Myanmar, Christine Schraner Burgner, had warned members of the Security Council of a catastrophe in the region. However, the Council failed to reach an agreed statement to send a «firm and unified message» to the leaders of the military coup in Myanmar. During a Security Council session on 31/3/2021, the UN envoy to Myanmar said that Myanmar might slide into a failed state, and that the Rohingya will suffer more than others.

Burgner appealed to members of the Council « to “consider all available tools to take collective action and do what is right, what the people of Myanmar deserve and prevent a multi-dimensional catastrophe in the heart of Asia,”. She estimated the number of people arrested since the Myanmar army coup at about 2559, while the number of deaths at the hands of the army and police forces reached 521.

Burgner expected that the military would

not engage with international community unless they felt they were able to contain the situation through repression. The General Secretariat of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) followed the situation in Myanmar closely, especially the reports received on the ongoing developments therein. It renewed its firm position and support for the Muslim Rohingya people and its call for ensuring their safety and security and recognition of their basic rights, including the right to full citizenship and creating conditions conducive to a voluntary, safe, dignified and sustainable return for all Rohingya refugees and internally displaced people. Furthermore, it called on the international community to provide more support for the various efforts aimed at achieving justice and accountability for the benefit of this minority and for the immediate cessation of all forms of violence against them.

Meanwhile, a delegation from the OIC General Secretariat and the Islamic Solidarity Fund visited the Republic of Bangladesh, from 27 /2/2021 to 2/3/2021, to witness firsthand the situation of Rohingya refugees. The delegation held a series of meetings

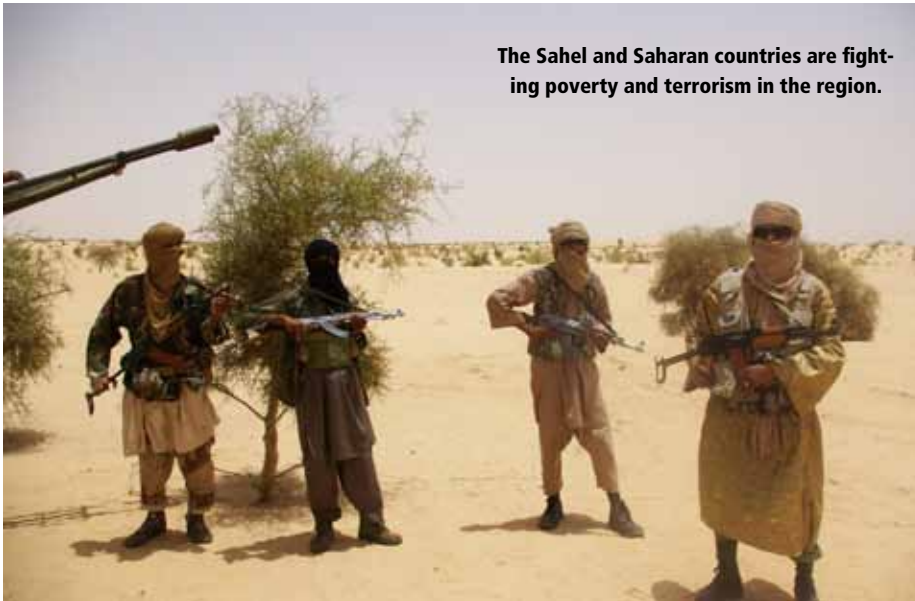
with officials in Bangladesh to consult on ways to support bilateral cooperation and coordination on the issue of Rohingya Muslims in Myanmar.

The visit came within the framework of full solidarity with Bangladesh for sheltering one million afflicted Rohingya minority in Myanmar, and the OIC keen interest to follow the conditions of Muslim communities and minorities in non-member states.

In his speech on 23/2/2021, at the high-level segment of the 46th session of the UN Human Rights Council, the OIC Secretary-General, Dr. Yousef Al-Othaimen, reaffirmed the OIC principled position in support of the legitimate rights of the Rohingya Muslim community.

In a resolution issued during its 47th session, held last November in Niamey, Niger, the OIC Council of Foreign Ministers, welcomed the ruling issued by the International Court of Justice in The Hague, on 23/1/2020, on the case against the Republic of the Union of Myanmar. Under the said ruling, the court imposed precautionary measures to prevent the reoccurrence of genocide against the Rohingya in Myanmar.

OIC Reiterates its Support to G5 Sahel



The Sahel and Saharan countries are fighting poverty and terrorism in the region.

The General Secretariat of the Organization of Islamic cooperation (OIC) participated in the 7th Summit of Heads of State of the Sahel region, held in N'Djamena, the capital of the Republic of Chad, on 15-16/2/2021. In its statement, read out by Yousef Al-Dubaei, Assistant Secretary-General for Po-

litical Affairs, on behalf of Secretary General Dr. Yousef A. Al-Othaimeen, the OIC reiterated its support to the G5 Sahel, in addressing the security, humanitarian and development challenges faced by the region. He indicated that the OIC would redouble its efforts to implement the Resolutions of

the Council of Foreign Ministers related to Mali and the Sahel region, and that it would support the joint efforts of the countries of the Group.

Presidents of Chad, Mauritania, Mali, Burkina Faso, Niger, Senegal, Ghana and France attended the summit. In addition, Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Morocco and a number of Foreign Ministers from Europe, the Middle East and Africa, as well as executive officials from the UN, the AU, the EU and ECOWAS and the World Organization of la Francophonie participated in the conference.

The leaders met with the French President Emmanuel Macron, via video technology.

The President of Chad, Idris Deby, said that the vast Sahel region fights "poverty, a fertile ground for terrorism." The President called on the international community to intensify "urgent" funding for development, which would minimize the sources of militants' recruitment. On the sidelines of this summit, Chad also announced that it would send 1,200 soldiers to the "border triangle" between Mali, Niger and Burkina Faso to fight the jihadists. Chad called for international support to help the Sahel region.

Sri Lankan President Confirms Openness and Outreach with the OIC

Secretary-General of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), Dr. Yousef bin Ahmed Al-Othaimeen, received a phone call from the President of the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka, Gotabaya Rajapaksa, on 21/3/2021. They reviewed relations between the OIC and Sri Lanka and the situation of the Muslim community in the country. Al-Othaimeen valued the Sri Lankan President's call and desire to open up and communicate with international organizations. He also welcomed the decision by the Sri Lankan government regarding the right of Muslims to bury their dead in accordance with Islamic rituals.

The Secretary-General reiterated the OIC keen interest to follow the conditions of Muslim communities and defend their rights in non-member states.

The OIC General Secretariat had welcomed

the Sri Lankan government's decision to reverse its earlier decision to cremate the bodies of the Muslim victims of the COVID-19 and allow their burial. The decision followed the invitation by the Secretary-General, on several occasions, since the outbreak of the pandemic and the prohibition of the burial of Muslims in Sri Lanka, to the authorities therein to refrain from cremating the bodies of Muslim victims and to allow their burial in accordance with Islamic rituals. The Secretary-General renewed the same call in his statement before the 46th session of the UN Human Rights Council, on 23/2/2021.

The General Secretariat appreciated the response of the authorities in Sri Lanka to these calls, and reiterated its keen interest to follow the conditions of Muslim communities and minorities in non-member states and defend their rights, hoping that the de-

cision of the authorities in Sri Lanka would contribute to protecting the rights of Muslims therein.

The OIC, the second largest intergovernmental organization in the world after the UN, has been following, and continues to follow, the situation of Muslim minorities and communities around the world. The OIC position reflects the consensus of 57 Member States from different parts of the Islamic world.

The Sri Lankan government had decided last year to incinerate the bodies of the deceased due to alleged infection with the Coronavirus, claiming that the virus could spread by polluting the groundwater. As a result, Muslim protests erupted there, calling on the government to backtrack on it for contradicting the Islamic tenants, but in vain.



The Organization of Islamic Cooperation stands firmly with its member states in their fight against terrorism.

Strong Condemnation of Terrorism in Different Parts of the Islamic World

The General Secretariat of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) stood firmly and clearly in its condemnation of the series of terrorist incidents and attacks witnessed by different countries in the African, Arab and Asian geographical regions of the Islamic world.

Niger was one of those countries that witnessed one of the most violent attacks in the past weeks, most salient of which was the terrorist attack against innocent sellers returning from a market in the Tillaberi region in the west of the country. The attack left at least 58 people dead. Food stores were set ablaze. The attack was described as a horrific massacre. The OIC Secretary-General, Dr. Yousef bin Ahmed Al-Othaimeen, strongly condemned the attack. He offered his sincere condolences to the bereaved families of the victims and to the government and people of Niger. He wished the injured a speedy recovery. The OIC reiterated its condemnation of terrorism in all its forms and manifestations and continued to support Sahel countries in combating this phenomenon. The General Secretariat had also condemned in the strongest terms the continuing terrorist attacks in the Tillaberi region in western Niger, the latest of which was the

armed attack against three villages in which many innocent civilians were killed. The Secretary-General had sent a message of condolences and sympathy to His Excellency Muhammadu Issoufou, former President of the Republic of Niger, following the terrorist operations in the Tillaberi region, reiterating the OIC stand in support with the Republic of Niger in its fight against terrorism.

The position rejecting terrorism in Niger was also reiterated by the OIC on Somalia. It strongly condemned the terrorist attacks witnessed in Somalia recently, which resulted in the death and injury of innocent civilians. The General Secretariat condemned the escalation of terrorist acts in the country at a time that required concerted effort of everyone to stop violence and prepare for the upcoming elections.

The OIC position was firm in rejecting terrorism in Iraq, as reflected in its strong condemnation of the criminal and terrorist act that targeted a popular market in the center of the Iraqi capital, Baghdad, on 21/1/2021, and resulted in the deaths and injury of a number of innocent citizens.

The OIC also expressed its strong condemnation of the terrorist act of launching a number of rockets at the city of Erbil in

northern Iraq, which resulted in the killing of one person and wounding a number of people.

The OIC also condemned the series of bombings and assassinations that occurred in Afghanistan recently, as part of a sudden escalation of violence, which resulted in casualties, including civilians and law enforcement personnel. The Secretary-General offered his sincere condolences to the families of the victims and to the government and people of Afghanistan, praying to Allah the Almighty to grant the wounded a speedy recovery.

The Secretary-General called for an end to violence in this Member State, and urged all parties to focus on peace efforts and contribute to the success of the Afghan peace talks, stressing that "dialogue is the only way forward towards achieving comprehensive reconciliation and lasting peace in Afghanistan as part of an Afghan-led and owned peace process."

Al-Othaimeen reaffirmed OIC support for Afghanistan in its efforts for peace, security and development, recalling the solidarity of the OIC Council of Foreign Ministers with Afghanistan at its last session held in Niamey, Republic of Niger, in November 2020.

OIC Welcomes Saudi Initiative for a Political Settlement in Yemen

Secretary-General of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, Dr. Yousef bin Ahmed Al-Othaimeen welcomed the initiative announced by the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, on 21/3/2021, to end the crisis in Yemen and reach a comprehensive political solution through a complete ceasefire under UN supervision.

He underlined the continued support for the efforts of the UN Special Envoy to Yemen, Martin Griffiths, and the US Envoy to Yemen, Timothy Lenderking, the positive role of the Sultanate of Oman, and the push for efforts to reach a political solution to the crisis under UN auspices.

The Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, His Highness Prince Faisal bin Farhan, had announced an initiative aimed at ending the crisis in Yemen.

"We want a comprehensive ceasefire in preparation for a political dialogue, and the ball is now in the Houthis' court. There is no indication yet of the Houthis' desire for peace," he added. "The Kingdom is coordinating with the UN to put an end to the crisis in Yemen," he said. He also stressed that "We will continue to support the Yemeni people and their legitimate government." He explained that the initiative included opening Sanaa Airport to direct, regional and international flights; allowing the import of fuel and foodstuffs, to be followed by consultations among Yemeni parties to



The Saudi Initiative paves the way for peace in Yemen.

reach a political solution to the crisis under UN auspices, based on the references of UN SC Resolution 2216, the Gulf initiative and its implementation mechanisms and the outcomes of the national dialogue.

The Minister added that Saudi Arabia called on the Houthis to accept the initiative, giving them the opportunity to harness reason, stop the bloodshed, address the difficult humanitarian and economic conditions from which the Yemeni people suffer, and engage as partners in achieving peace.

The initiative may prove effective in bring-

ing an end to the crisis, as it includes number of items to address the root causes of the crisis. These items are: a comprehensive ceasefire under UN supervision, depositing taxes and customs revenues emanating from oil derivatives ships at Hodeida port, into the joint account of the Central Bank of Yemen in Hodeida; opening Sanaa International Airport to a number of direct regional and international flights; and starting inter-Yemeni consultations to reach a political solution to the crisis under the UN auspices.

Al-Othaimeen Congratulates Libya on the Formation of a National Unity Government

The General Secretariat of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) welcomed the vote of confidence by the House of Representatives for the National Unity Government in Libya, headed by Mr. Abdul Hamid Al-Dabaiba. The OIC Secretary-General, Dr. Yousef bin Ahmed Al-Othaimeen, congratulated the new government and the Libyan people, expressing the hope that this important step would pave the way for further steps towards reconciliation, peace, security, stability and development in Libya.

On this occasion, the Secretary-General reiterated the OIC full support for Libya at this critical historical juncture.

The OIC General Secretariat had welcomed

the results of the vote on forming the new Libyan executive authority by the Political Dialogue Forum. The OIC also expressed the hope that the formation of the executive authority would lead to the establishment of security, stability and development in Libya.

The OIC appreciated the efforts made by the UN, which sponsored the Libyan Political Dialogue Forum in Geneva.

The talks held in Libya under the auspices of the UN had led to the formation of a new interim government for the country with the aim of finding a solution to the state of chaos, violence and division in the country.

An interim Libyan national unity government was selected to replace rival administrations

in the war-torn country and to oversee elections next December.

Delegates to a UN-led forum cast their votes for a three-member presidential council and a prime minister, at the end of five days of talks in Geneva.

This step came as a paradigm shift in the peace process, which followed the ceasefire reached last year.

Mr. Muhammad Yunus Al-Manfi was selected as the Head of the Presidential Council, while Abdel Hamid Dabaiba was selected as the head of the transitional government, based on the results of the vote that was broadcast live to the participants in the political talks process.

International Criminal Court Opens an Investigation into the Situation in Palestine

The General Secretariat of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) welcomed the media reports regarding the announcement of the Chief Public Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court to initiate an investigation into the situation in Palestine, considering this an important step towards achieving justice and holding accountable those responsible for the violations and crimes committed by Israel, the occupying power, against the Palestinian people.

The International Criminal Court had announced the opening of an investigation into "war crimes" committed in the occupied Palestinian territories. A statement issued by the Office of the Prosecutor, Fatou Bensouda stated that, "the investigation will cover crimes within the jurisdiction of the court, which are alleged to have been committed since June 13, 2014."

The Palestinian Foreign Minister, Riyad Al-Maliki, welcomed the decision saying "The opening of the investigation proves that the Criminal Court respects its mandate and independence". The decision was rejected by Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, saying it represented "the essence of hypocrisy and anti-Semitism," accusing the court of being "biased against Israel."

In the same context, the United States of America condemned the court's decision, and announced through its State Department Spokesman Ned Price, its strong opposition.

In 2018, Palestine submitted a request for a referral to the International Criminal Court for a file of Israeli crimes that includes 3 cases: settlements, prisoners, and aggression on Gaza, including violations of the "March of Return and Breaking the Siege".

The Palestinian Minister of Justice, Muhammad Shalalda, described the court's decision as "historic, and a step towards holding Israel accountable for its crimes."

He said in a special statement, "This decision means, from a legal point of view, that the investigation fulfilled its conditions, we will witness Israel being held accountable." He pointed out that the "International Criminal Court" will consider several files, which are the most serious, including the war on the Gaza Strip.

He added, "The first step is to classify the

crimes, then to press an indictment against the individuals responsible, who planned, approved and executed, and who was aware of these crimes, that may reach Netanyahu, the defense minister, officers and soldiers". Shalalda called on the countries of the world to "cooperate with the court to support and facilitate the investigation process".

The Palestinian Minister ruled out any political pressures imposed on the court. He said "the court is an independent judiciary and the judges represent themselves, not their countries". He also stressed that Palestine "will not be affected by any political pressure, to withdraw from the lawsuit".



In the same context, Shawan Jabareen, director of Al-Haq Foundation (NGO), is optimistic about the court's success in holding Israeli war criminals accountable. Jabareen said, "The decision means that we have left the stage of legal and procedural debate, and have taken a substantial step by starting the investigation, which will be followed by the issuance of arrest warrants." "Certainly, this decision will put those responsible for crimes behind bars, when? I cannot answer that, but this is what we are working on, even if it lasts for months or years," he added. He indicated that this path might take a long time; some countries will try to "influence the progress of the investigation." He added, "The State of Palestine must be fully prepared for any request from the ICC, to provide detailed and accurate information".

It is noteworthy that the OIC had welcomed the ruling by the Pre-Trial Chamber of the International Criminal Court (ICC) that the territorial scope of the Court's jurisdiction in the state of Palestine extends to the territories occupied by Israel since 1967, namely Gaza and the West Bank, including East al-Quds. The OIC hailed the ruling as a victory for international law and legitimacy.

The International Criminal Court is responsible for investigating four types of crimes according to its statute, which are crimes of genocide, crimes against humanity, the crime of aggression, and the war crime.

The ICC's announcement of its decision on February 5 regarding its jurisdiction in the Palestinian territories (East Jerusalem, the West Bank, and Gaza), allows it to conduct an investigation into Israel's perpetration of one of those crimes, which is War Crime. This came after the Court's Prosecutor, Fatou Bensouda, announced in 2019 "there is a reasonable basis that war crimes have been committed and still committing in the Palestinian territories."

This declaration represents great importance to the Palestinian people and leadership, as it confirms the legal sovereignty of the State of Palestine. The State of Palestine joined the Treaty of Rome in 1998, (The establishment Treaty of the court), then after obtaining the status of an observer state in the United Nations in 2012, Palestine became a member of the court at the beginning of 2015. Regardless of whether the investigation is completed or not, the conduct of the investigation is of great importance.

There is no doubt that this declaration represents a diplomatic, political and legal success in the path of the Palestinian struggle and the embodiment of the state at all levels.

According to press reports, Israel may not succumb to this announcement, which trembled the Israeli institutions as per press reports. Netanyahu described the court as a political body, not a judicial institution. Israel may try to disrupt the work of the court and block this investigation by exerting all means of pressure, especially as it places many Israeli officials under accountability in the future.

The US State Department expressed its concern about this decision.



General Secretariat Condemns Settlements and Celebrates Land Day

The Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) affirmed its absolute support to the Palestinian people and their just struggle for the restoration of their legitimate national rights.

This came on the occasion of 30 March, the anniversary of the Palestinian Land Day, as an opportunity to renew solidarity with Palestinian people in defending their land, history, sanctities and national identity.

On this occasion, OIC stressed the need to work to achieve peace in accordance with UN resolutions and the Arab Peace Initiative based on the vision of the two-state solution and the establishment of the State of Palestine, with East Jerusalem as its capital.

On January 21, the OIC General Secretariat condemned the decision of the Israeli occupation authorities to approve the construc-

tion of 2572 new settlement units in the colonial settlements built on the Palestinian territories occupied since 1967, including the city of Jerusalem. Considering this decision a severe violation by the occupying power, for international law and resolutions of international legitimacy, and in defiance of the will of the international community.

The OIC General Secretariat also condemned the decision of the Israeli occupation authorities to approve the construction of 800 new settlement units in the illegal settlements built on the occupied Palestinian territory last January 12, considering this a flagrant violation of international law and relevant United Nations resolutions, especially UN Security Council Resolution 2334.

The organization stressed that the acceleration of the construction and expansion of

illegal colonial settlements on the occupied Palestinian land does not serve the peace process based on the two-state solution approved by international legitimacy and the Arab Peace Initiative.

In the context of observing the situation in Palestine, the General Secretariat condemned the demolition of Palestinian homes and facilities in Khirbet Homsa al-Fawqa in the Palestinian Jordan Valley, and the displacement of dozens of Palestinian families from their homes and lands.

OIC emphasized that these practices do not serve the peace process based on UN resolutions and the Arab Peace Initiative based on the vision of the two-state solution and the establishment of the State of Palestine with East Jerusalem as its capital.

OIC Condemns Opening of two Offices for Embassies of Czech and Kosovo in Al-Quds

The General Secretariat of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) condemned the opening of an office of the Czech embassy as well as the Kosovo embassy in the occupied city of Jerusalem. The OIC stressed that, this illegal action constitutes a violation of international law and all relevant United Nations resolutions, especially UN Security Council Resolution 478 prohibiting the establishment of diplomatic missions in the occupied city.

The General Secretariat called for not to alter the historical, legal and political status of occupied Jerusalem, as it is an integral part of

the Palestinian territory occupied since 1967. The General Secretariat had confirmed that Kosovo's decision to open an embassy in occupied Jerusalem is inconsistent with international law and relevant United Nations resolutions, especially UN Security Council Resolution No. 478. In this regard, it also affirmed its principles regarding the Palestinian cause based on achieving peace through the UN resolutions and the Arab Peace Initiative based on the vision of the two-state solution and the establishment of the State of Palestine with East Jerusalem as its capital, pointing out that any unilateral action otherwise

does not serve the peace process.

On the other hand, the General Secretariat welcomed the decree issued by Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas regarding the date of holding Palestinian elections in all Palestinian territories, including East Jerusalem, and considered that this constitutes an important step towards renewing the legitimacy of Palestinian national institutions.

OIC affirmed its support for any steps that would enhance Palestinian national unity. It called at the same time, the international community to support the holding of Palestinian elections.



Niger Awards OIC Secretary-General Highest Decoration for his Service

Secretary-General of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), Dr. Yousef A. Al-Othaimeen, congratulated H.E. President Muhammad Bazoum on winning the presidential elections in the Republic of Niger.

During President Mohamed Bazoum's reception of Al-Othaimeen in the capital, Niamey, on March 28, 2021, the two sides discussed the bilateral relations between the Republic of Niger and the OIC, and the keenness of both sides to bolster and develop them.

The OIC took part with a high-level delegation in Niger's presidential inauguration ceremony of Mohamed Bazoum in Niamey on 2 April 2021.

The OIC Secretary General, Dr Yousef A. Al-Othaimeen, commended the peaceful and orderly transfer of power in the Republic of Niger, from Former President Mahamadou Issoufou to President-elect Mohamed Bazoum. He expressed hope that the step would bring further progress, prosperity and

stability to the country.

Dr Al-Othaimeen wished the incoming President success in his new office, and commended the outgoing President for his service and achievements.

During the visit, former President of the Republic of Niger Issoufou Mahamadou, on March 28, 2021, received the Secretary-General of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), Dr. Yousef A. Al-Othaimeen, in Niamey before the end of his tenure.

The meeting tackled bilateral relations between the Republic of Niger and the OIC and means of strengthening and developing these relations in various fields.

The then President Mohamadou Issoufou on 29 March 2021 in Niamey, awarded the OIC Secretary-General Dr. Yousef A. Al-Othaimeen, the highest national decoration in the Republic of Niger, for his efforts in leading the OIC, his service to the causes of the Muslim world and his role in supporting OIC

African Member States.

Dr. Al-Othaimeen also took part on 29 March 2021 in the ceremony marking the inauguration of King Abdullah City at the Girls' Campus of the Islamic University of Niger (IUN). The event was held under the patronage of the then President Mahamadou Issoufou of Niger.

Speaking on the occasion, the Secretary General said that the ceremony was yet another confirmation of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia's outstanding role in the Muslim world history, under the sound leadership of the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques, King Salman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud, and His Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud. The inaugural event, he added, was a tribute to the generous spirit of late King Abdullah bin Abdulaziz Al Saud who unsparingly donated to the establishment of this new campus.



President Aliyev Decorates Al-Othaimen with Order of Friendship

The President of the Republic of Azerbaijan, H.E. Mr Ilham Aliyev, on April 8, at the Presidential Palace in Baku, received the Secretary General of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), H.E. Dr Yousef A. Al-Othaimen.

President Aliyev decorated the Secretary-General with the Dostluq Order (Order of Friendship), recognizing his distinguished service and contribution to strengthening relations between Azerbaijan and the OIC.

The Secretary General congratulated President Aliyev on the liberation of the Azerbaijani lands, in implementation of relevant UN and OIC resolutions.

Moreover, Dr Al-Othaimen held a meeting with Azerbaijan Foreign Minister Jeyhun Bayramov, in the presence of members of OIC Contact Group on Azerbaijan.

At the end of the meeting, the Secretary General and Azerbaijan's FM held a joint press conference.

On the occasion of the 29th anniversary of the commemoration of the genocide that took place in the town of Khojaly, Republic of Azerbaijan, the Secretary General of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC),

OIC Commemorates the 29th Anniversary of Khojaly Massacre

Dr. Yousef bin Ahmad Al-Othaimen, has paid tribute to all those who lost their lives in the 1992 massacre.

The OIC General Secretariat reiterated that the Khojaly incident was a result of the illegal occupation of Azerbaijani territories by the Republic of Armenia. It referred to the Cairo Final Communiqué (Paragraph 117) adopted

by the 12th Session of the Islamic Summit, held in Cairo in 2013 and to the Resolution No. 51/47-POL on "Solidarity with the victims of Khojaly Massacre of 1992" adopted by the 47th Session of the Council of Foreign Ministers (CFM) held in Niamey, Republic of Niger on 27-28 November 2020, which considered the actions perpetrated against civilian Azerbaijani population in the occupied town of Khojaly, as war crimes, crimes against humanity and genocide.

On this sad occasion, the Secretary General reaffirmed the CFM resolutions calling for political settlement of the Armenia-Azerbaijan conflict on the basis of sovereignty, territorial integrity and inviolability of the internationally recognized borders of the Republic of Azerbaijan, in accordance with the generally accepted norms and principles of international law and the relevant UN Security Council resolutions.



Secretary General Receives Tunisia's Permanent Representative

On 14 March 2021, the Secretary-General of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), Dr. Yousef A. Al-Othaimeen, received in his office at the headquarters of the OIC General Secretariat in Jeddah Mr. Hichem Fourati, Ambassador of the Republic of Tunisia to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and Tunisia's Permanent Representative to the OIC.

During the meeting, the Permanent Representative signed, on behalf of his country, the Statute of the Islamic Organization for Food Security (IOFS), a specialized institution of the OIC.

The two sides discussed issues of common interest, including ways and means to foster bilateral relations between the OIC and the Republic of Tunisia.

Al-Othaimeen Receives Credentials of Oman's Permanent Representative

Secretary-General of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), Dr. Yousef A. Al-Othaimeen, received in his office at the headquarters of the OIC General Secretariat in Jeddah, on 15 February 2021, the Ambassador of the Sultanate of Oman to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, His Excellency Faisal bin Turki Al Said, who presented his credentials as Permanent Representative of his country to the OIC.

The Secretary-General welcomed Oman's Ambassador. The two sides then discussed issues of common interest, including means to foster bilateral relations between the OIC and the Sultanate of Oman.



Secretary General Meets Bahrain's Permanent Representative

Secretary-General of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), Yousef A. Al-Othaimeen, meets on 4 March 2021, Ambassador Al-Shaikh Hamoud Bin Abdallah Bin Hamad Al-Khalifa, Ambassador of the Kingdom of Bahrain to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and Permanent Representative to the OIC.

During the meeting, the Permanent Representative of Bahrain signed, on behalf of his country, the Statute of the Women Development Organization (WDO), a specialized institution of the OIC.

Al-Othaimeen Receives Uzbekistan's Permanent Representative to OIC

The Secretary-General of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), Yousef A. Al-Othaimeen, received on 1 March 2021, in his office at the headquarters of the OIC General Secretariat in Jeddah, Ambassador Ologebek Maksudov, Permanent Representative of the Republic of Uzbekistan to the OIC.

During the meeting, the two sides reviewed the prospects of cooperation between the OIC and Uzbekistan.



OIC Secretary General Receives Morocco's Permanent Representative

Secretary-General of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), Dr. Yousef A. Al-Othaimeen, today in his office received Ambassador of the Kingdom of Morocco to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and Permanent Representative to the OIC, Mustafa Al-Mansouri.

During the meeting, Morocco's Permanent Representative signed the Statute of the Islamic Organization for Food Security (IOFS) on behalf of his country.

The two sides discussed areas of cooperation between the Organization and the Kingdom of Morocco and explored ways to solidify bilateral relations.

OIC Renewed Its Firm Commitment for peace in Afghanistan



The Secretary-General of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), Dr. Yousef bin Ahmed Al-Othaimeen, received at his office, on 19 January 2021, the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Afghanistan, Mohammed Haneef Atamar. During the meeting, developments in the peace process in Afghanistan and the various forms of support provided by the OIC to Afghanistan were reviewed.

The Secretary-General renewed the OIC firm

commitment to assist the Afghan people to achieve comprehensive reconciliation, lasting peace, stability and development within the framework of national consensus.

On his part, the Afghan Foreign Minister appreciated the OIC role and the efforts of its Secretary General to achieve peace, security, stability and development in Afghanistan. He also praised the support provided by the OIC and its institutions to carry out development projects in Afghanistan.

In a similar vein, Dr. Al-Othaimeen reiterated the Organization's keenness and readiness to continue to contribute to peace, reconciliation and development process of Afghanistan.

The Secretary General made these remarks in a statement delivered on his behalf by the Assistant Secretary General for Political Affairs Amb. Yousef Al-Aldobeay at the ninth Ministerial Conference of the Heart of Asia held in Dushanbe, Tajikistan on 29-30 March 2021.

In his statement, the Secretary General recalled the two significant resolutions on Afghanistan adopted by OIC Council of Foreign Ministers during their 47th session held in Niamey, Republic of Niger, on 27-28 November 2020.

Referring to the OIC's participation at the launching of the Afghan Peace talks in September 2020 in Doha, State of Qatar, the Secretary General called on Afghan parties to seize this historic opportunity to pursue and foster dialogue, put an immediate end to fighting and violence and to work for reconciliation and durable peace.

Secretary-General Discusses Rohingya Issues with Minister Shahriar



Secretary-General of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), Dr. Yousef A. Al-Othaimeen, on 8 March 2021, met in his office in Jeddah with Minister of State for Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of Bangladesh Md. Shahriar Alam.

During the meeting, the two sides reviewed areas and prospects of close cooperation between the OIC and Bangladesh. They praised the good level of existing cooperation and consulted on ways to foster coordination on

the issue of the Muslim Rohingya in Myanmar following the visit conducted last week to the Republic of Bangladesh by a delegation from the OIC General Secretariat to take stock of the situation of Rohingya refugees on the ground.

The Secretary-General renewed the OIC's appreciation for Bangladesh for hosting Rohingya refugees and for the efforts exerted by the Government of Bangladesh, under the leadership of Sheikha Hasina, to provide

those refugees with care and support.

It worth noting that the OIC General Secretariat played host on January 27th 2021 to an online meeting wherein the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR) gave a briefing and situational update, to the OIC Contact Group on Rohingya, regarding the humanitarian situation of this population of the world.

In his welcome speech, Assistant Secretary General for Palestine Affairs Amb. Samir Bakr, leading the OIC delegation, underlined the keen personal interest of the OIC Secretary General, Dr Yousef A. Al-Othaimeen, in scaling up the Member States' humanitarian and political response in support of the Muslim Rohingya population, guided by the OIC Charter and relevant resolutions of the Islamic Summit and Council of Foreign Ministers.

For his part, the OIC Special Envoy to Myanmar, Ambassador Ibrahim Khairat, commended the continued advocacy efforts and response plans of the OIC to resolve the dire humanitarian, political and human rights situation of the Rohingya minority.

Secretary-General Discusses Developments in Yemen with Yemeni Foreign Minister



Secretary-General of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), Dr. Yousef A. Al-Othaimeen, received at the OIC General Secretariat in Jeddah, Dr. Ahmad Awad Bin Moubarak, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Yemen.

During the meeting, the two sides reviewed the UN's efforts to resolve the Yemeni crisis as well as the efforts exerted by the legitimate Yemeni Government to respond to the concerns of citizens and meet their aspirations. The meeting also emphasized the importance of the Riyadh Agreement, which contributed to creating an environment conducive to the settlement of many issues in Yemen and highlighted the importance of achieving consensus among the Yemeni parties. The two sides addressed the developments in the humanitarian situation in Yemen and the importance of the OIC's contribution to the alleviation of the suffering of the Yemeni people.

The Yemeni Minister commended highly the OIC's support for the Yemeni people and its role in encouraging the peaceful solution of the Yemeni crisis.

The Secretary-General reaffirmed the OIC's support for Yemen in all fields and its contribution to peace, security and stability in the country.

Al-Othaimeen Meets Foreign Minister of Iraq

Secretary General of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), Dr. Yousef A. Al-Othaimeen, met on 23 February 2021 in Riyadh, with the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Iraq, Dr. Fuad Hussein.

During the meeting, the two sides reviewed the bilateral relations between the OIC and the Republic of Iraq and ways to enhance them.

The Secretary General affirmed the OIC firm position in support of Iraq in order to achieve its security and stability, enhance its sovereignty and preserve its territorial integrity.

For his part, the Iraqi Minister of Foreign Affairs appreciated the OIC support and solidarity with Iraq, commending the important role the OIC plays in developing and promoting joint Islamic action.



OIC Held Bilateral Talks with Bosnia and Herzegovina

Secretary-General of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), Dr. Yousef A. Al-Othaimeen, received on 21 March 2021 in his office at the General Secretariat headquarters in Jeddah, Dr. Bisera Turkovic, Minister of Foreign Affairs and Deputy Chairperson of the Council of Ministers of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

The two sides discussed bilateral relations between the OIC and Bosnia Herzegovina and issues of common interest.

The Secretary-General previously received the Ambassador of Bosnia and Herzegovina to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, Mr. Muhamed Jusic.

The meeting discussed the bilateral relations between the OIC and Bosnia and Herzegovina and issues of common interest.



General Secretariat and ICESCO Discuss Mechanisms of Joint Projects

Secretary General of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), Dr. Yousef A. Al-Othaimeen, met with the Director-General of the Islamic World Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (ICESCO), Dr. Salim M. Al-Malik at the Secretary-Generals office at the OIC General Secretariat in Jeddah, on Monday, February 15, 2021.

Dr. Al-Othaimeen and Dr. Al-Malik discussed bilateral relations between the OIC and ICESCO, and ways to develop them systematically and put in place mechanisms for coordination and joint action in many programs and projects of interest to both sides. The OIC

Secretary-General praised the important role of ICESCO within the large family of the OIC, commending its determination to implement quality programs and projects that benefit the Member States in various fields with added value in the service of issues of development, training and capacity-building.

The meeting touched on many common areas between the OIC and ICESCO, especially in the fields of protection of Islamic heritage and service of Muslim communities in the non-OIC Member States, in addition to many cultural files.

OIC and ICRC Sign a New Plan of Action to Boost Cooperation

Pursuant to their cooperation agreement signed in 1994, the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) and the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) signed on 18 February 2021, at the OIC Headquarters, a three-year Plan of Action (PoA) for the period 2021-2024, in order to boost their partnership in the humanitarian domain. Ambassador Tarig Ali Bakheet, OIC Assistant-Secretary General for Humanitarian, Social and Cultural Affairs, and Mr. Kedir Awol Omar, Head of the ICRC Mission in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, in the name of their respective Institutions, commended the already fruitful cooperation marked so far by many consultations, joint workshops and informations and documents exchanges between the Institutions and expressed the determination of the OIC and the ICRC to realize concrete actions and reach further



objectives for their mutual benefit and in the profit of countries and populations in need of humanitarian assistance. This PoA will focus on many important areas

including capacity building and high-level consultations about issues of common interest.

General Secretariat and SFDA Train Professionals on Medical Devices Regulation

More than 150 experts from National Medicines Regulatory Authorities (NMRAs), pharmaceutical companies and medical device manufacturers from the Member States of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) attended a series of workshops in medical device regulation and pharmacovigilance. The workshops were organized by the General Secretariat of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) in cooperation with the Saudi Food and Drug Authority (SFDA) during 22-23 March 2021.

The SFDA experts shared their knowledge and experience during the interactive sessions in different aspects of medical devices regulation and pharmacovigilance such as Halal standards in medical devices, clinical devices, basic pharmacovigilance, and signal management, among others.

The OIC General Secretariat in cooperation with the Saudi Food and Drug Authority (SFDA) launched the series of training workshops for the OIC Member States in medical devices regulation and pharmacovigilance.

The training series was launched on 03 March 2021 by a two-day workshop on Medical Devices' Regulation. The initial workshop brought together officials from National Medicines Regulatory Authorities (NMRAs); Pharmaceutical companies, researchers, scientists and medical devices



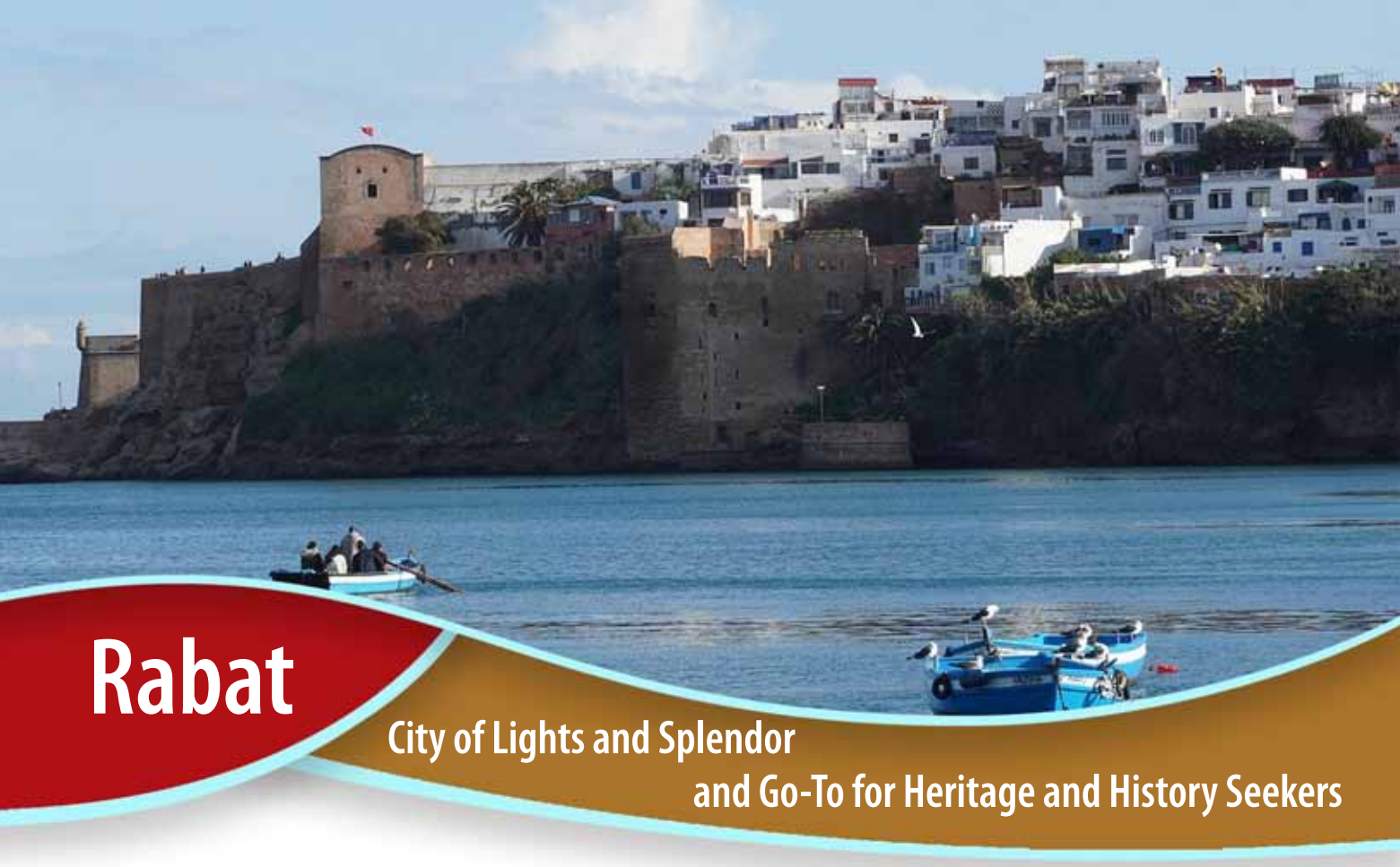
manufacturers from across the OIC Member States.

Eng. Ali AlDalaan, SFDA Vice President for Medical Devices sector who presided over the inaugural session, emphasized the need for collaboration among OIC Member States in the face of the enormous challenges posed by the outbreak of COVID-19 pandemic and other health challenges.

The workshop was also addressed by H.E. Amb. Askar Mussinov, OIC Assistant Secretary General for Science & Technology who hailed SFDA for availing the opportunity to

share knowledge on medical devices regulation and appealed to participants to use the workshop to acquire as much knowledge and skills as they could.

The training is aimed at promoting knowledge and expertise sharing and transfer among National Medicine Regulatory Authorities (NRAs) in accordance with the two-year Action Plan on Promotion of Collaboration among the NMRAs adopted by the First Meeting of the Heads of NMRAs from OIC Member States held in Jakarta, Republic of Indonesia on 21-22 November 2018.



Rabat

City of Lights and Splendor

and Go-To for Heritage and History Seekers

Hazem Abdo

Since time immemorial, Rabat has been a unique city of affection, familiarity, warmth, and tranquility, which welcomes every visitor heartedly. It is indeed the capital of lights shining on the Atlantic coast for which every passenger yearns.

The splendor of Rabat and the spirit of its people make its guests yearn for it always and forever due to its ability to win itself a stable location that never changes in their hearts. It looks young and fresh as ever in the arms of the Atlantic under the vigilance of the Bouregreg River. Its neighborhoods, suburbs, streets, and landmarks from Sala to Hassan Minaret Tower, Al-Moheet and Agdal neighborhoods to Riyadh neighborhood, and Hassan II and Mohammed V streets bathe in water, snow, and hail. Rain descends to wash its trees. The visitor would take Rabat as a beautiful garden in whose heart a glorious and age-old city has sprouted.

The late Palestinian poet Mahmoud Darwish wrote about it:

In Rabat, a city raised on the high waves of the Atlantic, the poet walks in search of the coincidence of meaning and the meaning of coincidence.

The Moroccan poet Abderrafi Jouahri describes its Bouregreg River in his poem "The Red Moon" as follows:

Shy, it peered behind the mountains
And the eyelid of darkness is watching
And Bouregreg, that great river
On whose banks the flowering melody rose
And in its waves, eternity bathes
And in its depth is ages lie
In the fifth century AH, the Almoravids made Ribat or Rabat Al-Fath a garrisoned station for their armies and a starting point for jihad in Andalusia in the Battle of Zalaca (Sagrajas) led by Sultan Yusef bin Tashfin. During the Almohad Caliphate, Sultan Abu Yusuf Yaqub al-Mansur reconstructed Rabat in 591 AH-1194 CE.

During the reign of Sultan Moulay Hassan I, a senior sultan of the Alaouite dynasty (after the great-grandfather of the Moulay ash-Sharif bin Ali), Rabat prospered. Moulay Hassan strengthened its jihad potentials by establishing the great tower, renewing the port, extending the palace, and erecting many urban establishments. At the beginning of the first decade of the twentieth century, the capital of the Kingdom of Morocco changed from Fez to Rabat. It grew and prospered into one of the largest cities in Morocco. The renowned Dr. Abbas Jirari, Adviser to King Mohammed VI and a member of the Academy of the Kingdom of Morocco, said that the civilizational

boom that Rabat knew was accompanied by cultural progress that touched various fields of science, thought, and literary and artistic creativity, as proven by hundred names of significant figures in all fields.

Rabat embarked on a new stage of its development and prosperity. It is today the City of Lights on the UNESCO list of historic cities with a glorious history. Its lover, the Moroccan journalist, Abdelkader Al-Idrissi, who came to it from the city of Tetouan, Moroccan Granada, in the summer of 1967, wrote, "I experienced the incredible transformations of Rabat, and it amazed me that it is developing at a steady and unique pace until it has truly become the city of lights and the capital of knowledge and arts."

Under the Almohads, the city witnessed a civilizational overhaul. The ribat (fortress) was transformed during Abd al-Mu'min al-Mouhdi's reign into a fortified structure to protect his armies heading towards Andalusia. His grandson Yaqub al-Mansur wanted it to be the capital of his state, so he ordered it to be fortified with walls and built several buildings, notably the Hassan Mosque and majestic minaret tower.

Sultan Yaqub al-Mansur also built a wall known as the Almohadi wall of 2,263 meters in length from west to south of Ra-



bat, 2.5 meters in width, and 10 meters in height. Seventy-four towers and five massive gates supported this wall.

Old City

In 2012, UNESCO enlisted the old/ historic city of Rabat on its World Heritage List.

Kasbah of the Udayas

The Kasbah of the Udayas is a fortified fortress built by the Almoravids, and its importance increased during the era of the Almohads. They made it a station on the mouth of the Bouregreg Valley to launch military campaigns against the Spanish. The Moriscos who came from Andalusia settled there and brought it back to life by making it the seat of the historic Bouregreg State. During the Alaouite era, the Kasbah of the Udayas underwent several reforms between 1757 and 1789. Its wall, monumental gate (the Great Gate), and mosque known as the Old Mosque are signs of Almohad architecture.

Chellah

Chellah is an archaeological landmark on the southern bank of the Bouregreg River. It consists of a Marinian funerary area on Roman and Phoenician ruins, all fortified with Almohad's walls. The Phoenicians established a market there, and they called it "Sala," then it became the site of the Roman colony known as "Sala Colonia." Chellah remained abandoned from the fifth to the tenth century CE when the site turned into a station for the mujahideen until the Marinid Sultan Abu Yusuf Yaquob in 1284 CE made it a cemetery to bury the kings and notables of

Bani Marin, where he built the first nucleus of a complex that included a mosque, an ablution house, and a dome under which his wife, Umm al-Ezz, was buried.

Hassan Minaret Tower

Hassan Mosque and the minaret tower, one of the most prominent landmarks in Rabat, was built by Almohad's Sultan Yaqub al-Mansur, but this project stopped in 1199 CE after his death. It became extinct due to the earthquake that struck it in 1755 CE. Its ruins attest to the enormity of the original structure, reaching 180 meters in length and 140 meters in width. Besides, the tower, which is a replica of the Kutubiyya minaret tower in Marrakech and the Giralda in Seville, attests to the mosque's existence and magnitude. It is a square, 44 meters high, and its four facades are decorated with stone-carved ornaments and inscriptions in the Andalusian-Moroccan style from the twelfth century.

Dar al-Sultan

The Dar al-Sultan cave is located south of Rabat on the Atlantic coast, where the remains of a human skull dating back to the Aterian period in the Middle Stone Age was found in 1975. It is for a sane person with some primitive characteristics.

Museums and Libraries

Rabat is rich with cultural attractions and museums, including the Museum of Udayas, which displays ceramics, jewelry, traditional clothes, embroideries, carpets, and some manuscripts from the Almohad era. It also has the Folklore Museum opposite the

Traditional Industries Complex and the Museum of Ancient Archeology in the modern city. The visitor can watch pieces dating back to the prehistoric era and others to the medieval Islamic era. The city includes the Museum of Contemporary Modern Art, which mediates the streets of Mohammed V and Allal bin Abdullah and the Great Theater on the Buregerg River, which was designed by the late Iraqi renowned architect Zaha Hadid, the University Mohammed V, the Mohammed V Theater, and several halls for plastic exhibitions, including the Arts House and Bab er-Rouah Hall.

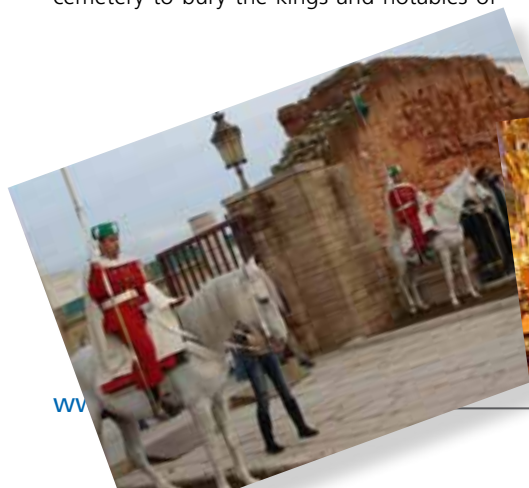
Bab er-Rouah

It is a historical gate that crosses the fortified wall of Rabat. It was built in 1197 CE by the Almohad Caliph Abu Yusuf Yaqub bin Yusuf al-Mansur and is one of the most luxurious of the five gates surrounding the walls of Rabat and the most decorated among them. It is 28 meters long and 12 meters high.

Borj Sirat

It is a fortress located to the west of the seawall, southwest of the harbor, designed by engineer Ahmed el Inglizi ("Ahmed the English") in 1775-1776 on a slope overlooking the Atlantic during the reign of Sultan Muhammad III bin Abdullah to defend the coast with the Borj Saqqala tower and Borj Dar.

It is Rabat, rightly the capital of lights and the city of heritage and history, that deserves to be visited over and over again. Its visitor does not get bored of its streets and renewed beauty, which increases with every visit.





Gaza Hopes to Achieve Justice through the International Criminal Court

Gaza (DPA) - Emad Abdul-Jawad

Palestinian Muhammad al-Selk clings to the thread of hope in holding accountable those involved in the Israeli aggression on Gaza, which caused the amputation of his leg, and killed twenty civilians, including his father and three of his children, seven years ago.

The man, sitting on the entrance of his house in the densely populated Al-Shejaiya neighborhood in eastern Gaza, recounted the details of the attack "as if it had just happened". He kept repeating: "I will not forget and I will not forgive until the murderers are tried and international justice achieved."

On the third of last March, the Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court, Fatou Bensouda, announced the opening of an official investigation for suspicions of committing war crimes in the occupied Palestinian territories, which represented a glimmer of hope for the disabled Muhammad al-Selk and hundreds of other victims.

The sound of rockets and explosions that rocked the square opposite his home, east of Gaza City, on the evening of July 22, 2014, still resonates in the memory of Al-Selk (48 years), who shouted: "They were killed immediately by three drones, 'Hasbuna Allah Wa Nima AlWakeel' Allah suffices me, for He is the best disposer of affairs."

The man, while leaning on his metal stick, told the German news agency (dpa): «We still have hope for the justice of the criminal court, and we will continue to demand our rights, let them come here as the remains

of the crime are still in place.» Referring to the holes and cracks in the walls caused by shrapnel of the missiles at the time.

He also affixed on the wall of his home, pictures of ten victims from his family, including his father and his three children, all of whom were in the yard opposite his home, which is known in Gaza as «Bastat Market» when an Israeli drone launched three missiles at once at the place.

The attack on the Selk family and neighbors is one of more than five thousand attacks carried out by the Israeli army during the war on Gaza.

These attacks caused massive destruction in the besieged coastal sector, and killed 2,147 persons on the Palestinian side, including 530 children and 302 women, while 72 people were killed on the Israeli side, including six civilians.

Amnesty International described the International Criminal Court's announcement to open an investigation on crimes committed in the Occupied Palestinian Territory as a «historic step».

It was announced that a Palestinian legal team from the Gaza Strip was ready to travel to the Criminal Court headquarter in Netherlands.

The head of the Palestinian legal team at the International Criminal Court, Raji Al-Sourani, told (DPA) that «the start of the investigation is a great achievement for justice after many decades of lack of accountability for war crimes and crimes against humanity in

the Palestinian territories.»

He added, «no one can claim that he has not heard or seen what happened in the occupied territories. The problem is not in the information, nor in the files, but rather in the acceleration of procedures and the work of the investigation team, and ensuring that the criminal court is immunized to resist the pressures that will be exerted by the international forces, supporting the state of Israel».

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu strongly attacked the criminal court's decision, describing it as "the essence of hypocrisy and anti-Semitism".

Human rights organizations stressed the importance of immediately starting an investigation on Israel's violations in the Occupied Palestinian Territories, ensuring that investigations are not obstructed politically and logistically, by applying of pressure and influence on both the court committees and victims.

In the Rafah camp in the south of the Gaza Strip, Samira El-Ghali still trembles with fear whenever she hears the sound of an explosion, even if it was caused by fireworks during festivals or weddings.

El-Ghali is one of four survivors after military aircraft completely demolished their home in the «Bishit» camp in the center of the city on the fourth week of the war.

At that time, El-Ghali was seriously injured, while two of her children, Raed (10 years) and Alaa (two years), were moderately wounded, and her father-in-law suffered minor injuries.



Brazil fears 3500 Daily Deaths as COVID-19 Virus Rages

Rio de Janeiro, Martina Farmbauer (DPA)

In front of the Hospital Ronaldo Gazzola in the north of Rio de Janeiro, there are 30 mats, made to look like beds with sheets and pillows, with roses lying on them.

They're meant to symbolize the hospital beds in which COVID-19 patients are treated. Many stop by to lay a rose for someone who has died here during the pandemic.

But it's not just about remembrance. "We're here to demand the basics: a crisis cabinet, a joint effort by the president of the republic, the governors and the mayors," Antonio Carlos Casto, head of the non-governmental organization Rio de Paz, says.

Brazil, a country of 210 million people, is among the worst hit countries during the pandemic, a tragic reality reflected in the symbolism of these 30 mats.

Each of these memorial beds represents 10,000 deaths.

In late March, Brazil became the second country in the world to surpass the 300,000 mark of registered COVID-19 deaths. Only in the United States, with 545,000 deaths, have more people fallen victim.

Another tragic milestone came at the same time. For the first time since the outbreak of the virus in Brazil, more than 3,000 people died in a single day.

Scientists expect that the average will soon be up to 3,500 deaths per day. More than

12.2 million people have been confirmed to be infected.

Experts say this trend is caused, at least to some degree, by a variant of the coronavirus that was detected in travellers from the Amazon region in January.

«This new variant appears to have a greater speed of infection. Cases seem to develop more quickly,» said epidemiologist Diego Xavier, who works at the Fundacao Oswaldo Cruz (Fiocruz) research institution. The variant has now been detected in other continents.

An infection with this strain is not necessarily more lethal, however, and according to a study, vaccines from Biontech/Pfizer and AstraZeneca work better against it than initially thought.

But with so many people infected, hospitals are full. In some places, patients can barely be given care. Brazil's healthcare system is about to collapse - or indeed has already collapsed in many places.

In 24 of 26 states, as well as in the capital district of Brasilia, the situation in intensive care units is in «critical condition.»

Hundreds are waiting for a bed, many of them dying before they get one. Medicine and oxygen supplies are in shortage, while sedatives and muscle blockers used for intubation are running particularly low, according to a BBC Brazil report, citing the Council

of Health Secretaries in all states.

Younger people are not being spared. «People go out thinking they will only lose taste and smell,» said Sao Paulo state health secretary Jean Gorinchteyn. «And they end up losing their lives.»

Brazil's President Jair Bolsonaro has, meanwhile, downplayed the coronavirus from the beginning.

«If the president continues like this and infections continue, there may be another new variant that doesn't respond to a vaccine,» Xavier says.

Again and again, Brazil had postponed the start of vaccination, and corrected the amount of its available vaccine doses.

Brazil started its vaccination campaign against COVID-19 last January.

A small light on the horizon might be a factory in northern Rio that has begun large-scale production of the AstraZeneca vaccine. However, Bolsonaro continues to reject a lockdown on economic grounds.

Currently, Brazil has what is considered to be the biggest vaccine production factory in Latin America.

Fiocruz factory aims to produce 110 million doses of the vaccine by the middle of the year using imported medical material.

Thanks to imported technology, the factory will be able to produce 119 million doses independently over the second half of this year.

Al-Othaimeen Calls for Addressing Challenges Related to Access to water

On the World Water Day, celebrated on 22 March every year, Secretary General of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), Dr. Yousef Al-Othaimeen reiterated the need for concerted efforts to address the challenges of reliable access to water as well as the management of other water-related risks for better health, livelihood and economic prosperity for all. "This year's International World Water Day theme "Valuing Water" once again underlines the critical impact of water on all aspects of people's wellbeing around the globe," said Al-Othaimeen.

The Secretary General stressed that, increasing water shortage, poor water quality, droughts or floods compounded by climate change prevalent in many of the OIC Member States have resulted in economic and demographic changes affecting negatively their



socio-economic development. The OIC Secretary General emphasizes the importance of international cooperation in facing the rising challenges in the domain of water, in order to address the diverse water-related issues. To this end, the OIC Member States adopted

an OIC Water Vision in 2012. This comprehensive document provides a framework for promoting cooperation for a water secure future through increased collaboration, exchange of best practices, knowledge sharing, capacity building and development of expertise in various water related disciplines.

Al-Othaimeen reiterated the OIC's commitment to strengthen international partnerships involving all stakeholders including governments, civil society institutions, international organizations and NGOs for sustainable management of water resources, promoting societal awareness of water conservation and storage, development of alternative water sources and regulations for mutual benefits and achievement of the shared goal for a water secure future.

COVID-19 Took Lives, Destroyed Livelihoods and Increased Hatred



The General Secretariat of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) participated in the international conference to address COVID-19 held under the theme: "Health, Economy, Diplomacy and Social Prospects". This videoconference conference was held in Bandung, Indonesia on 23-25 February 2021. Dr. Al-Hussein El-Ghazoui, Director of the Cultural Affairs Department, represented the OIC General Secretariat in the third session of the conference, entitled: "New Cultural Adaptations".

In the Secretariat's paper, Dr. El-Ghazoui reviewed the efforts made by the OIC General Secretariat and its subsidiary, affiliated and specialized organs to minimize the repercussions and impact of COVID-19 on the peo-

ples of the Islamic world. He drew attention to the virtual extraordinary Conference of Foreign Ministers of the OIC Member States and the meeting of the OIC Steering Committee on Health, held respectively on April 22 and April 9, 2020. He also recalled other meetings and efforts such as the awareness campaign, the efforts of the Islamic Development Bank, the Islamic Solidarity Fund, and the International Islamic Fiqh Academy as well as other OIC initiatives and steps taken to combat COVID-19.

The paper also reviewed in detail the threats posed by the epidemiological situation, and the containment means and methods adopted by the Member States, which had major impact on limiting the spread of the virus

among human gatherings.

The paper highlighted the repercussions of the pandemic, including the social damage it caused and the emergence of negative feelings among the members of the same society. The pandemic established some divisions in society, side-lined and alienated other categories of people.

The pandemic increased cases of discrimination, fuelled hatred and led to blame being thrown on others for what is happening. The paper accused racist far-right groups of using the pandemic to advance their anti-migrant dreadful agendas. It explained that Coronavirus pandemic had posed many challenges unprecedented in the current times. It became an issue requiring action to be taken to contain its negative effects.

The paper insisted on the need to spread hope and optimism among people through various means, including media; shedding light on the importance of strengthening people's health immunity and encouraging health workers and researchers to work harder to find the needed solutions and medical treatments to defeat this disease.

On the other hand, the OIC's paper stated that the General Secretariat provided support for the humanitarian response plan launched by the United Nations in favor of migrants, refugees, IDPs and receiving communities.



Demographic Disaster Warning: COVID-19 Leads to Global Decline in Birth Rates

Washington-(DPA)-

In general, epidemics manifest a common pattern as far as their impact on population is concerned, which is remarkably similar to natural disasters, i.e., a steep decline in birth rates followed by gradual increases and then followed by a baby boom. Additionally economic conditions, mental health, fear, and mortality may also influence future birth rates.

Oddly enough, when the pandemic first took hold in the U.S., many joked that widespread lockdowns would spark a “baby boom” and sky-high birth rates. Ironically, CBS News reported that provisional data from 29 state health departments showed a roughly 7.3% decline in births last December, nine months after COVID-19 was declared a pandemic by the World Health Organization (WHO).

Studies on the issue suggest that fertility rates are affected by economic recession and poverty, with country-specific poverty rates across both emerging and developed economies leading to further variation in fertility rates.

Bloomberg suggests that, data on fertility rates in 2020 showed that France registered the lowest birth rate since World War II, while China saw a decline in births by 15%.

“The longer and more severe the recession, the steeper the fall in birth rates, and the more likely it is that a fall in birth rates becomes a permanent change in family plan-

ning,” said HSBC economist James Pomeroy. A dropping birth rate is particularly evident in Italy, one of the first outbreak hotspots. Births in 15 cities there plummeted 22 per cent last December.

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Comparable effects are appearing elsewhere. Japan saw the fewest newborns on record in 2020, while Taiwan’s fertility rate fell below one child per woman for the first time. Economically speaking, such outcomes are ominous. In the US for example, even without the effects of the pandemic, retirees are due to outnumber children by the 2030s, according to Bloomberg.

In the European Union, the ratio of people over 65 to those aged 15-64, a key metric on the affordability of social services for the old, will probably deteriorate.

That would exacerbate a situation that was already worsening, with pension spending rising by nearly a third between 2008 and 2016.

“The fiscal impact can be a double whammy,” said Sonal Varma, an economist at Nomura. “Falling population growth will hurt potential growth (as the labor force falls), hurting tax revenues. And this will occur concurrently with increased spending on public pensions and healthcare.”

Even if vaccine drives are successful in taming the virus’s spread, the economic fallout, such as joblessness, is likely to last past the point where the health crisis abates, with a corresponding brake on births.

Things might not necessarily improve when the economic data shows a recovery, considering that fertility across major economies has steadily declined for decades.



Dr. Maya Morsy, President of the Egyptian National Council for Women addresses the virtual Conference. In the frame appears Ambassador Bakheet delivering the Secretary-General's statement.

Al-Othaimeen: Inauguration of WDO is a Quantum Leap towards Meeting Women's Aspirations

The Ministerial Council of the Women Development Organization (WDO), held a virtual extraordinary meeting on the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) electronic platform on Wednesday 24 March 2021. The OIC Secretary-General said that the call for the meeting after the experts meetings demonstrates the efforts of the Republic of Egypt in supporting the WDO and the willingness of the competent authorities in Egypt to accelerate the finalization of procedures for the WDO Executive Secretariat to start its activities. It also testifies to the importance Egypt attaches to the issues of advancement of women and the promotion of their role in the development efforts in member states. Moreover, it is an evidence of Egypt's effective role in supporting the General Secretariat's efforts in following up the implementation of the Organization's relevant resolutions.

The Secretary-General added that the socio-economic repercussions of the Coronavirus pandemic further worsened women's concerns and the pressure they endure. In the statement delivered on his behalf by Assistant-Secretary-General for Humanitarian, Cultural and Social affairs, Ambassador Tarig Ali Bakheet, Al-Othaimeen said that

the General Secretariat is looking forward to the launching of the OIC Women Development Organization (WDO) as a qualitative breakthrough that fulfils the aspirations of all women in the Member States, regardless of their conditions, in a way that will lead to the adoption of a positive approach and to more effective efforts to address women's issues and advance their interests and aspirations. The Secretary-General said in his statement that the agenda of the meeting is very important for the start of the work of the WDO on which the OIC relies to contribute to the empowerment of women and the promotion of their role in the development process of the Member States.

Dr. Al-Othaimeen expressed sincere thanks and gratitude to the people and Government of the Arab Republic of Egypt for convening the meeting and for the efforts exerted and arrangements made to prepare for the meeting and ensure its success. He also thanked the Government of the Republic of Burkina-Faso for its efforts in following up the resolutions of the 7th Ministerial Conference on the Role of Women in Development.

The Secretary-General noted that, since the establishment of the two open-ended groups

of experts to formulate the WDO financial and personnel regulations and the criteria for selection of the WDO Executive Director, the two groups held virtual meetings on 2-3 and 8-9 March 2021 under the chairmanship of Egypt and with the participation of WDO member states. Al-Othaimeen expressed high confidence that the Republic of Egypt, under the guided leadership of President Abdel-fattah El-Sisi, will spare no effort to enable the WDO to honor its obligations provided for in its Statute, which will enable it to contribute to the attainment of the main objectives of the OIC and implement its relevant resolutions.

The Secretary-General concluded his statement by renewing the OIC's commitment to exert all possible efforts to provide the WDO with the needed .

For her part, Dr. Maya Morsy, Chairperson of the current session of the WDO Ministerial Council and President of the National Council for Women of the Arab Republic of Egypt, underscored the need for Member States to provide support to the WDO budget to sustain its work. She wished the meeting success in adopting the documents required to kick off WDO's work.



Violence Against Women: An Outcome of Societal Culture and Negative Media

Beirut - Fadia Azar - (DPA):

Violence against women is a pathological phenomenon that derives its roots from an ancient social culture, treatment of this phenomenon is not limited to introducing laws that protect women; it also requires women's awareness of their rights, adherence to them and advocate for them, while they are subject to the path of society's development generally.

Violence against women is a violation of human rights, and results in enormous social and economic costs that affect the entire society.

It causes physical, psychological, and sexual health problems, where woman loses her ability to produce and participate in regular activities, and limits her ability to take care of herself and her children.

Violence against women takes different forms, including physical, such as physical violence, and moral, such as psychological violence. It is a phenomenon prevalent in all human societies. The World Health Organization estimates that one in three women (35%) around the world will experience violence in their lifetime.

The United Nations defines violence against women as "any act of gender-based violence

that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private life".

Dr. Sahar Hammoud, a professor of sociology at the Lebanese University, said, "Violence is considered an aggressive behavior that unlawfully uses pressure or force to inflict harm on persons or property or to influence the will of an individual."

To read the phenomenon of violence in general and violence against women in particular, Dr. Hammoud added, "It is necessary to return to the underlying causes of this behavior, whether on the aggressor or the victim." She explained, "On the level of the aggressor person, there are reasons related to psychological aspects, including the desire for negative self-assertion, the desire for revenge with the aim of restoring individual stability, as a result of denying of violence previously committed on him, or feeling the pleasure of torture."

Dr. Hammoud pointed to "social reasons related to unemployment, economic situation, or family conditions such as rejection and neglect, excessive indulgence, difficult social and financial conditions, the dissolution of

family or living in a state of divorce."

She added, "There are other reasons that may be related to childhood and adolescence, such as the influence of groups, especially the comrades group, which encourages aggressive behavior within the field of social contact, the negative influence of teachers within the school environment, in addition to, neglecting and not following up the problems of students through guidance specialists."

She believed that violent behavior could be "a result of simulating the behavior of parents during the stages of socialization. We must also not forget the influence of societal culture and the media that may indirectly stimulate these behaviors through films, programs and video games, the strength of their impact increases when the individual lives within his society in a state of alienation, especially at the level of non-normality and rebellion. "

As for the victim, Dr. Hammoud believed that "he may live in similar harsh conditions during childhood and grow-up stages, which in turn helped to reduce his self-esteem, and led to his feeling of frustration and thus to surrender and to accept the practice of this behavior on him."

Al-Othaimeen Reviews Achievements in Meeting with Female Staff



Secretary General of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), Dr. Yousef bin Ahmed Al-Othaimeen, held on March 8, 2021, an internal meeting that included the female staff members of the OIC General Secretariat on the occasion of the International Women's Day, which the organization celebrated at its headquarters in Jeddah, under the theme: "Women leadership: achieving an equal future in the world of COVID-19".

The Secretary General said that the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, comes at the top of member states that emphasized the importance of the role of women in promoting the economy and development, as women receive great attention, pointing out that Saudi Arabia has taken many measures aimed at empowering women, stressing also that Vision 2030, which was developed with National Transformation Program 2020, put the issue of empowering women among its top priorities.

Dr. Al-Othaimeen stressed that OIC's mobility in this field derives its strength and effectiveness from the support of the Member States, which adopted plans and implemented initiatives and strategies that significantly advance women through their access to leadership positions and the high rates of education and work.

At this meeting, the Secretary General thanked the female staff of the General Secretariat for their contributions, especially at the difficult time of COVID-19 epidemic.

He noted that women's issues are among the priorities of the organization, because of their reflection on the comprehensive development process in the Islamic world. He outlined the role of OIC in this field, which includes launching the Ministerial Conference on Women, adopting the organization's plan for the advancement of women (OPAAW), and establishing the Organization for Women's Development as the first specialized body of the organization concerned with women's affairs, and other initiatives.

The Secretary General extended greetings and congratulations to the female staff on the celebration of the International Women's Day this year.

Al-Othaimeen said that women's issues call for concrete measures to ensure their effective participation at various levels, pointing

OIC made unremitting efforts to empower women and involve them in decision-making, and their participation in all developmental areas

out that OIC has taken many measures in the field of empowering women, advancing their status, and tackling the challenges that member states face.

With regard to the establishment of the Women's Organization, Al-Othaimeen said that it was established in 2009 with Egypt as Headquarter, indicating that it is a specialized organization for the development of women, advancement of their status and building their capabilities, skills and competencies in the member states. Its Statute was adopted in 2010, and during the last year, it was entered into force after 15 member states ratified it, following intensive efforts by the General Secretariat, and the host country Egypt, to urge the member states, to ratify the statutes of this new specialized organization, that will deal with everything related to the development and empowerment of women and their participation in the development process in their countries. One of the most important things that this organization will take care of is to follow up on the implementation and development of the OIC Plan of Action for the Advancement of Women in Member States - abbreviated as (OPAAW). The Secretary General stated that among the OIC's initiatives comes the establishment of the OIC Prize for Women's Achievements. Its first version was organized during the seventh Ministerial Conference on Women in Burkina Faso, and the organization is preparing to organize the second edition of the prize during the work of the Eighth Ministerial Conference for Women to be hosted by the Arab Republic of Egypt.

In addition to the inauguration of HRH Princess Lalla Maryam bint El Hassan as an ambassador of goodwill in the field of defending family values, the institution of marriage and combating underage marriage on March 8, 2018 in Marrakech, Kingdom of Morocco. Holding of many seminars and workshops on topics of interest to women and their empowerment in cooperation with OIC affiliated institutions and related regional and international organizations.

Further to the efforts of the OIC Member States in the field of women empowerment, the Secretary General indicated that OIC made unremitting efforts to empower women and involve them in decision-making, and their participation in all developmental areas.

Role of Women in Peace and Security from Female's Point of View

The General Secretariat of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) held an interactive virtual seminar on "The Role of Women in Promoting Peace and Security" as part of a series of cultural activities. The seminar was broadcasted live from the headquarters of the General Secretariat, on March 23, 2021. The participants shared their contributions regarding Resolution 13/25 of the UN Security Council on the involvement of women in promoting peace and security.

Ms Diago Diagne Ndiaye, from the Republic of Senegal, Head of the Regional Office of the Women, Peace and Security Network in the Economic Community of West African Countries, spoke at the beginning of the symposium and dealt with the experience of the Regional Office in the field of enhancing the role of women in peace and security issues.

Diago said that despite the many initiatives that have been implemented, the number of women who have entered the field of achieving peace and security is still low, and despite all attempts to move women forward in this field, the results are still weak.

Diago said that the network has put in place steps to proceed with Resolution 13/25 issued by the United Nations Security Council, which reaches two decades by 2022, noting that all efforts made in this regard have stopped due to the novel Coronavirus pandemic, after the imposition of a state of emergency in many countries.

She explained that in March 2021, the Secretary-General of the United Nations, Antonio Guterres, launched a call for a global ceasefire, as the world was unable to continue addressing the epidemic and conflicts at the same time.

African countries have drawn up plans to address women's issues over successive years in order to enhance the capabilities of women, noting that this confirms the efforts made by the Regional Office of the Network of Women, Peace and Security in the space of the ECOWAS.

At the regional level, Diago said that working cells were established and thus a road map has been developed on the inclusion of both male and female in issues of conflict, peace and security.

Ms. Diago stressed the need for women to benefit from financing small projects in conflict areas in order to be able to support



their families and thus support young men to prevent them from being attracted to armed conflict, which, according to Diago, will reduce the pace of violence in war zones.

Fawzia Kofi from the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, a member of the Afghan Parliament and a member of the OIC Women's Advisory Committee, also spoke about the need for women to participate in peace and security, saying that those who fall on the battlefield are not only men but women as well.

Fawzia called for the need to look at how wars make people lose their opportunities and good education, stressing that the role of women appears in time of wars, citing Afghanistan, which has been in wars for more than 40 years, where women were used as tools in the war.

She explained that women are losing opportunities to equal access to services and

facilities more than ever before. She added, "We are not only talking about those who lose their lives in wars, but also the opportunities that are withdrawn from the hands of women in different societies from the sectors of education, work, creativity, social projects and other fields."

Mrs. Fawzia explained that, 60% of the budgets that countries spend, are allocated for issues related to peace, security and wars, rather than good education, health systems, or building the infrastructure of these countries, however, societies and countries that do not suffer from civil wars, can focus on vital issues such as education, health, work, and more, without ignoring issues of security and peace.

Ms Sulaima Ishaq Al-Khalifa, Director General of the Unit to Combat Violence against Women (CVAW) of the Sudan's Ministry of Labor and Social Development, delivered her paper in the symposium, where she indicated that it is necessary to find a national approach in Sudan to implement the requirements of the resolution, not only in the transitional phase that Sudan is currently experiencing, but also subsequent stage of prosperity and stability.

MS. Sulaima said that many women of the age of youth did not participate in the process of implementing Resolution 13/25, but she emphasized that the opportunity is now available to involve everyone, noting that Sudanese women have faced violence and war situations like other women, but that did not prevent Sudan from celebrating in March 11 The International Women's Day and Sudanese Women's Day.

Despite the many initiatives that have been implemented, the number of women who have entered the field of achieving peace and security is still low

OIC Commemorates the International Day of Women and Girls in Science



The Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) attaches special attention to the promotion and empowerment of women in OIC Member States and to highlighting their contributions in various fields, including in science and technology. This is reflected specifically in the resolution on the promotion of women's education in the fields of science, technology, engineering and mathematics, adopted by the 7th session of the Ministerial Conference on the Role of Women in Development in OIC Member States held in Ouagadougou, Burkina-Faso in 2018. The resolution supports and encourages the Member States to commemorate the International Day of Women and Girls in Science. In this

vein, the OIC General Secretariat commemorates this year's International Day of Women and Girls in Science celebrated on 11 February of every year pursuant to the relevant resolution of the UN General Assembly. On this special occasion, the General Secretariat launched an electronic platform on its official website and on its social media platforms for a period of two weeks starting 11 February 2021. The platform presented biographies and photographs of prominent women and girls who attained invaluable achievements in the areas of science and technology in the Member States and who have been nominated by their countries as honorable models in this domain to celebrate

their achievements and encourage them on this occasion.

It is worth noting that the General Secretariat organized last year a virtual workshop for experts from OIC Member States and relevant institutions and from a number of regional and international organizations on the promotion of the teaching of science, technology, engineering and mathematics to women and girls in OIC Member States. The workshop, which was organized in cooperation with the Islamic Development Bank, IC-ESCO and COMSTECH, highlighted the need to address the shortage of opportunities for women in science, technology, engineering and mathematics, in comparison with men.

Capacity Building for Women Bio-entrepreneurs

The National Centre for Biotechnology and Biosciences (CNBB) in the Ministry of Science, Technology and Higher Education in Mozambique, in partnership with the General Secretariat of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), organized a two-day training workshop on "Capacity Building for Women Bio-entrepreneurs", in Maputo on 24 – 26 March 2021.

The workshop aimed to strengthen the capacities of women bio-entrepreneurs in the Southern African Development Community (SADC), provide them with technical and entrepreneurship skills and create opportunities

for them to engage with funders, potential partners and customers as well as help them to grow their business with minimum risks and maximize their profit.

The Minister of Science, Technology and Higher Education of Mozambique, Doctor Daniel Nivagara, delivered a welcoming statement at the opening session. In his remarks, he expressed Mozambique's appreciation to the OIC General Secretariat, under the leadership of Dr. Yousef A. Al-Othaimeen, for supporting the Government's goals in addressing gender inclusiveness in the Bioscience sector, which has been identified as a

priority for the Republic of Mozambique in response to global and regional Policy Directives such as SDG5 (gender equality).

OIC Assistant Secretary General for Humanitarian, Cultural and Social Affairs, Ambassador Tariq Ali Bakhiet, delivered a recorded speech on behalf of the Secretary General applauding Mozambique's efforts on inclusion and empowerment of women and the commendable contributions to the promotion of joint Islamic action and commitment to achieve OIC goals stipulated in its 2025 Program of Action.



منظمة التعاون الإسلامي
OIC - OCI



INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY
ONE OF THE PRIORITIES OF THE OIC
SUPPORTING THE ROLE OF WOMEN
IN COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

International Women's Day: Al-Othaimeen Affirms Women's Competence in Leadership Roles

On the occasion of International Women's Day, March 08 of each year, Secretary-General of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), Dr. Yousef A. Al-Othaimeen, stressed the significance of women's issues and empowerment, which are among the OIC's top priorities based on its conviction that strengthening the role of women in the comprehensive development process calls for taking concrete measures to ensure their active participation at various levels.

On this occasion, which was held this year under the slogan "Women in Leadership: Achieving an Equal Future in a COVID-19 World," the Secretary-General congratulated women in the Islamic world and around the world for all their achievements in all fields, especially the tremendous efforts they have been making in response to the emerging coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic and recovering from it.

Al-Othaimeen indicated that women everywhere have proven during this pandemic that they are worthy of assuming leadership and decision-making roles, as women stood on the front lines alongside men in combating COVID-19 in the fields of medical care, community and civic organizations, nursing homes, education sector, and others. They have demonstrated their practical skills and ability in making sound decisions and measures to support national and international efforts to combat and recover from the virus.

The Secretary-General emphasized that the OIC has taken various measures to empower women, advance their status, prohibit discrimination against them, and face the Member States' relevant challenges. These measures included launching a sector conference for women every two years and adopting the OIC's Plan of Action for the Advancement of Women (OPAAW). Add to these the introduction of the OIC's Prize for Women's Achievements and the establishment of the Women Development Organization (WDO), the first OIC's specialized body concerned with women's affairs, which began its work last year after its statute entered into force.

The OIC's Secretary-General also seized this occasion to call on the Member States and the international community to intensify efforts to protect women against marginalization and exclusion and enable them to participate in the decision-making process as a vital element in achieving the envisaged sustainable development.

Success Story: Libyan Woman Assumed Ministerial Position



Tripoli - Ashraf Al-Ezabi - (DPA) –

When the head of the Libyan National Unity Government announced the criteria for choosing his government at the end of last February, it was surprising that, positions of Minister of Foreign Affairs and Minister of Justice, were allocated to women, in addition to other positions that Libyan women used to assume.

This news had a great impact on women. They foresee a promising future.

A day after the announcement, social media was on fire, opinions are diverged between those rejecting, supporting and conservative. Later, when the government was presented to the parliament, the prime minister insisted in a speech before the parliament on allocating the foreign affairs portfolio to women.

Despite all this, the fact is that a Libyan woman will run the Ministry of Justice, and another will lead foreign policy for the first time in Libya's modern history. A member of the Supreme Council of State, Magda Al-Falah, affirms the ability of Libyan women to work in these positions. She said: "We have quali-

fied women, who possess political experience, practice leadership skills, and have the ability to communicate and manage teams, develop visions and implement them, there is a quota allocated for women, but we will demand more."

On the other hand, the candidate for the Ministry of Tourism Agency, Aisha Abu Hajar, does not believe in the notion that, "Without the quota, women would not get anything." She justifies this by saying: "Our ambition is more than just a percentage. We want the society to achieve gender equality at work." The head of the Supreme Council for Women of Libya, Zakia Al-Ammari, disagrees with it, she says that: "We still need the quota, but we have not reached the percentage we want." She commented, "The quota is imposed, and over the past years, women have tried a lot, she is able even to lead the state itself." Al-Ammari is proud of the path of women since the founding of modern Libya in 1951. She believes that the Libyan women are able to attain exceptional achievements; they also had the honor of not, just trying,

but assuming big positions.

She added: "The Libyan woman is the first to represent the judiciary in the Arab world, and the first to fly civil and warplanes and attend the military and police colleges. Today, Libyan women lead the education and health, and participate in other institutions, so how they cannot practice politics while they are the first victims of bad policies."

As part of the policies that women supported, the Presidential Council issued a decision in 2016 to establish a unit to support and empower women affiliated with the Council of Ministers. Similar offices were established in most government institutions. What is the role of these offices? Does the term (empowerment) mean that a woman is unable to reach on her own, and needs someone to empower her? The Director of the Women's Support and Empowerment Office at the Ministry of Education, Amal Al-Malti, acknowledges that, and says: "Women in our society cannot reach on their own and need support and opportunities from decision-makers. Al-Malti believes that it is necessary to preserve the quota for the time being, until the level of awareness of both men and women increases.

According to Ms. Al-Malti, empowerment offices work to support women by developing their capabilities, defending them, making them aware of their rights and duties, raising their capabilities, and then enabling them to access decision-making positions.

Ms. Al-Malti is proud of what has been achieved at the level of education, as the representation of women "according to her" has reached 30% in the departments, bodies and specialized committees and the presidency of universities, colleges and research centers.

OIC Introduces Women Development Organization to the World

Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) took part on 17 March 2021 in the virtual CSW65 Ministerial Round Table event to introduce the Women Development Organization (WDO) of the Member States of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC).

The statement delivered by Amb. Tariq Ali Bakheet, the Assistant Secretary-General for Humanitarian, Cultural and Social Affairs, on

behalf of H.E. Dr. Yousef A. Al-Othaimeen, the OIC's Secretary-General, affirmed that the OIC's expectations of the WDO are high as the organization will be a key contributor to women's empowerment in OIC Member States.

The statement also asserted the confidence of the OIC that the Arab Republic of Egypt, the headquarters state of the WDO, will not

spare any effort, under the wise leadership of His Excellency President Abdel Fattah El-Sisi, to enable the organization to fulfill its obligations stipulated in its statute.

The event was organized by Egypt, Burkina Faso, OIC and UN Women within the context of the CSW65th session to introduce the WDO.

Electronic Application to learn Arabic Poetry in Malaysia

The General Secretariat of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) held a lecture on scientific research and sustainable development under the title "Adopting the techniques and innovations of the twenty-first century in learning and teaching Islamic studies: exploring the future in a proactive way, through planning, not through coincidence". The lecture took place within the monthly cultural lectures series, organized by the General Secretariat at its headquarters in Jeddah.

Dr. Rahma Ahmed Haji Othman (Former Director in Malaysian Ministry of Higher Education, Former Vice President of the International Islamic University for Research and Innovation in Malaysia) delivered the virtual lecture on Wednesday, February 24, 2021.

The lecture dealt with modern technological methods in the field of education, upgrading skills and utilizing the output of scientific researches to improve learning methods, especially in digital fields.

Dr. Rahma presented a number of innovations achieved by students of the Interna-

tional Islamic University for Research and Innovation Malaysia, especially in the field of teaching Arabic for non-native speakers.

The lecture confirmed that work is underway to transform Malaysia into a technologically advanced country, pointing out that a national policy has already been developed and launched in December 2020 in order to achieve leadership in development and compete at the global level.

Dr. Rahma explained that it is necessary to provide many elements in the field of learning enhancement, such as: vitality, cooperation, creativity and criticism. She also stressed the importance of providing critical skills, so that the teacher is not the basis of the educational process only. Knowledge sources have to be developed, classroom should not be physically limited, and rather, the student's productivity have to be enhanced, in addition to his love of knowledge and research, as well as the development of critical thinking.

Dr. Rahma presented a briefing on innovation at the Islamic University, which highlights the application of Arabic poetry education. (E-

Diwan) available on the store, as one of the distinguished innovations of students of the International Islamic University for Research and Innovation in Malaysia. She said that the idea started after it became difficult to access references for Arabic poetry at the university, while this application provides all academic needs for learning the Arabic language with Arabic voice, text and interaction. The app also provides English and Malay translations. Dr. Rahma said that E-diwan is in line with the Malaysian educational policy and suits different groups of students who have been prepared and adopt the spirit of their new skills in the field of modern technology.

The researcher reviewed a number of young innovators at the university who have strengthened the process of learning the Arabic language through many applications such as (easy Arabic) and (e vocabulary) and special applications for people with special needs and people with visual impairments (Vitab), and many applications related to knowledge of halal foods and halal education and others.

Jamal Al-Lail: 1.5 Billion Students Learning Remotely

Dr. Haifa Jamal Al-Lail, President of Effat University in Jeddah, gave a virtual lecture at the headquarters of the OIC General Secretariat, Tuesday, January 19, 2021, entitled: (Higher Education and COVID 19: Opportunities and Challenges).

Dr. Al-Lail started her lecture explaining that COVID-19 epidemic had not only a negative impact on the health system, but on social life, including employment, education, agriculture and other important economic aspects, noting that 1.3 billion university school students around the world were unable to attend their classes. Since March 23, 2020, the number of students has increased to 1.5 billion students in the last update, according to UNESCO.

Dr. Jamal Al-Lail indicated that although the epidemic has raised many challenges and difficulties in the field of higher education, it has stimulated those in the higher education sector to think seriously about available alternatives and the plans necessary to use them at the emergencies so that the education sector can continue in the future.



Maha Aqeel, Director of the Women's Department at the General Secretariat, said that the lecture came in the context of series of cultural seminars held by the OIC General Secretariat at its headquarters, and coincides with the World Education Day, which falls on the 24th of January of each year. The lec-

ture also celebrated the role that education plays in achieving development and peace, and the importance of working towards obtaining quality, equitable and comprehensive education, learning opportunities and keeping pace with lifelong learning.



OIC Condolences Indonesia over Earthquake in Sulawesi

Secretary General of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), Dr Yousef A. Al-Othaimeen, sent a letter of condolences and sympathy to President Joko Widodo of the Republic of Indonesia, on the loss of victims of the earthquake that hit the Sulawesi Island and took a heavy toll of lives and property. Dr Al-Othaimeen expressed heartfelt condolences to the President of Indonesia, his people and the bereaved families of the victims of the devastating earthquake, asking the Most High to have the deceased in His bounteous mercy and to bring quick healing to the wounded.

The 6.2-magnitude quake, one of a string of disasters to hit Indonesia, struck West Sulawesi early Friday morning, sending thou-

sands fleeing from their beds.

The quake caused significant damage to hundreds of homes, a mall, hospital and several hotels, and has been followed by more than 39 aftershocks.

As many as 42 people have been killed, mostly in Mamuju and the rest in the neighbouring district of Majene, the country's national disaster mitigation agency said in a situation report. More than 820 people were injured, it said.

The heightened seismic activity set off three landslides, severed electricity supplies, and damaged bridges linking to regional hubs, such as the city of Makassar. Heavy rain was also worsening conditions for those seeking shelter.

Videos shared on social media showed residents fleeing to higher ground on motorcycles, and a young girl trapped under rubble as people tried to shift debris with their hands. Rescue workers used cutting and lifting equipment to free survivors and find the dead.

Straddling the Pacific "Ring of Fire," Indonesia is regularly hit by earthquakes. In 2018, a 7.5-magnitude quake and subsequent tsunami struck Palu, in Sulawesi, killing thousands. A 9.1-magnitude quake off the north of Sumatra island triggered a tsunami on Boxing Day in 2004 that lashed coastal areas of Indonesia, Sri Lanka, India, Thailand and nine other nations, killing more than 230,000 people.

OIC Participates in Observation Process of Presidential Elections in Djibouti

The Secretary General of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), Dr. Yousef bin Ahmed Al-Othaimeen, dispatched a delegation from the OIC's General Secretariat to participate in the observation process of the presidential elections, which will be held on Friday in Djibouti. In a meeting held at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the delegation participated in the election observation with other regional organizations, and also met with the ministers of interior, justice, women and family, heads and members of the national institutions concerned with the elections, namely the Constitutional Council, the Independent National Electoral Commission and the National Information Authority. During the meeting, they discussed the arrangements and preparations made for the elections.



OIC Delegation to Djibouti



Al-Othaimeen Congratulates Egypt on Successful Refloating of the Suez Ship

Secretary-General of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), Dr. Yousef A. Al-Othaimeen, congratulated the Arab Republic of Egypt on the success of its efforts to refloat the container ship stranded on the Suez Canal.

Al-Othaimeen commended greatly the high efficiency of Egyptian officials, under the leadership of H.E. President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi, in dealing with this incident, overcoming this crisis quickly and restoring maritime traffic in the Suez Canal to normal.

Al-Othaimeen affirmed the OIC's constant support for the Arab Republic of Egypt to

maintain smooth maritime traffic in the Suez Canal.

The OIC General Secretariat had commended the efforts made by the Arab Republic of Egypt to deal efficiently and with great competence with the accident of the wedged ship in the Suez Canal.

The OIC affirmed its support for the Egyptian authorities in the efforts made to rescue the wedged ship and overcoming this crisis.

On the other hand, Secretary General of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), Dr. Yousef Al-Othaimeen, expressed deep condolences to and heartfelt sympathy with

the bereaved families of the victims, the people and government of the Arab Republic of Egypt, over the two-train collision in the Sohag province south of the Egyptian capital Cairo.

He prayed to Allah for His vast and endless mercy to the souls of the deceased, asking Him to grant solace and comfort to their families and give fast recovery to the wounded.

Dr Al-Othaimeen stressed that, the OIC stands in full support of and solidarity with the Arab Republic of Egypt in this trial.

OIC Reiterates its Commitment to the Protection of Human Rights

Secretary General of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) Dr. Yousef A. Al-Othaimeen has reaffirmed the organization's commitment to the promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms.

He made the statement in his address to the High-Level Segment of the 46th Session of the United Nations Human Rights Council.

"This session takes place at a time when the world is facing numerous challenges affect-

ing peace, security, human rights and development," said Al-Othaimeen.

"The COVID-19 pandemic has had a profound impact on all aspects of life and especially on human rights. It has exacerbated social inequality and vulnerability," he added.

Dr. Al-Othaimeen highlighted the massive Israeli human rights violation against the Palestinian people, the human rights situation in Jammu and Kashmir, the post-conflict rehabilitation and reconstruction in Nagarno

Karabakh of Azerbaijan, the situation of the Rohingya Muslim community in Myanmar and other Muslim communities in non-OIC member States.

The Secretary General stressed that the OIC will continue to utilize all platforms to promote pluralism, dialogue among cultures and religions as well as respect for tolerance and integration to defeat the forces of bigotry and discrimination.



Secretary General of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), Dr. Yousef bin Ahmed Al-Othaimeen, delivered a speech before the 17th session of the thematic discussion of the Independent Permanent Human Rights Commission (IPHRC), which was held virtually and discussed the issue of: "Promoting and protecting the rights of persons with disabilities," on 30 March 2021, in Jeddah

In his speech, Al-Othaimeen praised the discussion of the issue of protecting and promoting the rights of persons with disabilities, stressing that the importance of this topic has increased in the wake of the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic, which has severely affected the enjoyment of human rights by this group.

Al-Othaimeen said that there is no doubt that the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic has clearly affected the world, especially the needy groups, as the economic gap between the various segments of societies around the world has widened, including women, children, migrants, refugees and people with disabilities.

In the wake of massive human rights and humanitarian challenges such as the COVID-19 pandemic, the world needs to revive shared values and join efforts. The scale of the response, especially during the launch of the long-awaited vaccine or other treatments, would put the bonds of human solidarity and collective responsibility to the test. The Secretary General said that countries must continue to address the related social, economic and health risks that follow this pandemic in order to protect people with health problems and disabilities.

He said that, OIC has prepared an action plan that provides a roadmap for policy makers to exchange knowledge and information be-

A Call for Changing Attitudes towards "People with Disabilities"

tween member states, on ways to improve the situation of persons with disabilities, explaining that OIC has included the promotion of the rights of persons with disabilities among the main goals in its program of action for 2025, indicating that there is a need to integrate these actions in the sustainable development goals, specifically in parts related to education, growth and various social issues.

The Secretary General called on all member states to take concrete measures to create a legislative framework to remove psychological, social, cultural and environmental barriers to ensure equal rights for persons with disabilities, and to invest in reducing risks of disability, engaging the media, scientists and the community to change the perception of persons with disabilities. In addition to strengthening international cooperation with the United Nations and Member States to exchange knowledge and best practices for designing national plans and strategies and using assistive technologies to build the capacities of these persons.

At the beginning of his speech, the Secretary General congratulated Dr. Saeed Al-Ghaffli on his election as President of the commission for the year 2021. He affirmed his confidence that he would follow the footsteps of his predecessors in achieving the commission's mission and goals. He also confirmed that the OIC General Secretariat would continue to support the commission in perform-

ing its tasks.

Al-Othaimeen also congratulated the commission on continuing its tireless work during the outbreak of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, and holding the seventeenth session virtually is an expression of the commission's commitment to adapt and continue to fulfill the responsibilities assigned to it. He explained, "We must be guided by this spirit in all circumstances, including this pandemic."

The Secretary-General also congratulated the Commission for the adoption by the forty-seventh session of the Council of Foreign Ministers, the revised OIC Cairo Declaration on Human Rights.

The Secretariat considers that the approval by the Council of Foreign Ministers of this document is a tangible achievement, as it is compatible with universal human rights instruments, also reflects the Islamic spirit and values.

The 47th session of the Council of Foreign Ministers was also informed about the draft "OIC Charter of the Rights of the Child in Islam", proposed by the Commission, and the Council mandated the General Secretariat to form an intergovernmental working group to review it, this task will be undertaken as soon as possible. The Commission has also made valuable contributions to develop a comprehensive OIC strategy to combat Islamophobia. The OIC General Secretariat also welcomes the constructive participation of the Commission.

World Health Day: COVID-19 Exposed the Inequalities in Accessing Healthcare



On the occasion of the World Health Day, Dr Yousef A. Al-Othaimeen, OIC Secretary-General, called upon OIC Member States and the international community to accord due attention to the existing and emerging health issues and forge partnerships to en-

sure the health and wellbeing of all human beings. He said that the world we live in is marked by discrepancies where a large number of people lack adequate access to basic amenities such as education and health care. "COVID-19 pandemic is a wakeup call

that has further exposed and exacerbated the inequalities between countries just as it has within different communities," said Al-Othaimeen. "The least developed countries have fragile health systems that are ill-prepared to deal with health emergencies. Majority of people are living in conditions that make them more vulnerable to many avoidable infectious diseases," he added.

Dr Al-Othaimeen emphasized that the world is interconnected and interdependent and calling for the need to invest in health as highlighted in the last OIC Strategic Health Program of Action OIC-SHPA 2013-2024. He called upon the developed countries and other international partners to join hands to provide necessary technical and financial assistance to the least developed countries to strengthen their health systems and other social safety mechanisms for the needy and poor people.

He congratulated scientists and researchers for developing necessary vaccines for COVID-19 in record time. He also reaffirmed the commitment to work with international partners especially the WHO to ensure timely development, production and equitable access to new COVID-19 diagnostics, therapeutics and vaccines.

OIC and Guinea Hold Workshop on Inclusion of Persons with Disability

The Ministry of Social Action and Childhood in the Republic of Guinea, in cooperation with the General Secretariat of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), held a workshop on inclusion and empowerment of persons with disability in the Guinean capital, Conakry, on 17 – 18 March 2021.

The workshop discussed ways of strengthening the capacities of persons with disability, the role of information technology in ensuring their independence, and the situation of persons with disability in the face of the coronavirus pandemic. A presentation was made on the international convention on persons with disability.

The opening session saw the participation of members of the Guinean government,

representatives of national institutions and civil society organizations in Guinea working on protection of persons with disability in Guinea, the representative of the United Nations Development Program (UNDP), and members of the diplomatic corps in Guinea. The Minister of Social Affairs and Childhood and the Minister of National Education and Literacy in Guinea delivered welcome addresses at the opening session. In their remarks, they expressed Guinea's appreciation to the OIC General Secretariat, under the leadership of H.E. Dr Yousef A. Al-Othaimeen, for its continued support for Guinea to implement the government's action plan on protection and empowerment of persons with disability.

OIC Assistant Secretary General for Humanitarian, Cultural and Social Affairs, Ambassador Tariq Ali Bakhiet, delivered a recorded speech on behalf of the Secretary General applauding Guinea's efforts on inclusion and empowerment of persons with disability. He disclosed that the OIC attached utmost importance to social protection, particularly protection of vulnerable groups, in line with the final communique of the 14th Islamic Summit, held in Makkah al-Mukarramah on 31 May 2021, which "stressed that the social dimension is essential to achieve sustainable development, and that investment in social protection is a means to attain those goals."

Secretary-General Extends Ramadan 1442H Greetings to the Muslim World

Secretary General of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), Dr Yousef A. Al-Othaimeen, extended greetings and well wishes to the Muslims in the world on the advent of the blessed holy month of Ramadan 1442H.

On this joyous occasion, Dr Al-Othaimeen congratulated the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, the host country, extending his best wishes to the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques, King Salman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud, the current chair of the Islamic Summit Conference, and to His Royal Highness Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman. He also extended his warmest greetings to their Majesties, Highnesses and Excellencies leaders of the OIC Member States.

Praying Allah to shower His bounteous blessings on the wider Muslim community on this blessed month, and to rid the world at large of the coronavirus pandemic. Dr Al-Othaimeen called on Muslims to imbibe the core teachings of Ramadan and let its lessons of self-discipline and rigor continue to guide their conduct beyond the glorious month, taking all the required precautionary measures to help curb the tide of coronavirus. "Protecting ourselves and others, by proactively observing preventive measures, including social distancing, is one of the fun-



damentals and ultimate purposes of Islam," Al-Othaimeen further stressed.

He went on, "We need to cling to the true spirit of Ramadan and cherish what it stands for, receiving it with the good morals of moderation and tolerance, and showcasing togetherness and apathy vis-à-vis fellow Muslims living in refugee camps and shelters. We have to keep their plight, at this difficult time of the pandemic, in our hearts

and prayers during Ramadan and beyond," he urged.

Moreover, the Secretary General invited Muslims in non-Member States to manifest the ethos and values of the bright and sacred month of Ramadan, listening to and heeding the call of Muslim scholars to perform Ramadan prayers and rituals at home, as may be prescribed in their countries of residence.

OIC Calls for Better Protection for Civilians during Armed Conflicts

The General Secretariat of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) held on 08 April 2021 a virtual workshop on the "International humanitarian law and the humanitarian principles", in partnership with the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC). The workshop marks the beginning of the

implementation of the 2021-2024 Plan of Action signed on 18 February 2021 between the two Organizations aimed at contributing to the capacity building of the OIC's staff.

On behalf of the OIC Secretary General and Assistant Secretary General for Humanitarian, Social and Cultural Affairs, Ambassador

Hassan Ali Hassan, Director of the OIC Legal Affairs Department, delivered the opening statement. He stressed on the importance for international actors to comply with the International Humanitarian Law and the humanitarian principles to better protect civilians against the impact of armed conflicts.

General Secretariat Condemns Attacks in Cote d'Ivoire and Mozambique

The General Secretariat of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) condemned in the strongest terms the attack perpetrated by gunmen on a military post in Cote d'Ivoire.

OIC Secretary General, Dr. Yousef A. Al-Othaimeen, expresses deep condolences to the families of the fallen soldiers and to Government and people of Cote d'Ivoire and wishes the wounded speedy recovery.

While recalling the principled position of the OIC against extremism and terrorism, the Secretary General reiterates the OIC's solidarity with the Government of Cote d'Ivoire in its efforts to combat violent extremism and terrorism.

The General Secretariat also strongly condemned the terrorist attacks perpetrated in Cabo Delgado Province, Republic of Mozam-

bique. It expressed its grave concern over the unravelling developments in the city of Palma. Extending his solidarity with Mozambique in its fight against terrorism, the OIC Secretary General Dr. Yousef Al-Othaimeen offers his deepest condolences to the families of the victims of the attacks and to the Government and people of Mozambique.



As part of the Program of the Capital of Islamic Culture of the Islamic World Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (ICESCO), the Celebration of Doha as the Arab Region's Capital of Islamic Culture for 2021, kicked off on Monday, March 08, 2021, under the theme "Our Culture is Light," under the high patronage of His Highness Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani, Emir of Qatar. The Celebration includes over 70 programs and activities that reflect the heritage of Qatar, which will be implemented throughout 2021.

Since its launch in 2005, ICESCO's Program of the Capital of Islamic Culture aims to celebrate three cities each year in the Islamic world, which have a prominent cultural history. The goal is to highlight their cultural and civilizational heritage, promote cultural and civilizational dialogue, and consolidate the values of coexistence and understanding among peoples. Each city represents one of the three geographical regions of the OIC Member States (Arab region – African region – Asian region).

The Qatari Ministry of Culture and Sports led the celebration, in cooperation with the Qatari National Commission for Education, Culture, and Science, and in partnership with several ministries and authorities in Qa-

tar, including the Ministry of Education and Higher Education, the Ministry of Endowments and Islamic Affairs, Qatar Museums, Katara Cultural Village, and Qatar Foundation for Education, Science and Community Development.

The Celebration's programs and activities constitute a platform for promoting creativity in various intellectual, artistic, and cultural fields, highlighting the role of the State of Qatar in the cultural fields as well as its cultural richness and heritage, and encouraging creativity and innovation as cultural values that enrich Islamic civilization.

ICESCO has chosen Doha as the Arab Region's Capital of Islamic Culture for 2021 for its long history and heritage knowing that Doha is the land of dialogue and a crossroads of civilizations.

The Islamic World Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (ICESCO) and the Qatari Coordinating Committee for the celebration of Doha as the Capital of Islamic Culture for 2021 had held a coordination meeting to arrange for the official launch and its general program and to discuss other relevant details.

During the videoconference, the Qatari Coordinating Committee presented on Monday, January 25, 2021, the draft program

of the celebration and the main suggested highlights and cooperating parties. The Committee stressed the need for coordination with the relevant ministries, sectors, national bodies, and civil society given their key role in ensuring the success of the celebration.

The Qatari delegation proposed the organization of the inauguration ceremony on March 8, 2021, and pledged to provide ICESCO with the details of the major programs and highlights of the celebration, including international and regional exhibitions, international art festivals and symposia, and cultural weeks.

ICESCO pledged to inform the Qatar party of the major activities and projects planned as part of the celebration of Doha as the Arab Region Capital of Islamic Culture for 2021. The measure is part of ICESCO's new vision, which is based on promoting culture in the Islamic world through many initiatives, projects, and programs. The most notable initiatives are "ICESCO Digital Home," "ICESCO International Art Center," "Islamic World Heritage Center," "ICESCO International Chairs Network" as well as the civilizational project "ICESCO Roads for the Future."

Satellites Reach Space and the OIC Hails “Mars Mission”



The first satellite entirely manufactured in Tunisia and dedicated to the Internet of things (IoT) was launched into space in an especially important step for the country that became the first Maghreb country to build a satellite.

“Participating in this project is a source of pride and working in the aviation or space navigation sector is a dream,” said Eng. Khalil Shiha from the National School of Electronics and Communications in Sfax said.

The «Challenge One» satellite, manufactured by the Tunisian telecommunications company «Talnat», reached its orbit aboard a Soyuz missile.

Tunisia has become the first Maghreb country and the sixth in Africa to manufacture a satellite, according to the specialized website «Space in Africa”.

The experimental satellite aims to collect data from sensors, including internet-connected thermometers, pollution detectors, positioning chips, or moisture sensors, to be read in real time even in areas not covered by the network on the ground.

The Russian «Soyuz» missile, which carries the Tunisian satellite in a group of 38 satellites, was scheduled to take off on the 65th anniversary of Tunisia’s independence but it finally set off from Baikonur base in Kazakhstan in an event that was followed from Tunisia by H.E. the Tunisian President, Kais Saied.

«Our real wealth is young people who are able to defy all difficulties. We only lack the national will,” said Saied.

The US\$ 1.2 million project, which started in 2018, embodies the work of a team of young

Tunisian engineers, accompanied by Tunisian experts abroad, including an expert who participated in the NASA «Perseverance» mission to Mars.

The transmission capacity of the «Challenge One» artificial satellite is 250 kilobytes per second over a range of 550 kilometers, and it will try to meet the increasing need to connect things through satellites, as the terrestrial internet does not cover more than 20 percent of the Earth’s area.

In the next three years, «Talnat», in cooperation with other African countries, seeks to launch a swarm of more than twenty satellites to commercialize this technology.

“This project opens the way for an innovative service to the region in an expanding field,” said Talnat CEO, Mohamed Fraikha.

In a sign of the region’s strong ambitions in the space industry, the United Arab Emirates launched the first Arab probe to Mars. Dr. Yousef A. Al-Othaimeen, the Secretary-General of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), had congratulated the UAE on the success of the «Hope Probe» interplanetary mission after the Probe successfully reached its orbit around Mars on its first attempt, making the UAE the first Arab and Islamic country and the fifth in history to reach the red planet. Al-Othaimeen expressed the OIC’s pride in this scientific triumph, which is the most recent addition to a series of the UAE’s breakthroughs due to the strenuous efforts and brilliant competencies of its people, and a message to Arab and Muslim youth that determination, ambition, and perseverance are

the path to overcoming challenges, reaching global achievements, and leaving an indelible mark on the map of scientific and cultural tour de force worldwide.

On the other hand, the Emirate of Dubai announced the successful launch of a satellite from the Baikonur space base in Kazakhstan, which is an environmental nanometer that aims to study the challenges and issues related to air quality and climate change in the UAE, taking advantage of the advanced applications of the space industry in this field.

On the other hand, the King Abdulaziz City for Science and Technology (KACST) announced the successful launch of the «Shaheen Sat» designed to photograph the Earth and track ships from low orbits, from Baikonur base in Kazakhstan, on board the Russian missile «Soyuz 2”.

Shaheen Sat includes a telescope payload with high accuracy imaging, and a payload for tracking marine ships. This satellite, which was developed and manufactured within a short period, is characterized by an imaging accuracy of up to 0.9 meters, a weight not exceeding 75 kilograms, and dimensions of 56 * 56 * 97 cm.

On this occasion, the KACST Chief, Dr. Anas bin Faris al-Faris, said in a statement to the Saudi Press Agency that this achievement is a result of the great support that the research, development, and innovation sector enjoys in Saudi Arabia, indicating that the success of its launch comes as a continuation of the successes achieved by Saudi Arabia in the field of space. The KACST has developed and manufactured a group of highly efficient satellites that provide imaging and reconnaissance services. During the past twenty years, it launched 17 satellites.

Al-Faris added that Shaheen Sat was developed by a Saudi team from various engineering disciplines in cooperation with the KACST partners and provides satellite images for the government and private sectors to serve development goals. It also tracks marine vessels by employing artificial intelligence techniques and big data.

He pointed out that the KACST will work, in cooperation with the Saudi Space Commission, to invest in technology, and develop and manufacture highly efficient satellites in a short period.



Express Train To Prosperity in Dakar

Dakar, the capital of Senegal, faces a transportation crisis. The number of motor vehicles in the city is growing at a rate of over 8% per year. The Islamic Development Bank (IsDB) contributed EUR 300 million towards a new mass transit system, replacing the old railway line and constructing pedestrian foot bridges and road bridges for traffic to link both sides of the railway corridor. The new mass transit system has improved the lives of thousands of Dakar's commuters, while reducing transport pollution and creating new jobs.

Dakar is the political, economic and cultural capital of the Republic of Senegal and is home to four million people, who make up a quarter of Senegal's population. This paradox of 25% of the Senegalese population living on just 0.28% of the national territory results in high pressure on land occupation, high costs of housing, a concentration of all services and activities (port, business, banking, administration) in a small area, and major transportation problems – all of which impact negatively on the country's economy. Every morning, thousands of people commute from the city's suburbs and surrounding area to downtown Dakar, where most economic activities are concentrated. A reverse movement happens in the evening. Consequently, each year, hundreds of thou-

sands of hours of economic productivity are lost and cases of severe respiratory illness increase steadily. Demand for transport is very high and exceeds the capacity of the transport infrastructure and services.

Dakar's density makes it well suited to a middle-distance mass transit system. The Government of Senegal has therefore made improving public transportation in the Dakar metropolitan area a priority and has initiated two large projects: the Regional Express Train (TER) and a bus rapid transit (BRT) system.

The BRT system will allow modern, high-capacity buses running in a reserved lane. It will pass through 14 municipalities on the west side of Dakar and aims to transport 300,000 passengers per day and reduce travel time from 95 minutes to 45 minutes.

On the east side of the city, considering the number of people to be served and the distances to cover, a fast, efficient train system – the TER – is being established. The TER and BRT projects will be connected by new bus services linking the stations to allow the population quick access to these new modes of transport.

The TER project comprises a railway link between downtown Dakar and the new urban center of Diamniadio – a distance of 36 km (Phase I).

In future, the project will also link to the

Blaise Diagne International Airport, a distance of 19 km (Phase II). Existing rail facilities are being replaced with four tracks: two electrified standard gauge tracks dedicated to passenger transport, which will replace the current train service; a metric track for freight; and a strip of land reserved for developing a maintenance and service track, which could be used in future to construct a fourth track.

In addition, the project is building railway infrastructure (bridges, platforms, earthworks, maintenance facilities for rolling stock, etc.) and electrical systems (power, signals, telecommunication, ticketing, etc.) and constructing or renovating 14 railway stations. IsDB contributed EUR 300 million to Phase I of the TER project. This funding has supported replacing the old railway line and the construction of pedestrian foot bridges and road bridges for traffic to link both sides of the railway corridor.

Phase I of the project has achieved its goals and changed the Dakar landscape: once testing is complete, the new trains will reduce travel time between downtown Dakar and Diamniadio from 1.5 hours (2015) to 0.5 hours. With six trains per hour (one train every 10 minutes) and a top speed of 160 km per hour, transporting 115,000 passengers a day in safe, comfortable conditions.



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Nigeria Introduces a Saving Scheme to Help the Poor Perform Hajj

Launching of the Hajj Savings Scheme (HSS) is a historic milestone in the masterplan of National Hajj Commission of Nigeria (NAHCON). It is a scheme that has taken years to build. Although the Commission has not reached the desired destination yet, the launching and signing of agreement were important steps towards a long and hopefully, successful endeavor.

The Hajj Savings Scheme is Nigeria's version of Malaysian Tabung Haji. Malaysia began its program in September 1963. It grew from three bank branches to over a hundred branches; from 1, 281 initial depositors in 1963 to over 4million depositors today, plus over 1.8 billion dollars in revenue. The target of Nigeria's Hajj Savings Scheme is to achieve and surpass this. NAHCON believes it is achievable in view of the numerical advantage Nigeria enjoys relative to Malaysia.

NAHCON's Vision of the HSS is to create a platform that will ease Hajj enrolment for Nigerian pilgrims in such a way that even the poorest among Muslims will have the opportunity of performing Hajj through self-sponsorship. This will be made possible, God-willing, through a gradual deposit

of monies that will be invested on behalf of the depositor until it reaches the desired amount for Hajj fare.

The scheme is currently coming in collaboration with Ja'iz bank during this first phase. At a later time when all necessary governmental procedures are finalized, NAHCON, under HSS trustees, will be sole manager of the scheme.

Monies deposited under the Hajj Savings Scheme will be invested in shari'a compliant ventures with profits credited to the depositor according to Islamic formula of profit sharing.

The Commission's prognosis is that, with Hajj Savings Scheme, the future of pre-planned Hajj is here. On the part of Hajj administrators, a pre-planned Hajj will facilitate Hajj arrangement years in advance. It will be goodbye to projective planning (for unspecified number of people) due to delay in Hajj fare remittance.

A pre-planned Hajj on the part of the depositor means an investor may select the year he or she plans to undertake the Hajj trip regardless of the fact the required amount had been met. The depositor's profit will continue to accrue notwithstanding.

Pre-planned Hajj means an intending pilgrim does not have to sell himself into poverty due to yearning to worship His Lord on Arafat day, but to save gradually and patiently for his turn.

With pre-planned Hajj, priority for Hajj slots will be given to depositors under the scheme on the basis of first-comers whose funds had reached the required amount. For example, if Nigeria's allocated slot is 95,000 and 100,000 have qualified, priority will be given to the first 95,000 that have met the target if they desire to perform the Hajj that year. The remaining depositors will then be rolled-over to subsequent years. Of course, the cash and carry Hajj slot will still be available, but with conditions.

The HSS is expected to contribute to the Nigerian economy in various ways such as utilizing otherwise dormant funds and through tax generation. It is also a means of empowering state pilgrims' welfare boards with revenue for maximum productivity. Hopefully, zakat that will accrue from the profits will be used as social safety net to serve the Muslim community and by extension, the Nigerian public.

“Orangutan” in Borneo, Indonesia, Escapes COVID-19



Munich - Carola Frantzen - (DPA): In the highlands of the Indonesian island of Borneo, which has a rainy tropical climate, a female orangutan called Nineoah Goa, a type of monkeys, travels.

After months of waiting, the transition now takes only a few minutes until Nineoah returns to the forest it belongs to.

She was rescued from a barn in Thailand and transferred to a forest rehabilitation school run by the Borneo Orangutan Rescue Foundation in Indonesia. She received training on how to survive in the wild.

Nineoah graduated from the training course with distinction to be now one of the first ten gigantic monkeys known as orangutans to be released into a protected jungle area, after the Foundation's efforts in this regard were halted due to the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic.

“For a full year, we have not been able to release these monkeys due to the pandemic, but we remain very committed to efforts to save orangutans from extinction,” says Jamartin Sehit, director of the Foundation. These giant monkeys used to live in large parts of Southeast Asia. Still, now they only live on the islands of Borneo and Sumatra, after the expansion of the cultivation of oil palm trees, along with illegal hunting and forest fires, reduced their natural habitat and their numbers too.

Experts fear the extinction of this family of monkeys that live in the wild within few de-

In the Kalimantan rain-forest in the Indonesian sector of Borneo, seven male orangutans and three females are transported

cares.

The COVID-19 pandemic also posed an additional risk, and it is not currently clear whether the virus could infect this species of monkeys, and no case of infection has been confirmed among them.

This is thanks in part to the swift efforts of the wildlife protection organizations that protect them. For example, the Borneo Orangutan Rescue Foundation closed hosting places for giant monkeys in March 2020 and tightened safety standards for workers. The Foundation's experts say that some gorillas in the Safari Zoo in San Diego, United States, suffered from colds and coughing. It was discovered that they had contracted the COVID-19 virus in January 2021.

A study conducted later showed that all species of great apes have characteristics that make them vulnerable to infection with the virus. This prompted experts to assume that orangutans could also be in-

fectured with the coronavirus and be exposed to the disease.

On the other hand, in the Kalimantan rainforest in the Indonesian sector of Borneo, seven male orangutans and three females are transported, among them Disha and Diego, a mother with her children, where they travel to the atmosphere of freedom. Their ages ranged from four to 28, and most of them threw their bad experiences behind their backs. And one of these monkeys, called Bali, was rescued from a farm in 2003 when he was three years old, and his leg was broken. Three bullets lodged under his skin.

To transport the ten animals, the Foundation gathered a team of medical staff, biologists, officials and experts, and modified health protocols so that they would be released into the forest in the safest way possible.

“Tests were carried out on the huge monkeys that were released into the wild to ensure that they were free of the coronavirus before they began their life in our protected forests,” Sehit says.

Daniel Mirdis, director of the Foundation branch in Germany, expresses his happiness about the exit of orangutans from the lockdown caused by the pandemic to set off to wildlife before a man can do so.

The Foundation used a helicopter to transport the animals as quickly as possible to its new area to avoid any risks of infection.

This method significantly reduced the length of the trip, which could have taken three days by car from the rescue area to the protected forests.

More importantly, the use of the plane led to avoiding crossing villages and settlements, which reduced the chances of endangering the health of animals due to the pandemic, according to the Foundation.

Veterinarian Agus Vacheroni explains preparing to transport the monkeys on the plane for a one-hour flight. “The animals were given a mild anti-allergic drug that can cause drowsiness, and it can also be used to treat insomnia or motion sickness,” he says. “This drug is like taking a pill for a human being before taking a car trip on a rough road or a speedboat,” he added.

Once the animals reached the forest, the box quickly opens as the monkeys headed towards the trees.

OIC Holds a Training Session on Election Observation

The General Secretariat of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) held the first training session of the Election Observation Unit under the title (Enhancing the Efficiency of Observation for the Management of the Electoral Process) at its headquarters in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia, on February 01, 2021.

Mr. Yousef Aldobeay, Assistant Secretary-General for Political Affairs, delivered the speech of Dr. Yousef A. Al-Othaimen, the OIC's Secretary-General. He affirmed that the OIC had monitored elections and polls in many countries of the Islamic world for a long time. It is one of the fundamental pillars for building a democratic system, good governance, and the principle of consultation in the OIC's countries.

In the Secretary-General's speech, Aldobeay said that the session would cover several topics related to the role of the observer, the types of voting, the stages of the monitoring process, the legal framework for the electoral administration, and the OIC's missions participating in monitoring elections that take place in any of the OIC's countries.

The session, held at the General Secretariat's headquarters, included answers to many questions: what are elections? What is the observation or monitoring of elections in any member states? What is the electoral administration? It also dealt with the past experi-



ences of the OIC's missions in election observation.

The session dealt with many issues such as monitoring the elections and the voting process in general, the work methodology of the OIC mission, and the essential points of preparations before the day of general polling, work during polling day, and the post-polling stage.

The two-day session included several parts on the importance of elections in enhancing security and peace (women, their role, and participation in elections) and the situations

to which the observer is exposed, and partnerships with other international and regional organizations.

The course concluded by discussing the stage of preparing the report submitted on the concerned elections.

On the other hand, and in a bid towards strengthening cooperation between the OIC, the United Nations, and the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) in the field of elections observation, and within the framework of cooperation and coordination in the field of elections observation, on February 16, 2021, the periodic meeting between the OIC General Secretariat (Elections Observation Unit), the United Nations Secretariat (Electoral Assistance Division) and the UNDP Regional Office took place in Amman.

The meeting was part of the OIC's continuous efforts to enhance its capabilities in this field. The meeting reviewed the joint action plan in the field of elections observation and the road map and prospects for future areas of cooperation.

The OIC's General Secretariat expressed its aspiration to support cooperation with leading international and regional organizations in elections and their observation.



OIC Observes Elections in Kyrgyzstan and Chad



The General Secretariat of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) dispatched a delegation to the Kyrgyz Republic to observe local elections and the referendum on the amendment of the Constitution, which were held on 11 April 2021.

The OIC delegation held a meeting with the Chair of the Central Electoral Commission of Kyrgyzstan and conveyed to her the greetings of the OIC Secretary-General, Dr. Yousef A. Al-Othaimeen.

The delegation carried out its election observation mission in the capital Bishkek and its outskirts. It noted that the elections took place in a peaceful and orderly manner, in line with the election law in Kyrgyzstan and inter-

national election standards.

The OIC Secretary-General congratulated the people and government of the Kyrgyz Republic on the successful organization of the elections, hoping that the outcomes would benefit the Kyrgyz people.

Similarly, the Secretary-General of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), dispatched a mission to the Republic of Chad to observe the presidential elections that took place on April 10 and 11, 2021. The mission's activities included a meeting with the Head of the Independent National Elections Commission in Chad, during which means of promoting cooperation between the General Secretariat and the Republic of Chad were

discussed. A coordination meeting was also held with delegations of other international organizations participating in observing the elections.

The OIC delegation visited a number of polling stations in various constituencies of the capital, during which it observed various aspects of the electoral process. After the elections, the delegation was honored to be received by the late President of the Republic of Chad, H.E. Idris Debby. The head of the delegation conveyed to him the greetings and appreciation of H.E. the Secretary-General, and the OIC readiness to support the people of Chad in their endeavors to achieve social and economic development.

Saudi Health Ministry Provides COVID-19 Vaccines to OIC Staff



As part of the continuous efforts of Saudi Arabia, the host country of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), to address the Covid-19 pandemic and facilitate the access of the OIC's staff to the anti-virus vaccine, the Saudi Ministry of Health organized an

open day on March 18 in cooperation with the OIC's General Secretariat to vaccinate the OIC's staff.

Dr. Yousef A. Al-Othaimeen, the OIC's Secretary-General, honored the Ministry of Health team for its work and inspected the relevant

procedures.

The Directorate General of Administration and Finance had invited employees and their families desirous to receive the vaccine to visit the Ministry of Health team on the ground floor of the General Secretariat building.

OIC Focusses on Science, Technology and Scientific Research



The Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) has attached special importance to issues of science, technology and scientific research following the first OIC summit for Science, Technology and Innovation held in the capital of the Republic of Kazakhstan in September 2017.

The necessity of promoting scientific research, science and technology, was underlined in the subsequent three meetings of the OIC Council of Foreign Ministers of the Organization. Three Resolutions 45, 46 and 47 were adopted thereon.

The resolutions on science and technology of the above-mentioned sessions renewed the call on Member States of the OIC and its institutions to continue and increase strengthening their programs and activities for the advancement of science, technology and innovation. This includes encouraging R&D through increasing investment in S, T & I, and creating an integrated policy environment that enables education and research institutions, business, and industry to innovate and invest, and the translation of science, technology and innovation into employment and economic growth activities that encompass all interrelated elements, including the transfer of knowledge and technology.

The above-mentioned resolutions emphasized the pivotal role of governments, with the active participation of stakeholders from the public and private sectors and research institutions, and in creating and promoting a fertile environment for innovation and entre-

preneurship and the advancement of science, technology and engineering, in line with national priorities.

The resolutions also commended the Islamic Development Bank Group (IsDBG) for providing financial support to S&T centers of excellence for science and technology. They requested the IsDBG, COMSTECH, ISESCO and the OIC General Secretariat to expedite the identification of five other centers of excellence in accordance with the provisions of the OIC Vision 1441H for Science and Technology. The Ministerial Councils took note of the IsDB specialized programs for technical cooperation, science and technology, and the identification of resource centers. It urged Member States to take note of the advanced capabilities of the resource centers identified by the IsDB, and to consider making use of their expertise in facing local development challenges.

The Foreign Ministers also called on all relevant OIC institutions to coordinate their programs and activities with COMSTECH with the aim of achieving synergy and complementarity in the pursuit of the goals related to S, T&I outlined in the OIC S, T&I Agenda 2026 and the OIC 2025: Program of Action.

The OIC recognizes S, T&I including information and communication technology, are vital for achieving internationally agreed development goals including the sustainable development goals and the "OIC 2025: Program of Action".

The OIC attached importance to the OIC

S,T&I Program 2026, adopted by the 1st OIC Summit on Science and Technology, which identified priorities and recommended actions to promote S,T&I in OIC Member States and called on OIC Member States and its institutions to take the necessary measures for the implementation of the recommendations contained in the OIC Program for Science, Technology and Innovation 2026, through focused series of initiatives and programs and through the promotion of collaborative research programs. It encouraged Member States willing to work in the development of "mega-science projects" that are interdisciplinary in terms of their nature and content, as contained in the said Program.

The OIC expects that its Secretary General will hold a high-level review meeting for implementing the OIC S,T&I Agenda 2026 with the participation of Member States and all OIC institutions and related bodies with the aim of evaluating the progress made in the implementation of the programs and activities towards achieving the approved goals and objectives of the OIC agenda, Science, Technology and Innovation 2026.

The General Secretariat commended the success made in organizing the «1st OIC Robotics Challenge», in coordination with COMSTECH in Tashkent, Republic of Uzbekistan. The Foreign Ministers of the OIC Member States called on the General Secretariat to conduct similar competitions in other disciplines in cooperation with interested Members States and institutions of the organization on a regular basis.

In order to enrich work in the field of technology and scientific research, the above-mentioned resolutions emphasized the central role of governments, with active contributions from stakeholders from the public and private sectors, and research institutions, in creating and supporting an enabling environment for innovation and entrepreneurship and the advancement of science, technology and engineering, in accordance with the provisions of national priorities.

The OIC also called on all relevant OIC institutions to coordinate their programs and activities with COMSTECH with a view to achieving synergy and complementarity in pursuit of the science, technology and innovation-related goals set out in the OIC Science, Technology and Innovation Agenda 2026.

UAE Innovations for People with Disabilities

Dubai DPA: UAE women are active at innovation. They have contributed to the introduction of inventions that especially serve children and people with disabilities. In March each year, the UAE celebrates innovations, and organizes exhibitions and electronic platforms to display new inventions and highlight their benefits and importance for mankind and development.

Female students in schools and universities, and female graduates who have benefited from their academic specializations form part of the inventors who exhibit their inventions that serve various sectors of life.

Ahmed Majan, Chairman of the UAE Inventors Association, says that women in the UAE are actively contributing to innovation, especially in the fields of medicine, education and safety.

He added: "They have the imagination and capabilities to compete with men in creating devices and technologies that contribute to overcoming some real life difficulties and supporting various fields of work." "Women focus on creating devices that suit the UAE, Gulf and Arab environments. Their ideas stem from the difficulties faced by some residents in the region. They have received a lot of local and global attention, some of which attracted international companies and took their way to industrialization to serve the world" he elaborated.

Among the names that have recently shown innovations were Maryam Al Muhairi, Aisha Al Shehhi, and Safaa Al Ameri, who studied electronic engineering. They managed to create an electricity-generating device using Photovoltaics (PV) and winds to distribute energy based on priorities.

Developed in the laboratories of the College of Technology in Abu Dhabi, the idea behind the device was to produce solar and wind energy to operate several devices. A distinctive feature of the device was that it developed an application to control the process of power distribution as and when needed while storing the excess energy. In the absence of one of the two energies, the other is used to ensure the relevant devices are still working.

The device is designed to rationalize oil consumption by generating electricity, without using any type of fuel, to ensure cost-effectiveness. The innovators confirmed that the device could be used in homes, economic and



agricultural projects. This can contribute to preserving non-renewable energy sources.

In Abu Dhabi, some UAE women have developed a remote patient monitoring sensor, eliminating the need for their physical reporting to health centers, which saves effort and time, especially for children, the elderly and people with disabilities.

Among the innovations, was an eye-controlled wheelchair for people with disabilities, introduced by two engineers, Aisha Hussein and Amina Abdullah, at the cost of \$1500. It aimed to help patients and the elderly with inability to move their limbs. The acoustic system enables blind people to walk without the need for a companion.

In Dubai, Fatima Al-Naqbi presented a smart wave-powered hat that monitored patients' vital signs, such as temperature, humidity or body movement, for doctors to follow them electronically.

The hat sends ultrasound waves that determine the dimensions of the obstacles in the way of the blind and analyzes them to warn the user by vibration or emitting a sound while determining the distance to alert the presence of objects, pits or elevations in front of them, thus enabling the blind to rely on themselves and avoid dangers and obstacles, and reduce their exposure to collision with objects on their way. The smart hat was developed to be in the form of an «agal» placed on the head or a «ghutra» that fits the Gulf dress.

The UAE innovators presented a smart glove

that converted sign language for the deaf into written and audible language. The device contributes to solving the communication difficulties between the disabled and the community in different situations, and it can be used for learning in schools.

To respond to certain needs in agriculture, engineer Aida Rashid developed a drone to spray farms with pesticides. It can be programmed to cover a pre-defined geographical area automatically. Equipped with high-resolution cameras, the drone can monitor the spraying process and facilitate aircraft guidance. Using high capacity insecticides tanks, it can spray a wide agricultural area. Furthermore, it uses air sensors to measure wind and temperature to determine the best times for flying and spraying pesticides.

Additional sensors may be fixed in the drone to capture any foreign materials on plants and send them to laboratories for analysis to ensure the safety of crops.

Two sisters, Muzna and Al-Yazia Al-Mansoori, developed a device to monitor health during fitness workouts and send an alert on the quantities of water the body needs, while delivering a message to the doctor in the event that measurements show potential risks.

The device monitors vital functions of athletes during exercises, through a smart sensor that measures perspiration sodium levels. It facilitates understanding the changes that may occur in the body.

40% Increase in Demand for Food Humanitarian Assistance Due to COVID-19



On April 6, 2021, the Islamic Organization for Food Security (IOFS) organized the "OIC International Online Conference on Food Security Reserves" to explore the role of the reserves in alleviation of food insecurity in the member states and discuss the pre-feasibility study, concepts, and proposals for their establishment.

The opening statement of the conference was delivered by H. E. Ambassador Askar Musinov, Assistant to the Secretary General of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation's General Secretariat for Science and Technology. In his speech, he stressed the importance of the OIC Food Security Reserves in the fight against food insecurity crises in the member states. He emphasized the strong support the OIC provides for IOFS in its efforts to ensure food security through the strategic programs.

In his opening speech, H.E. Mr. Yerlan A. Baidalet, Director-General of IOFS noted that the necessity of establishing the OIC Food Security Reserves has long been highlighted by OIC the member states since 1995. First it was mentioned during the 4th OIC Ministerial Conference on Food Security and Agricultural Development in Tehran, Islamic Republic of Iran, and then at the 7th OIC Ministerial Conference in Nur-Sultan, Kazakhstan in 2016. He stated that creating region-wise food security reserves would be the most concrete way to assure food security in case of humanitarian disaster.

According to the Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO) reports, around 2 billion people worldwide experience moderate to severe food insecurity, many of them reside in the OIC member states. The pandemic

has exacerbated the situation; in accordance with World Food Program (WFP) and Global Humanitarian Overview (GHO) 2021, there's a near-40 percent increase of demand for humanitarian assistance and protection in 2021 due to COVID-19.

The establishment of Food Security Reserves could consolidate efforts of the OIC/IOFS Member States towards achieving food security and eliminating hunger across the Muslim world. After the adoption of the Resolution IOFS/GA/3-6-2020 on the Establishment of the OIC Food Security Reserves at the Third General Assembly on 2-3 December 2020, the IOFS Secretariat was tasked to engage experts in enhancement

of the preliminary studies and gather the member states to approve the further development of the Food Security Reserves. The activities of the IOFS are aimed at solving the problem of food insecurity in the Member States through 16 strategic programs approved at the 3rd IOFS General Assembly held in Turkey in December 2020. These IOFS programs, in general, are focused on three main tasks: first, prevention and risk management in the field of food security, which include establishing the OIC Food Security Reserves. Second, capacity building in agriculture through strengthening trade and economic ties and scientific and technological potential, and third, providing humanitarian support to the OIC countries in need.

H.E. Yerlan Baidalet, Director-General of IOFS expressed hope "that the outcome of OIC Food Security Reserves Conference would lead to creating a credible mechanism for cooperation among OIC member states towards ensuring food security through the efforts of each country."

Mr. Stephen Catchpole, the Public Sector Reform Specialist at LA International Cooperation, and the IOFS partner, led the first session. He outlined the overall purpose of the FSR, that is, to facilitate the population access to food during the periods of food shortage in the OIC Member States through coordination of national food stock policies and national food reserves. This requires the member states to conclude bilateral and multilateral agreements to eliminate barriers against international trade, to have access to stock and distribution measures in the event of crisis, as well as to protect food stock and ensure market price stability.

Around 2 billion people worldwide experience moderate to severe food insecurity, many of them reside in the OIC member states



Abdul-Fattah Sulaiman Ahmed Abdullah

World Federation of Arab-Islamic International Schools

“Freedom of religion is central to the moderate and tolerant message of Islam. A Quranic passage (2:256) famously declares, }There is no compulsion in religion, the right direction is clearly distinguished from the wrong.{“

Civilized Feature of Islam... a Religion of Moderation

Since its first beginnings, Islam has been a religion of moderation, forbearance and ease. Islam does not desire arduous labors and impracticable worships. It does not burden on Muslims hardship or embarrassment in performing their religious duties of all kinds. Because Islam is a tolerant faith of truth, its teachings and divine rules (with regard to creed, worship, morals, social and human dealings and relations) are meant to be eternal and valid for every time and place until the Day of Judgment.

These foundational precepts of Islam as an all-inclusive, seamless legal tradition have permeated the Islamic history, all along from the time Prophet Muhammad received his first call to faith to the practical application of the principles and teachings of the revealed divine message and the building of an ever-expanding community around the values of truth, justice, moderation, wisdom and reason. This system has been enacted and settled in concert with the innate character of the human being and in accordance with the states of peoples.

That is why Islam with its tolerant attitude captures the attention of moderate people of the world, and it continues to grow and stand fast until the Day of Judgment, with its innate capacity to evolve without losing its essential identity. The rule of Allah the Almighty will remain close to the hearts and minds of individuals and communities around the world, providing a reformist cure to raging crises, rampant problems and tumultuous issues.

In the tolerant and moderate nature of Islam is our remedy, solution and salvation in all aspects of life. With its reformist character comes prosperity, welfare, stability, peace and security, and in it are the roots of political, economic and technical progress and prosperity without excess nor shortage, and without permissiveness nor restrictiveness.

Indeed, moderation is the best course of action in both spiritual and worldly matters. For is not the crown jewel the central portion of a necklace? Is not discretion the best part of valor? Similarly, a moderate and orderly course of spending should be kept at levels between extravagance and frugality, because moderation and balance also govern Islam's economic code of conduct.

Islam promotes moderation in all aspects of life. It offers a middle course between extravagance and frugality, encouraging believers on being economical with money and food. It also forbids indulging in excessive talk, belief and attitude. In these and many other walks of life, Islam takes a middle ground. There is no exaggeration and no negligence in Islam – no laxity nor extremism. Islam teaches us to be moderate in our religious and other deeds and to do what is within our ability. Always adopt gentleness, goodness, wisdom and beautiful preaching in exhortation, and call to the way of Allah in ways that are best and most gracious. It is one of the overriding principles of Islam to ease and remove hardships, not to burden believers beyond their capabilities. As such, Islam is the easiest religion to follow. Besides, Islam does not advise rudeness, harshness or strictness.

Most significantly, freedom of religion is central to the moderate and tolerant message of Islam. A Quranic passage (2:256) famously declares, “There is no compulsion in religion, the right direction is clearly distinguished from the wrong.”

Islam with its upright code of practice does not preach nor condone terrorism. It discourages extremism, destruction, corruption and sabotage, and does not permit inflicting harm on any person. It does not gloss over discord and strife. Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) says, “It is not lawful for a Muslim to terrorize a fellow Muslim.” He also says, “Do not terrorize a Muslim. It is a gross injustice to intimidate a fellow Muslim.” Indeed, these Prophetic sayings apply to both Muslims and non-Muslims.

Moderation is a right and a grace. It is a highly civilized Islamic feature and an authentic concept in Islam, rooted in and aligned with the fundamental principles of human integration and harmony, cooperation and togetherness for progress and prosperity.

Moderation has a significant effect on the human community at large. It creates a positive predisposition in the mass religious consciousness to tolerant, loving and peaceful attitude toward fellow Muslims, the wider community of faithful and the entire humanity. Its omission leads to unbearable hardships, enormous injustice, loss of freedoms and the fatal tendency toward perversions of all sorts.

Moderation is the best way to stability, synergy, felicity, progress and prosperity for both individuals and the community.

The Islamic tradition is based on ease, leniency, middle way and balance in performing religious duties for all believers, in all their states and conditions.



IsDB Sets a Mechanism to Provide COVID-19 Vaccines

The President of the Islamic Development Bank (IDB), Bandar Hajjar, confirmed during the meeting of the Development Assistance Committee of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) and the Arab Coordination Group that the IsDB is currently developing a mechanism to provide COVID-19 vaccines by supporting the manufacture, purchase and provision of vaccines and encouraging their production in the Member States.

Furthermore, Hajjar participated, via video-conference, in the Forum for the Vaccine Industry in Africa organized by the African Union with the presence of 1,200 participants. In his speech at the forum, the IsDB president affirmed that his institution cooperates with the African Union and African governments in order to support Member Countries in manufacturing vaccines and building a resilient health system capable of dealing with pandemics and disasters.

On the same level, Hajjar and Makhtar Diop, Managing Director of the International Finance Corporation (IFC) discussed, in a virtual meeting, the development of the partnership between the two institutions. The IsDB Group and the IFC have established a strong cooperation relationship including the development and implementation of many joint projects, especially between the IFC, and the Islamic Corporation for the Development of the Private Sector and the Islamic Trade Finance Corporation, two members of the Islamic Development Bank Group.

The meeting discussed the IsDB experience in establishing an economic empowerment department within its administrative structure, its experience in the field of decentralization and value-added chains, cooperation in the fields of health and the provision of Coronavirus vaccines, Islamic finance, and public-private partnership projects in various target sectors, including digital infrastruc-

ture.

The IFC Managing Director expressed his appreciation for the development of the IsDB activities and the level of continuous cooperation between the two institutions, hoping that the two sides would contribute more to influential development achievements in various sectors.

During the meeting, Hajjar congratulated Makhtar Diop on his appointment as Managing Director of the IFC, and gave him an explanation on the developments at the Islamic Development Bank and the IsDB new business model, which aims to make markets work for development with a focus on science, technology and innovation, and Islamic finance.

It is worth noting that, at present, the volume of co-financing operations between the Islamic Development Bank Group and the International Finance Corporation is US \$ 1.15 billion.

ISF Provides Assistance to a Number of OIC Member States

Secretary General of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), Dr. Yousef A. Al-Othaimeen, approved new financial as-

sistance for projects in a number of OIC Member States. This assistance comes within the framework of the continuous support provided by the OIC, through the Islamic Solidarity Fund (ISF), one of the OIC subsidiary organs, to the emergency sectors, universities, centres and societies, hospitals and schools in the OIC Member States.

The Secretary General praised the role played by the ISF management in responding to the needs of Member States and pro-

viding assistance in the humanitarian, educational, health and social fields.

Al-Othaimeen pointed out that the basic vision of the OIC-ISF is to provide material assistance to Muslim societies in order to support them socially and culturally. The ISF also provides, according to its capabilities, urgent humanitarian aid to Islamic countries and Muslim societies that are exposed to disasters and crises.



ISESCO Launches Platform for Women Icons in the Islamic World

The major international celebration that the Islamic World Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (ISESCO) held on March 11, 2021, to officially launch its celebration of 2021 as the Year of Women issued its final declaration. The celebration saw high-level participation, including first ladies, princesses, ministers, leaders of international organizations, and prominent women from around the globe.

In the Final Declaration, which two female interns at ICESCO readout, the participants reiterated their thanks and gratitude to His Majesty King Mohammed VI for His high patronage of ICESCO Year of Women, under the theme "Women for the Future." They also expressed their thanks to ICESCO and its Director-General (DG), Dr. Salim M. Al-Malik, for this unprecedented international initiative amid the current global circumstances that the COVID-19 crisis triggered, during which women have been on the frontlines to counter the pandemic in vital sectors such as health and education.

The participants reaffirmed their full support for ICESCO's forward-looking vision involving the launch of a number of initiatives that highlight the importance of women's

participation in making the future.

They also welcomed the initiatives of the Member States and the regional and international organizations aimed to achieve the United Nations' Millennium Development Goals relating to women and commend the efforts they have exerted to reduce the effects of the pandemic on women and girls. They also call on ICESCO to federate and develop the Member States' different initiatives to expand their benefits and suggest appropriate implementation mechanisms to ensure the efficiency of cultural action in the future.

The meeting valued the launch of a specialized international platform whereupon the most outstanding women leaderships in various developmental fields can share expertise and best practices, coordinate their positions, and rally support and advocacy for women causes in general.

They praised ICESCO's initiative to launch a training program for the benefit of girls, pending the establishment of an international academy for training young women leaders.

They reiterated their commitment to support the orientations likely to facilitate the achievement of the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals and the implementation of relevant national, regional, and international plans and executive programs.

The celebration saw high-level participation of first ladies, princesses, ministers, women leaderships from the United Nations and other international organizations, several

Moroccan male and female ministers, and public figures.

The agenda of the event, held under the theme: "Women Icons: A Source of Inspiration for the Future," featured dignitaries and eminent women personalities: Ms. Entissar Amer, Spouse of the Egyptian President; Ms. Mariem Bint Dah, First Lady of Mauritania; and Ms. Rula Ghani, First Lady of Afghanistan.

Upon the high instruction of H.M. Sultan Haitham bin Tariq of Oman, Dr. Madeeha bint Ahmed Al Shibaniyah, Omani Minister of Education, delivered the Sultanate's address. Also, a group of Their Highnesses the Princesses from the many Member States took part in the event.

Other speakers during the event included, Ms. Jamila El Moussali, Minister of Solidarity, Social Development, Equality and Family of Morocco; Ms. Noura Al Kaabi, Minister of Culture and Youth of the United Arab Emirates; Ms. Mariam Assadiq Al Mahdi, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Sudan; Ms. Nezha El Ouafi Minister Delegate to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, African Cooperation and Moroccan Expatriates, in charge of Moroccan expatriates of Morocco.

The celebration also witnessed the participation of women leaders in international organizations and bodies, foremost of which is the United Nations that Ms. Amina J. Mohammed, Deputy Secretary-General of the United Nations, Chair of the UN Sustainable Development Group, represented.



Chad and IRCICA: Agreement on the Preservation of Written Cultural Heritage

A Cooperation Agreement was signed between the Ministry of Tourism Development, Culture and Handicrafts of the Republic of Chad and IRCICA on 25 January 2021 to serve as a general framework for joint projects that would be undertaken in areas of common interest. The agreement, signed by the Minister of Tourism Development, Culture and Handicrafts of the Republic of Chad Mr. Géo Patalet and the Acting Director General of IRCICA Prof. Dr. Aboubacar Abdullah Senghore, covers various types

of activities that can be organized in future under specific projects to be devised in two main areas: the restoration and conservation of written cultural heritage, involving library and archive materials on one hand, and promotion of traditional handicrafts, through training and organization of exhibitions and festivals, on the other. Foundations of the agreement were laid during the visit of H.E. the Minister Mr. Geo Patalet on 11 December 2020, accompanied by the Ambassador of Chad in Ankara

H.E. Mr. Adoum Dangai Nokour Guavat and high officials from Chad, where an extensive meeting was held with Director General of IRCICA Prof. Dr. Halit Eren. Preservation of cultural heritage and promotion of the traditional handicrafts are among the main areas of specialization of IRCICA where the latter carries out long-term programs involving a large variety of activities, including training programs, research and publications.

200 Million Girls around the World Subjected to Female Genital Mutilation

On the occasion of the International Day of Zero Tolerance for Female Genital Mutilation (FGM), commemorated on the 6th of February of each year, the Islamic World Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (ICESCO) calls for raising awareness about the risks arising from the persistence of the practice in many countries of the world, as it harms the female external genital organs to solely preserve wrong customs and traditions.

The persistence of the practice, which has

dire effects on the physical and psychological health and safety of women and girls, is considered as a form of discrimination. In conjunction with ICESCO's proclamation of 2021 as the Year of Women, the Organization considers "female circumcision" as a customary practice that has nothing to do with religion, unlike male circumcision, which is a religious ritual.

ICESCO calls for resorting to medical studies to prove the harm this FGM inflicts on human health.

ICESCO also calls for raising awareness of the risks arising from the persistence of FGM and for the urgent need to coordinate the efforts of the international and governmental institutions and civil society organizations to ensure sound health education that respects human dignity and is compatible with correct religious beliefs.

The UN estimates that about 200 million girls around the world have been subjected to FGM genitals, causing them to suffer continuous physical and psychological disabilities.

ICESCO Launches Projects to Support Women and Youth



The Islamic World Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (ICESCO) and the National Commission for UNESCO and ICESCO in Burkina Faso signed an agreement to launch the “Project of the Fight against COVID-19 through Supporting Innovation and Entrepreneurship of Women and Youth in Burkina Faso,” as part of the ICESCO-Alwaleed Philanthropies partnership to support the efforts of 10 African countries to counter the adverse repercussions of the pandemic.

The signing ceremony was held via video-conference in the presence of H.E. Dr. Salim M. AlMalik, ICESCO Director-General (DG), and Mr. Alkassoum Maiga, Minister of Higher Education, Scientific Research, and Innovation of Burkina Faso, President of the National Commission for UNESCO and ICESCO.

In his address at the ceremony, Dr. AlMalik reaffirmed that ICESCO will sustain its support to Member States’ efforts aimed at addressing the negative effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. The measure is part of the Organization’s new vision that adopts enhanced communication with countries to identify their respective needs and priorities to foster sustainable comprehensive development and enhance the capacities of the beneficiary countries to manage their social transformations.

Sincere Thanks

ICESCO DG expressed his sincere thanks and deep appreciation to Alwaleed Philanthropies, ICESCO’s permanent partner whose Board of Directors that H.R.H. Prince Alwaleed bin Talal Al Saud chairs, for the generous support to ICESCO’s humanitarian and social initiatives to assist 10 African countries, including Burkina Faso.

Mr. Maiga commended ICESCO’s excellent initiatives, programs, projects, and activities the Organization launched and implemented during COVID-19 aimed at strengthening the efforts of Member States to address the negative impacts of the pandemic. He also appreciated Alwaleed Philanthropies’ assistance to Burkina Faso through its partnership with ICESCO.

At the end of the ceremony, the two parties signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) on the implementation of the project. The MoU provides for developing a sense of innovation and entrepreneurship among women and youth in the private sector especially in rural areas in Burkina Faso through the establishment of local units for manufacturing hygiene products and protective equipment; encouraging youth and women to embrace innovation and entrepreneurship; and spreading the practice of good hygiene to foster public health and ensure smooth transition to structured economic activities in Burkina Faso.

Youth empowerment

In a similar vein, the Director-General (DG) of ICESCO, Dr. Salim M. AlMalik, reaffirmed that youth training and capacity-building is a topmost priority for the Organization under its new vision and action strategy. He stated that the leadership incubator that ICESCO launched at the end of 2020 will be followed by 10 incubators designed to equip the Islamic world youth with the future required leadership skills in educational, scientific, and cultural fields.

The DG then watched video-clips and listened to introductory presentations on the new strategy and programs of the Sector of Culture and Communication that a group of young interns at ICESCO prepared under the supervision of the Chief of the Sector and its experts. Dr. AlMalik expressed his ambition that by the end of 2021 interns would outnumber staff members and that youth from all Member States would come to conduct internships at the Organization. Posing for a photo with the young interns, ICESCO DG lauded the work and creative ideas of the interns, which reflect the benefits from the expertise of the staff of ICESCO. He also stressed that ICESCO will continue implementing the initiatives to contribute to capacity-building, training, and rehabilitation of the Islamic world youth for a better future for them and their countries and that the Organization will announce the launch of the “Youth Council.”



SESRIC Conducted 27 Training and Capacity Building Activities in 2020

SESRIC has, over the years, initiated many capacity-building Programs on a wide range of socio-economic areas of interest to the OIC member countries with a view to enhancing the capacities of their human resources in the relevant national institutions. The Centre implements these Programs in collaboration with the relevant national, OIC and international institutions through various modalities, such as training courses, training workshops and study visits. The Centre usually conducts its training and capacity building activities physically by matching the capacities and needs of different national institutions of the member countries. In addition, the Centre hosts and manages a number of specific thematic Networks and Portals that bring together national focal points of relevant national institutions with the aim of sharing knowledge and exchanging expertise and best practices.

The restrictions on international travel during 2020 due to the global crisis of COVID-19 pandemic made it difficult for the Centre to implement its training and capacity building activities physically. However, despite all the challenges, the Centre has succeeded to mobilize its resources and undertake all necessary steps to continue its activities virtually. The Centre has recognized that intra-OIC collaboration and solidarity were needed more than ever and,

accordingly, exerted all its efforts during these difficult times towards enhancing cooperation and synergy among the national institutions in the member countries. The Centre, therefore, started to conduct all its activities virtually through online platforms to keep pace with the global solution and to continue accommodating the training activities and keep participants motivated and engaged in its various programs.

During 2020, SESRIC successfully conducted 27 virtual training courses and two training workshops in addition to organizing 10 Webinars and three Networks and Meetings at the OIC level. The Centre's records show that 54 OIC Countries have taken part in the conducted virtual training and capacity building activities during the year 2020 with the involvement of 648 participants in the training courses, 58 participants in the training workshops and 186 participants in the Networks and Meetings from various national institutions of the OIC States.

While believing that the constraints can be confronted better with collective efforts and solidarity, the Centre will continue its efforts towards strengthening the institutional and human capacities in the member countries through its various modalities of South-South Cooperation mechanism.

Within the framework of its Occupational Safety and Health Capacity Building Pro-

gram (OSH-CaB) and in line with the OIC-OSHNET Work Plan 2021-2022, SESRIC organized a training course on "International Occupational Safety and Health (OSH) Regulations" on 14-22 April 2021. The course was delivered in three official languages of the OIC.

The training course was provided by competent experts from the Tunisian Occupational Health and Safety Institute (TOSHI) and the Department of Occupational Safety and Health (DOSH) of the Ministry of Human Resources of Malaysia for the benefit of 82 experts and executives from national OSH Authorities of 28 OIC member countries.

The main objective of the training course was to support the efforts of the national OSH authorities of the OIC member countries towards developing and enhancing the technical knowledge and skills of their staff on international OSH regulations. The course provided insights into various OSH related subjects, including OSH regulatory framework, OSH legal instruments, international labor standards, OSH enforcement and coordination mechanisms.

In his speech at the opening session, H.E. Mr. Nebil DABUR, Director General of SESRIC, highlighted that the appropriate national OSH legislation and other related effective policies and instruments are crucial to maintain a safe working environment.



Challenges in Developing Halal Tourism

Within the framework of its Tourism Capacity Building Program (Tourism-CaB), SESRIC organized a training course on “Halal Tourism and Muslim-Friendly Hospitality Services” on 22-26 March 2021 through an online video conferencing platform.

The course was provided by competent experts from the Islamic Tourism Centre (ITC) of Malaysia for the benefit of experts and executives from the National Tourism Office of Comoros.

The main objectives of the training course were to provide insights on the new trends of Muslim-Friendly Tourism (MFT) and the role of governments in encouraging this segment, in addition to discussing the opportunities and challenges in developing and marketing Halal tourism. Participants developed better understanding on the ways and means of attracting Muslim tourists from all over the world by offering facilities and services in accordance with Islamic principles.

The training course highlighted the importance of MFT in the OIC member countries and emphasized on the need for raising awareness and collaboration among all public and private tourism stakeholders working in the domain of tourism, including tour operators, hotel managements, relevant ministries, religious authorities and academics.

This training course was designed in line with the virtual training solutions undertaken by SESRIC in order to better serve the Centre’s training activities and keep participants motivated and engaged during this difficult time of global crisis due to COVID-19 pandemic.

Similarly, within the framework of its Vocational Education and Training Program for the Member States of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC-VET) and in line with the OIC-TVET Strategic Roadmap 2020-2025, SESRIC, in cooperation with the General Directorate of Vocational and Technical Education at the Ministry of National Education of Turkey, organized a Training of Trainers (ToT) Course on “Tourism and Hospitality Services” on 29 March - 02 April 2021 through an online video conferencing platform. The course was delivered by following an online competency based approach that includes pre-recorded videos and live practical demonstrations from a TVET Institution.

The ToT Course aimed to support and contribute to the efforts of the national TVET institutions of the OIC member countries towards developing and enhancing the capacities of their staff in the field of tourism and hospitality services in the light of the most recent global standards, practices and

trends.

H.E. Mr. Nebil Dabur, Director General of SESRIC, commenced the training course with the opening statement. During his speech, H.E. Mr. Nebil Dabur stressed on the importance of enhancing the technical skills and competencies of the TVET staff -teachers and trainers- because of its direct impact on transfer of knowledge and expertise. Mentioning the significant role that hospitality and accommodation services play in attracting tourists to the destinations, he emphasized the need for further improving the quality of these services in the OIC member countries to match the global standards and increase their competitiveness in the global tourism market.

Delivering the opening remarks on behalf of H.E. Mr. Kemal Varın Numano lu, Director General of the Vocational and Technical Education at the Ministry of National Education of Turkey, Ms. ennur Çetin, Head of Social Partners and Projects, highlighted the adverse effect of the COVID-19 pandemic on the delivery of TVET all around the world and underlined the readiness and willingness of the Ministry of National Education of Turkey to share its experience and knowledge in various fields and areas of the TVET with the other OIC member countries.

Al-Laithi Elected IBU Director General

The General Assembly of the Islamic Broadcasting Union (IBU) was held in Jeddah. On the side lines of the meeting, elections were held for the position of the new Director General of the Islamic Broadcasting Union. With the consensus of 57 Islamic countries, the media figure Dr. Amr Al-Laithi, the candidate of the Arab Republic of Egypt, was chosen as Director General of the Islamic Broadcasting Union. It is worth noting that the last time Egypt took over the position of the IBU Director General was in 1979, as the IBU was headed by the late media figure Ahmad Farrag. It is worth mentioning that the Islamic Broadcasting Union was established with the approval of the Sixth Conference of the OIC



Foreign Ministers in 1975, as an expression of adherence by and faith in collective action, within the framework of the objectives of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation. The IBU consists of broadcasting organizations in the IBU Member Countries. The IBU is headquartered in Jeddah, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, and the aim of the IBU is to spread the Islamic call, highlight the importance of heritage, work to spread the Arabic language to the non-Arabic native speakers, produce and exchange radio and television programs with Member States, highlight the genuine, proper and true image of the Islamic nation, and correct the wrong image that the West holds about Islam.

IIFA Allows Taking COVID-19 Vaccine during the Day in Ramadan

The International Islamic Fiqh Academy (IIFA) issued a statement regarding the ruling on taking available vaccines against COVID-19, and concerning the precautionary measures taken by the government of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia related to those visiting the two holy Mosques of Makkah and Al-Madina during the holy month of Ramadan. The statement pointed out that it is permissible for the fasting person to take the available vaccines against COVID-19 during the day in the blessed month of Ramadan, and this has no effect on the fasting at all, because the non-nutritive subcutaneous or intramuscular injections are not considered among invalidators of fasting according to scholars

consensus, noting that IIFA had previously issued, in its tenth conference held in Jeddah in 1997, its resolution regarding fast-breaking substances in medical treatment. IIFA affirms that the precautionary measures taken and health guidelines issued by the Saudi authorities, which made them obligatory for those who perform Umrah or come to pray or visit the two holy Mosques of Makkah and Al-Madina during the holy month of Ramadan, including the need to take the required vaccinations against COVID-19, are legitimate. It is the duty of everyone who goes to the Two Holy Mosques for an Umrah or prayer or a visit, to comply with these measures and directives, and not to violate them at all.



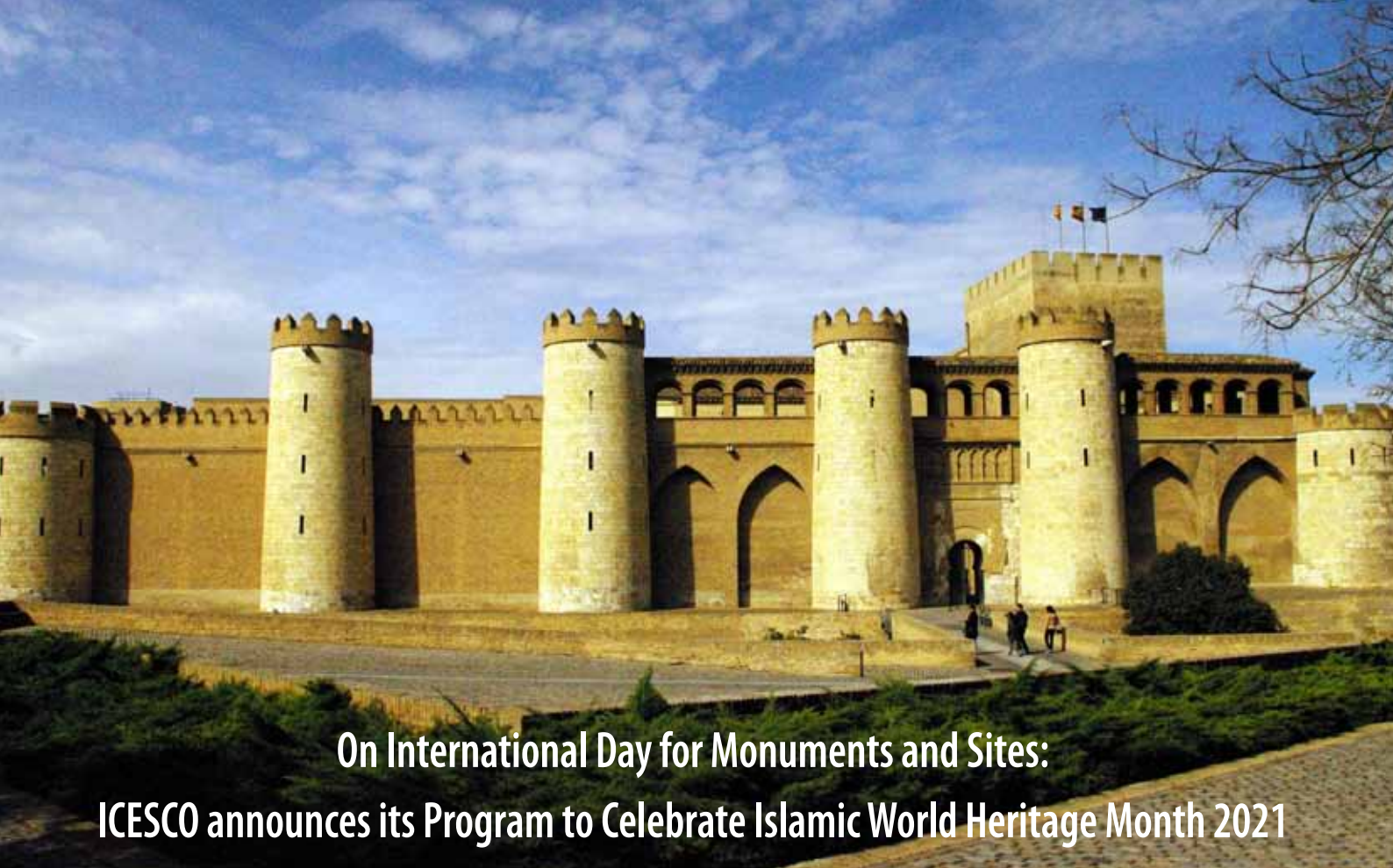
Secretary General of International Union of Muslim Scouts meets Al-Suhaibani



The Permanent Representative of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia to the Organization of Islamic

Cooperation (OIC), Saleh Al-Suhaibani, met at the headquarters of the International Union of Muslim Scouts (IUMS) in Jeddah, the IUMS Secretary General, Dr. Zuhair Ghunaim, and a number of the IUMS leaders. During the meeting, they reviewed the IUMS efforts to create a generation that is aware of the challenges it faces, and represents the youth of the OIC countries. Ghunaim explained that the IUMS is one of the OIC organs - adopted in 1994, which includes in its membership scout organizations and societies that spread and develop Islamic scouting movements in the world, focus on youth and leaders, develop a spirit of brotherhood among them, and work to develop educational curricula.

He indicated that the IUMS enjoys a consultative status to the World Scout Bureau, one of the United Nations organizations, pointing out that the IUMS is one of the six global Unions that fall under the World Scout Organization. He added that the number of scouts around the world is 40 million, including 18 million Muslim scouts, indicating that the IUMS works to implement targeted programs that achieve the OIC youth strategy in order to serve the causes of the Muslim Ummah. For his part, Al-Suhaibani stressed the importance of the relentless efforts made by the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia to support joint Islamic action under the umbrella of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation..



On International Day for Monuments and Sites:

ICESCO announces its Program to Celebrate Islamic World Heritage Month 2021

ICESCO attaches great importance to preserving cultural heritage, raising awareness of its role, and alerting to the threats of vandalism against heritage during crises, on top of which is the current global health crisis. This was evident in several achievements and many reference documents, all of which pinpoint the need for urgent action and the establishment of a contract between public sectors, international and regional organizations, and civil society institutions to develop a joint roadmap to protect cultural heritage.

Since its establishment on April 18, 1982 on the proposal of the International Council on Monuments and Sites, the celebration of the International Day for Monuments and Sites is an opportunity to highlight the richness, diversity, and originality of the tangible and intangible cultural heritage in the Islamic world countries.

ICESCO stressed that the celebration is also an occasion for the general public to discover the richness and diversity that characterize world heritage and the archaeological sites whose features have been defined in all parts of the globe, highlighting the relentless efforts made, as part of international agreements and declarations related to the protection of cultural and natural heritage, in order to maintain, preserve and promote heritage.

Since 2019, ICESCO has also deployed a strategy based on a more comprehensive and re-

alistic vision for preserving cultural heritage in the Islamic world. To this end, it has provided the necessary means of action, foremost of which is the approval of the establishment of the Islamic World Heritage Center, the development of the work mechanisms, the expansion of the functions, and enhancement of the roles of the Islamic World Heritage Committee, especially about inscribing heritage sites on the Islamic World Heritage List.

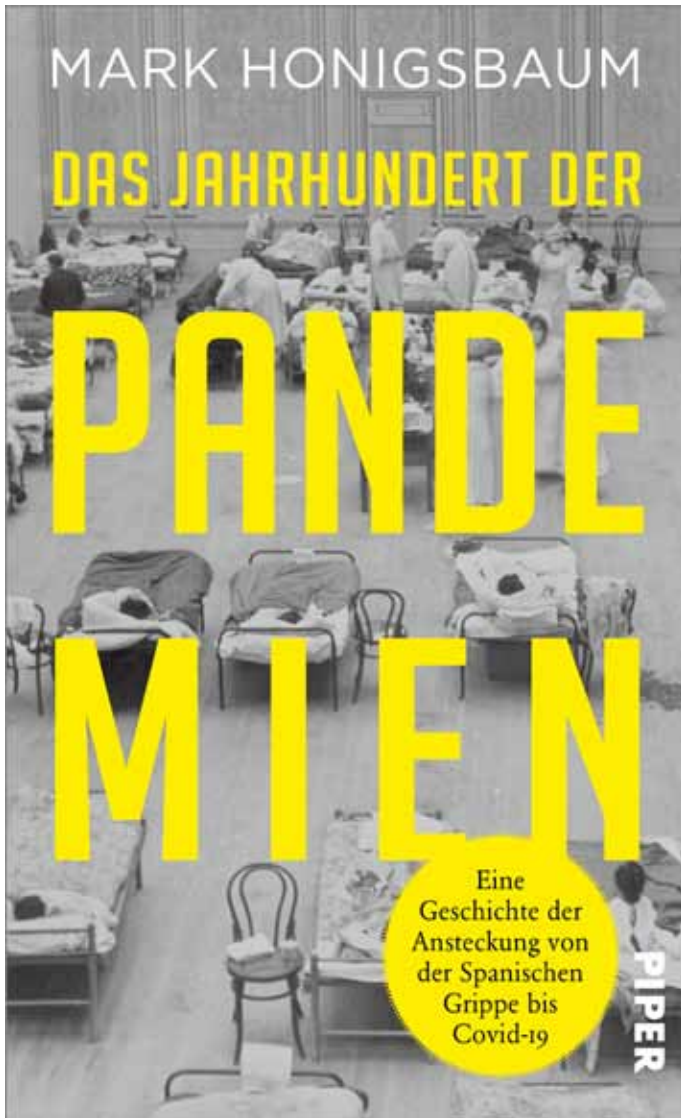
Moreover, ICESCO set up an observatory for heritage protection to monitor the situation of heritage in the Islamic world and threats thereto and formed the Heritage Projects Fund, which will help provide the necessary support to the parties in charge of heritage protection in the Member States. The celebration of this day in 2021 comes in very exceptional circumstances in light of the COVID-19 pandemic, which forced more than half of the world's population to stay in their homes and caused the closure of most archaeological sites, historical monuments, and museums, which were previously open to visitors. ICESCO has introduced several comprehensive initiatives in the cultural field to provide alternatives to in-person programs. These include the "Distance Culture" initiative; the necessary support for damaged heritage sites and museums that have been affected by the closure since the beginning of the crisis in several Member States. Also, through its

civilization project "Roads to the Future" and "ICESCO Creativity" program, ICESCO has allocated several programs and activities within a comprehensive and balanced vision for the future of the heritage of the Islamic world by 2030.

To implement the recommendation of the Islamic World Heritage Committee issued at its meeting on December 10th, 2020, that call for the adoption of an initiative to celebrate the Heritage Month in the Islamic World annually, during the period from April 18 (International Day for Monuments and Sites) to May 18 (International Museum Day), ICESCO observed it this year under the slogan "United for Art and Heritage" and prepared an integrated project that features many international seminars and training courses over a whole month.

In light of these urgent and dangerous circumstances, ICESCO calls on the whole world and international and regional organizations to take measures to limit the negative repercussions of the pandemic and rationalize the promotion and management of the Islamic world heritage, by publicizing and maintaining it and harnessing the virtual display mechanisms and artificial intelligence to highlight its richness and diversity and raise public awareness of the importance of its preservation and incorporation in the desired sustainable development programs.

“The Pandemic Century”: A Book that Chronicles the Pandemics of a Hundred Years



Munich - Walter Wilms - DPA:

The world has been attacked repeatedly in the last 100 years by devastating pandemics such as the Spanish flu, Ebola and AIDS. British medical historian Mark Honigsbaum has published a book titled «The Pandemic Century: One Hundred Years of Panic, Hysteria and Hubris» that deals with similarities and differences between previous pandemics and the current Coronavirus crisis. The author developed an analysis of why we were vulnerable to the spread of such diseases in this way. Perhaps the current Coronavirus pandemic for many people in Europe was the first pandemic that affects them strongly and directly in a long time, but the world - or large parts of it - has been repeatedly exposed in recent decades to infectious diseases such as AIDS, SARS, Ebola or Zika. Honigsbaum discusses several of them in his worth reading book, as the word Century in the title of the book refers to the period between 1918 and 2019.

The SARS-CoV-2 pandemic is still under study and will emerge after reading the book from a slightly different perspective. This is primarily due to the fact that the author does not give just a simple and synchronous overview of different pandemics, but rather provides accurate documentation based on research that continued over ten years of the trajectories of these pandemics, including description of the confusing first cases and investigation work of some researchers in looking for the cause of the pandemic, the wrong methods in dealing with the pandemic and the impact of powerful lobbyists that have feared their privileges.

Large parts of the book feature a style more exciting than the detective stories, especially that every reader sets his sights on the current situation.

However, Honigsbaum has not only written an interesting book, it is also a very smart book where he presents in detail the extent of the great difference between each and every pandemic. The main concern of the writer is to highlight those factors that helped the emergence of pandemics, concealed their detection and made it difficult to combat them. There are many similarities in this regard.

“All these pandemics have shown how quickly recognized medical science can be turned upside down through the emergence of new cases, and the extraordinary success of such pandemics in spreading panic, hysteria and fear as long as there are no laboratory results, effective vaccines and effective medicines” Honigsbaum wrote.

False medical estimates often made it difficult to clarify the causes of diseases. The book gave an example of what was declared by the influential German bacteriologist Richard Pfeiffer (1858-1945) that the Spanish flu was a bacterial infection, and that the cause of this pandemic was found in the *Haemophilus* bacteria that he discovered (a genus of bacteria that belongs to the Pasteurellaceae family of the Pasteurellales order).

In West Africa, many experts, even the World Health Organization in 2014, have long rejected the assumption of an Ebola outbreak and the dire consequences associated with it. In Psittacosis (Parrot Fever) caused by birds in 1930, the American Bird Breeders Association held the responsibility for this disease to the imagination of the press, and AIDS is an example of how quickly a pandemic can silence a minority. Honigsbaum’s book explains the extent to which pandemics are related to contemporary societal, medical and historical factors. On top of these factors, for the writer, is the environmental aspect, because, regardless of the pandemic, whether it is Psittacosis, AIDS, Ebola or SARS, there are environmental conditions that facilitate the transmission of disease pathogens from the animal world to humans. In addition, it is the human way of life that can enable the pathogen to move quickly around the world.

Honigsbaum opined that human arrogance might have also played a role in the occurrence of pandemics. He quoted the prominent physician and microbiologist René Dubois (1901-1982) as saying, “Modern man believes that he has risen to the point where he has become a complete master over the forces of nature that shaped his development in the past and that he has become in control of his biological and cultural destiny.”

OIC General Secretariat's Encyclopedia: Coexistence and Acquaintance in Islam

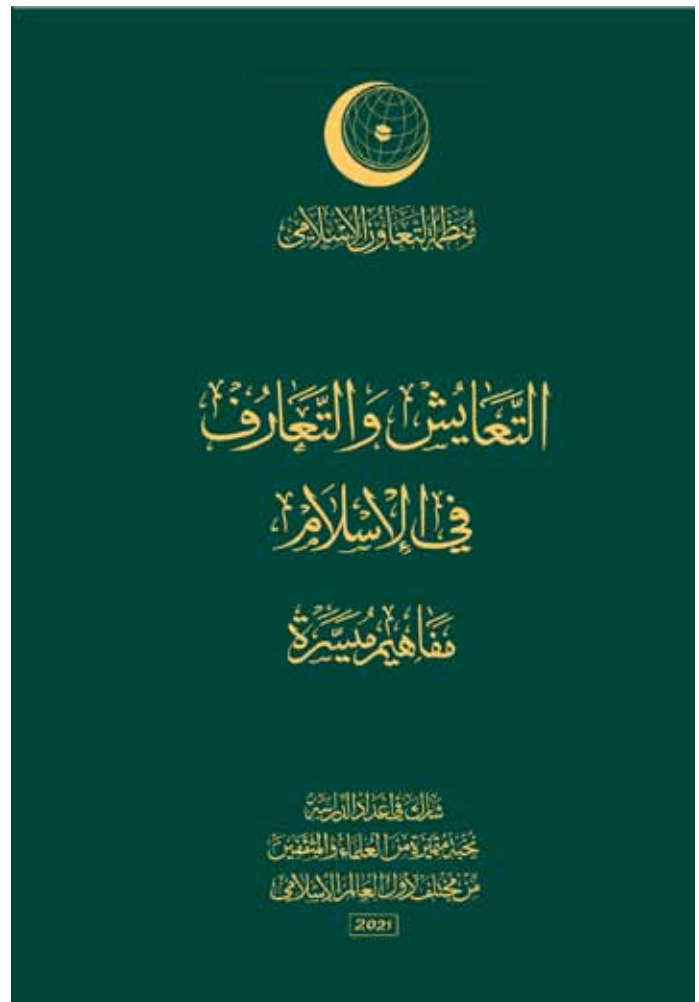
As part of its efforts in implementing the spirit of its charter and the 2025 Program of Action, the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) seeks to spread the discourse of moderation and counter the discourse of separation, hatred, and extremism by raising awareness among Muslims of the necessities of tolerance and acquaintance concerning their religion as described by the Noble Quran: guidance, light, and mercy for them and the worlds, and that they share among themselves and with the world values, principles, and morals compatible with humanity, and push towards foresight and contemplation in the affairs of restoring solidarity between the same community, and the participation in the world's values of tolerance, justice, and peace.

For all this, the OIC's General Secretariat launched, in September 2019, through its Voice of Wisdom Center a comprehensive encyclopedia project called: "Coexistence and Acquaintance in Islam: Simplifying Concepts."

This work aims to demonstrate all the doctrinal, legislative, and ethical aspects of the concepts of coexistence, acquaintance, and tolerance in Islam. It also aims to be a reference for ordinary readers and specialized researchers to find a comprehensive and integrated conception of the moderate understanding of these concepts.

More than 50 scholars, researchers, and intellectuals from different Muslim countries famous for enlightened and moderate discourse and thought worked for a whole year on preparing focused research rooted in the concepts of coexistence, acquaintance, and tolerance according to a modern Islamic perspective that addresses contemporary Muslims. It also addresses the non-Muslims who desire to know more about Islam and its teachings from its sources. The work was also supervised by a scientific committee of prominent scientific figures from Lebanon, Morocco, Saudi Arabia, and Sudan.

The book is divided into a comprehensive introduction written by the Chairman of the Book Advisory Committee, Dr. Radwan Al-Sayed. The book has four significant themes: introductions on coexistence and acquaintance, which deals with critical conceptual aspects of coexistence, acquaintance, and tolerance in Islam and their related meanings, such as dialogue, the etiquette of difference, pluralism, forgiveness, friendliness, and facilitation. The second theme addresses the general and underlying concepts of the philosophy of coexistence and acquaintance, those concepts that govern the philosophy of the true Islamic religion and establish the principle of coexistence and acquaintance in Sharia, such as the unity of creation, unity of religion, universality, equality, harnessing, and urbanization, dignity, justice, freedom, peace, security, mercy, and other general principles and various topics included in this



comprehensive book, which govern the doctrinal, practical, and moral provisions of Islam. The book's third theme deals with the concepts intertwined with the philosophy of coexistence and acquaintance, namely a set of concepts in which Muslims are misunderstood. The extremist groups distort them to justify their dangerous political and jurisprudential ideas and orientations though they are noble concepts formulated by the true Sharia to organize society, establish and root the spirit of justice in it as per the logic of the public interest and the requirements of temporal and spatial legislation, such as the concepts of governance, apostasy, al-walaa wa al-baraa (loyalty and disavowal), the people of dhimma, the jizya, the house of war, the house of Islam, jihad, and hirabah (unlawful warfare). The last theme touches upon the phenomena of polarization and confrontation, which includes many topics. It brings together the concepts that contradict the true philosophy of Islam of coexistence, acquaintance, and tolerance, such as extremism, intolerance, hatred, and terrorism.

The Voice of Wisdom Center and the OIC's General Secretariat hope for this book to be a building block for the OIC's continuous efforts in defending the true Islamic religion from the distortion of the extremists and the related fallacies efficiently and quickly without delving into disagreements, interpretations, and hardline understandings. The discussion and approach abide by the spirit of moderation and tolerance of Islam and its inherent values.

“Trash Heroes” Initiative in Bali Brings Together Young and Old



Bangkok, Carola Frentzen - (dpa) –

A published photo prompted an outpouring of horror around the world: Tons of plastic waste piled high on the beaches of Indonesia's otherwise paradise island of Bali, despite the fact that tourists have all but disappeared in the Coronavirus pandemic (COVID-19).

This tide of litter arrives on Bali's beaches every year, the result of monsoon-influenced ocean currents, growing pollution of the oceans, mass consumption and a broken global waste disposal system.

This waste doesn't just ruin the beaches as plastic is also strewn around Bali's forests, riverbanks, temple grounds and roadsides. However, there are efforts to rid the island of the rubbish.

Wayan Aksara, Balinese «Trash Hero» has intervened in this regard and has become a role model for many fellow citizens.

«I used to work as a tour guide, and like other friends I often got complaints from guests about scattered trash» says the 50-years-old man.

«It made me feel compelled to do something so that Bali's environment would become cleaner and better maintained. At that time there was only little awareness and concern»

explains Aksara.

In 2017, he joined Trash Hero, a global environmental volunteer initiative founded in Switzerland. The movement brings together community-based organizations to clear up litter and raise awareness about protecting the environment.

«By spending a few hours together picking up trash, people gain a profound understanding of the consequences of being careless about waste,» the movement's website explains its objectives. This was the case for Aksara. His involvement started small and grew. In the beginning, he collected trash with his two children and a few friends at Saba Beach, on Bali's eastern coast, near his home town of Banjar Buruan.

«In order to invite more people, I decided to form an environmental community,» he says. After learning about Trash Hero, he decided to join the group's «big family» and became head of the Saba chapter.

Just one year later, Aksara was named chairman of Trash Hero Indonesia and, with dozens of local chapters, he now organizes nationwide campaigns in the world's largest island nation.

Trash is not just a Balinese phenomenon.

«When talking about the problem of plastic waste, this does not only happen in Bali but all over the world. However, the level of public awareness in Bali, or in Indonesia in general, about the dangers of plastic waste still needs to be improved,» Aksara adds.

Indonesia is itself one of the biggest polluters of the world's oceans with plastic, something the «Trash Heroes» is striving to change. Many young people and tourists joined in before the COVID-19 brought tourism to a halt. So far, over 9,000 people have collected an estimated 24 tons of rubbish on Saba Beach alone, including 875 children, according to the group's Facebook page.

«Children's educational programs are the main thing. We try to educate children to be more caring at an early age» says Aksara. It isn't just tourists that bring the problem. The pandemic-era lull in arrivals hasn't seen a reduction in trash, Aksara says. «Instead it is increasing».

This is partly because many Balinese have lost their jobs and started their own small businesses cooking and delivering food, using more plastic for packaging. Moreover, there are all the disposable masks.



Dr. Tariq Ladjal

Supervisor, Sawt Al-Hikma Center

“Amidst the intense ISIS propaganda, and out of the OIC General Secretariat awareness of the role of social media in influencing and crystallizing public opinion, the OIC General Secretariat, established Sawt Al-Hikma Center (Voice of Wisdom) in October 2016, to be a comprehensive intellectual platform”

“Sawt Al-Hikma”: An Intellectual Arm to Counter the Discourse of Terrorism

The phenomenon of extremism and terrorism witnessed a sharp escalation since the beginning of 2014 when what is known as the Islamic State in Iraq transformed into a political entity with a wide geographical spread in western Iraq, and soon this organization stormed the Syrian borders to announce the establishment of the so-called Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS) or (Daesh). This field rush triggered a global shock in terms of the terrorist group's ability to rapidly expand, however, what shook the world most was the media capacity of this organization, and its superiority in advertising its ideas through social media platforms and on Facebook, with the latest media technology. This terrorist organization attracted large numbers of young people, starting an era that embodies the most heinous images of the alliance between a misunderstanding of religion with political and social grievances and hidden international interests affecting the geography of the Islamic world and the images of Islam and Muslims globally.

Amidst the intense ISIS propaganda, and out of the OIC General Secretariat awareness of the role of social media in influencing and crystallizing public opinion, and correcting misconceptions employed by extremist groups, the OIC General Secretariat, in implementation in of its 2025 Program of Action and the resolution adopted by the Council of Foreign Ministers of the Member States in its 42nd session held In Kuwait ,May 2015, established Sawt Al-Hikma Center (Voice of Wisdom) in October 2016. The aim of Sawt Al-Hikma Center is to be a comprehensive intellectual platform for the efforts of the OIC, its organs, and the Member States to address the phenomenon of violence and extremism, and to revive and spread the values of coexistence through the digital space and social media platforms.

Sawt Al-Hikma was launched according to a vision that works to dismantle extremist discourse using the latest social media platforms. The mission of the centre is to fight extremist currents using the same means that these currents use, by dismantling the intellectual, doctrinal and jurisprudential foundations on which these extremist organizations rely through messages and short videos with the aim of ridding the Islamic world of the evils of extremism and terrorism.

The centre embarked on its operations through three main pillars, which are intensive activity on social media, holding seminars, conferences and international initiatives, and finally organizing training courses in the countries most affected by the phenomenon of terrorism.

As for the first pillar, the centre created 11 accounts on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and YouTube, which were used to publish intense cultural, intellectual and religious content in Arabic, English and French on a daily basis in a modern format targeting youth between 14 and 35 years old. The centre has made great progress in this pillar, as it has become one of the most specialized centres that attract followers and are present in Islamic and international events. In one year (December 2018-December 2019) the centre was able to increase the number of its followers on all pages to 907,981 followers, and the centre has achieved more than 59 million reach, impressions and engagements on its accounts for the same year. In this year only, the centre has published more than 3421 Designs, 4,400 posts, 100 video graphics, 100 info graphics, 24 short films and 4 brochures. While the centre accomplished, in the following year (December 2019-December 2020), more achievements as it increased the number of its followers, on all pages, to 1,347,981 followers, and it also achieved more than 73 million reach, impressions and engagements, on its accounts for the same year. During the aforementioned year alone, the centre has published over 3,100 designs, 3,000 posts, 58 video graphics, 60 info graphics, 11 documentaries, 12 motion graphics, and 54 albums. The centre hopes to achieve 60 million reach and impressions during the year 2021, in addition to publishing thousands of posts and materials related to combating extremist and violent discourse, and spreading the narrative of moderation, peace and harmony.

Regarding the pillar (seminars, conferences and international initiatives), the centre has made great progress as it organized several leading international conferences devoted to discussing ways and mechanisms to combat extremism and terrorism. These events include the seminars it organized on the efforts of the OIC Member States in combating terrorism during the years 2018-2019, the international conference on the role of Education in combating extremism and terrorism, which was organized in cooperation with the Naif Arab University for Security Sciences, and the Conference on Intellectual Security in the Context of Combating Terrorism, which was organized in the Federal Republic of Somalia.

The centre also launched several international initiatives such as the International Short Video Contest, which the Centre launches its third edition in Ramadan this year. In March 2020, the Centre launched an international signature campaign to adopt March 19 as the International Day to Condemn Islamophobia.

COUNTRY PROFILE

Togo

Capital: Lome

Area: 57.000 square kilometres

Population: 5.337.000

National language: French

Currency: West African CFA franc



Togo is a tropical, sub-Saharan country, highly dependent on agriculture, with a climate that provides good growing seasons. The official language is French, with many other languages spoken by the people of Togo, especially those of the Gbe family. Togo is a member of the United Nations, the African Union, the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, Zone of Peace and Cooperation of the South Atlantic, the International Organisation of La Francophonie, and the Economic Community of West African States. Togo joined the Organization of Islamic Cooperation in 1997.

Togo celebrates the National Day on the 27th of April every year.

Togo (French: Togo) or officially the Republic of Togo (French: République togolaise) is a country located in West Africa, bordered by Ghana to the west, Benin to the east, and Burkina Faso to the north. It extends south to the Gulf of Guinea, where its capital, Lomé, the largest city in the country, is located. There are other large cities in Togo such as Sokode, Kpalime and Bassar.

Lomé is the official capital of the country and is located on the banks of the Gulf of Guinea, in the far southwest of Togo. In addition, it is the administrative and industrial

capital and the main port of the country. Lomé is famous for the export of coffee, cocoa and coconut seeds. It is worth noting that the city of Lomé has a special importance in the country due to the presence of an oil refinery there.

The Republic of Togo covers an area of 57,000 square kilometres (22,002 square miles), making it one of the smallest countries in Africa, with a population of about seven and a half million people. From the eleventh to the sixteenth century, the coastal region was a major trading centre for Europeans. In 1884 Germany declared Togoland a protectorate. After World War I, rule of Togo was transferred to France. Togo gained its independence from France in 1960.

The country's motto is: (Work, Liberty, Homeland), and the highest mountain of the country is Mount Agou, while the Gulf of Benin is the lowest point, and the water percentage there in the country is 4.2%. The country's population is called the Togolese, and the population density is 125.9 n / km², while the life expectancy is sixty years according to 2016 estimates.

Togo is a semi-presidential republic, where His Excellency Mr. Faure Gnassingbé occupies the position of President of the country,

and Parliament is the legislative authority in the country that was established in April 1960, the year of independence.

As one of the smallest countries in Africa, Togo has one of the highest standards of living on the continent due to its valuable phosphate deposits and its well-developed export sector, based on agricultural products such as coffee, cocoa beans and peanuts, which generate roughly 30% of export earnings. Fertile lands occupy 11.3 percent of the country, and most of them are developed. The main crops are cassava, jasmine rice, maize and millet. Another important sector is the textile industry.

The climate in Togo is divided into three types: a tropical climate with less rain in the south, a humid tropical climate with abundant rain in the highlands, and a Sudanian climate and summer rains in the north.

Agriculture is the backbone of the economy, despite the lack of resources that contribute to strengthening this sector, a matter that reduces its performance. Agriculture generated 28.2% of the GDP in 2012 and employed 49% of the working population in 2010. Togo is self-sufficient in food production. Cattle breeding dominates livestock production there.



Niger Republic hosts the 47th Session
of the Council of Foreign Ministers
Niamey



Grand Mosque of Niamey

The Grand Mosque of Niamey is located in Niamey City, capital of Niger Republic. It is the largest mosque in the city, and is located along Islam Avenue. The mosque features a unique minaret with 171 steps from top to bottom, from where you can have an overview of Niamey's skyline.



Augmenting Islamic cultures • Combating poverty
 Protecting the rights of Muslim minorities • Promoting Science and Technology
 Preserving Islamic heritage • Joint Islamic solidarity
 Strengthening International relations • Promoting development
 Combating terrorism • Achieving economic and trade cooperations
 Encouraging dialogue among cultures and religions
 Boosting Economic and Trade cooperation
 Defending the Palestine Cause • Defending the rights of Muslims



منظمة التعاون الإسلامي
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