

# OIC

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## Promoting Girls' Education in 4 African Countries

## International Support for the Role of the OIC in Afghanistan



## OIC Supports Riyadh's Bid for Expo 2030

# 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. H.E. Hissein Brahim Taha is the 12th Secretary General of the Organization. He assumed the position in November 2021.

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](http://www.oic-oci.org)**



منظمة التعاون الإسلامي  
OIC - OCI

# OUR MESSAGE

## And we seek for His Support

**M**ember States have done me the honor of electing me Secretary-General of this formidable institution. It is both a privilege and a duty, which, with the help of Allah, the support of Member States and the efforts of my colleagues, I will discharge to achieve the aspirations of this grand international institution, the second largest intergovernmental institution after the United Nations.

I have been preceded to this position by some of the finest individuals in my Member States, each of whom left their imprint on this Organization. I am determined likewise to carry out my duties in such a manner as would please Allah Glory be to Him and fulfil the aspirations of Member States and the staff of the Organization. It is a sign of the wisdom and success of our Member States that a succession of Secretaries-General have come to occupy this leadership position from geographic groups. The moment a Secretary-General's candidacy is endorsed by Member States, he becomes responsible before them. My work will be guided by the precious trust placed in me and the General Secretariat will be at the same distance between all Member States.

I have received from the headquarters country all the attention and support I could get, starting from H.E. the Minister of Foreign Affairs, his colleagues in the ministry, local officials in the Governorate of Makkah Al-Mukarramah, led by HRH Prince Faysal, Advisor to the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques, the Governor of the Region and all the organs of the Municipality of Jeddah.

The rapidly evolving political and economic situation give you no respite. Since day one, I had to work at two levels in parallel. I had to prepare a response to the challenges facing Member States while steering the workflow process inside the General Secretariat. The most prominent activity was the 17th extraordinary session of the Council of Foreign Ministers in Islamabad, Islamic Republic of Pakistan to tackle the humanitarian situation in the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan. The meeting was a success thanks to the Grace of Allah first and to the remarkable coordination between the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, which called for the meeting, and the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, which hosted it, and the cooperation of all Member States in attendance and the interaction of invited observer States and international organizations. The meeting issued a resolution guaranteeing the establishment of a trust fund to channel humanitarian aid to Afghanistan and the appointment of a special envoy of the Secretary-General to Afghanistan.

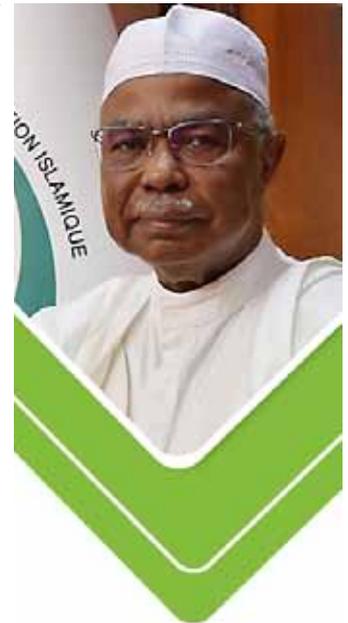
During the short period of time since I took office, I had a number of bilateral meetings. The first was with Prince Faysal Bin Farhan, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Saudi Arabia. I also had the honor to meet H.E. President Recep Tayyip Erdogan of Turkey and his Minister of Foreign Affairs, Mr. Mevlüt Çavuşoğlu on the sideline of the 37th session of COMSEC in Istanbul, Republic of Turkey. I also had the privilege to pay an official visit to the Arab Republic of Egypt to meet H.E. President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi and his Minister of Foreign Affairs, Mr. Sameh Shoukry. The meeting was held on the margin of the meetings of the Islamic Advisory Group for Polio Eradication, hosted by Al-Azhar Al-Sharif. In these and other meetings, I was offered all the support, which reassured me as I look forward to work and accomplishments. Undoubtedly, the first few weeks in the General Secretariat have shown the huge amount of work to be done and the high level of expectations. Still, I am optimistic that the OIC has what it takes in terms of potential and human resources to achieve its objectives in the service of Member States and reflect the principle of Islamic solidarity in the actual relationship between Member States.

The task at hand is by no means an easy one. The challenges facing the OIC are still present. At the top of these is the Palestinian cause, which continues to suffer from violations at the hands of Israel, the occupying power, and its continued attempts to Judaize Al-Quds Al-Sharif, carrying out systematic acts of aggression against Al-Aqsa Mosque, the first of the two Mosques and the third of the two Sanctuaries, along with various other thorny political issues that the OIC is tackling through cooperation and coordination with the international community.

Thanks to its global offices in New York, Geneva, Brussels, Kabul, Ramallah, Niamey, Baghdad and Mogadishu, the OIC has the strategic importance that enables it to forge critical international partnerships. It also works in tandem with such international organizations as the United Nations, the European Union, the African Union, the League of Arab States, the Gulf Cooperation Council the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, and other regional and international organizations with whom we fully understand the importance of working jointly.

The OIC wields substantial power thanks to its Islamic Group in the United Nations General Assembly. We are fully aware that the OIC stands on multiple pillars and that its voting power in international fora in New York, Geneva and Paris helps it shape global political, economic, humanitarian and cultural decisions.

May Allah help us.



**Hussein Ibrahim Taha**  
OIC Secretary-General

*The OIC wields substantial power thanks to its Islamic Group in the United Nations General Assembly. We are fully aware that the OIC stands on multiple pillars and that its voting power in international fora in New York, Geneva and Paris helps it shape global political, economic, humanitarian and cultural decisions*

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## OIC Related Links

### Subsidiary Organs

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

### Specialized Institutions and Organs

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

### Affiliated Institutions

Islamic Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ICCI) [www.icci.org](http://www.icci.org)  
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Organization of the Islamic Shipowners Association (OISA) [www.oisaonline.com](http://www.oisaonline.com)  
World Federation of Arab Islamic International Schools (WFAIS) [www.wfais.org](http://www.wfais.org)  
Islamic Cooperation Youth Forum [www.icyforum.org](http://www.icyforum.org)  
Islamic World Academy of Sciences (IAS) [www.iasworld.org](http://www.iasworld.org)

## OIC Work program, January-November 2022

**3 January 2022:** Sixty-fifth session of the Permanent Council of the Islamic Solidarity Fund, Headquarters of the General Secretariat, Jeddah

**5-6 January 2022:** Thirty-fifth session of the Islamic Committee of the International Crescent, Headquarters of the General Secretariat, Jeddah

**11-13 January 2022:** Meeting of the Islamic Committee for Economic, Cultural and Social Affairs, Headquarters of the General Secretariat, Jeddah

**18-20 January 2022:** Meeting of the Permanent Finance Committee, Headquarters of the General Secretariat, Jeddah

### 23-25 January 2022:

Senior Officials Preparatory Meeting for the 48th Session of the Council of Foreign Ministers, Headquarters of the General Secretariat, Jeddah

**2 February 2022:** Lecture on "The Role of Education in Promoting Development in Africa", Headquarters of the General Secretariat, Jeddah

**6 February 2022:** Fourteenth Meeting of the OIC Steering Committee on Health, Headquarters of the General Secretariat, Jeddah

**6-7 February 2022:** Governments expert group meeting to discuss the Convention on the Rights of the Child, Headquarters of the General Secretariat, Jeddah

**10 February 2022:** Electoral Observation Unit workshop in cooperation with the United Nations, Headquarters of the General Secretariat, Jeddah

**22-23 March 2022:** Forty-eighth session of the Council of Foreign Ministers, Islamabad, Islamic Republic of Pakistan



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## A Permanent Political Solution in Afghanistan to Prevent the Return of Terrorism

### Hissein Taha Calls for Support Support to the Organization's Mission in Kabul

The 17th Session of the Emergency Meeting of the Council of Foreign Ministers (CFM) of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) was held on 19 December 2021, in Islamabad, the capital of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, to discuss the grave humanitarian situation in the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan.

Speaking at the opening were H. E. Mr. Imran Khan, the Prime Minister of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, H.E. Mr. Shah Mahmood Qureshi, the Pakistani Foreign Minister, His Royal Highness Prince Faisal bin Farhan bin Abdullah, the Foreign Minister of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia – the Chair of the 14th Session of the Islamic Summit, H.E. Mr. Hissein Ibrahim Taha, the OIC Secretary General, and H.E. Dr. Muhammad Sulaiman Al Jasser, the Chairman of the Islamic Development Bank Group.

Mr. Taha emphasized that the OIC's role in providing humanitarian aid has become more necessary than ever before, given the scale of the increasing humanitarian challenges facing the Afghan people. In this regard, he called for strengthening the role of the OIC Mission in Kabul and to provide

it with the financial, human, and logistical resources so that it could assume its full responsibilities in coordinating humanitarian and development support operations for the Afghan people. He also urged member states and institutions of the Organization to provide humanitarian assistance through the organization's mission, in line with the recommendations of the final communique of the extraordinary open-ended meeting at the level of permanent delegates on the situation in Afghanistan, which was held on August 22, 2021 at the organization's headquarters in Jeddah.

In this regard, Taha praised the humanitarian support provided by many member states to the Afghan people, including the air bridge launched by the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, which coincided with the launch of the conference. The Secretary General extended sincere thanks to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia for its initiative to call for the holding of the important meeting, which comes within the framework of its firm commitment to support solidarity and joint Islamic action. He also extended his sincere thanks to the government and people of the

Islamic Republic of Pakistan for hosting the conference and for the generous hospitality extended to the participants, reaffirming its full commitment to supporting the causes of the Islamic nation and its keenness to enhance security and peace in region.

The Secretary General called upon all the Afghan parties to work to advance the interest of the Afghan people, protect lives, renounce violence, and establish lasting peace, in order to fulfill the aspirations and hopes of the Afghan people for stability, decent living, and prosperity. He stressed in this regard the OIC's support to the peace process in Afghanistan.

The Secretary-General thanked all Member States for his election as Secretary General of the Organization, seizing the opportunity of the first meeting with foreign ministers to emphasize the honor of serving the Member States and Muslims around the world.

Hissein Taha expressed his appreciation and gratitude for the participants, and for enduring the hardships of travel in light of the complications arising from the COVID-19 pandemic and the emergence of the "Omicron" mutator.



## Prime Minister of Pakistan Discusses OIC Files with the Secretary-General

The Prime Minister of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, Mr. Imran Khan, received the Secretary-General of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), Mr. Hissein Brahim Taha in Islamabad, on the sidelines of the 17th session of the extraordinary meeting of the Council of Foreign Ministers (CFM) of the OIC Member States, where the two sides held lengthy talks.

The Prime Minister and the Secretary-General discussed the situation in Afghanistan and the importance of mobilizing efforts to provide aid and assistance to the Afghan people and to provide urgent assistance to achieve security and stability.

The two sides also discussed developments in the Jammu and Kashmir issue and the OIC efforts to support the Kashmiri people in their struggle to obtain their legitimate rights, including the right to self-determination, enshrined in all the resolutions of the Islamic Summit conferences and CFM meetings, as well as the resolutions of the United Nations and the International Security Council. The two sides also addressed the escalation of Islamophobia and reviewed

the OIC and Pakistan's efforts to combat this phenomenon.

Earlier, the Secretary-General met at the Pakistani Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Islamabad with the Pakistani Minister of Foreign Affairs, Dr. Shah Mahmood Qureshi. The Secretary-General expressed his deep appreciation to the Government of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan for hosting the Conference. He also praised the important role played by Pakistan as a founding member of the OIC, for continuously supporting the Organization and contributing to enhance joint Islamic action among OIC member states. Mr. Taha's meeting with the foreign minister also touched on several issues of common interest.

For his part, Mr. Qureshi congratulated the Secretary-General on his assumption of office at the OIC General Secretariat and commended the OIC's efforts towards enhancing Islamic solidarity, assuring the Secretary-General of Pakistan's support. He also thanked the OIC General Secretariat under the leadership of the Secretary-General for the excellent preparations and arrange-

ments for the CFM on Afghanistan.

The meeting was attended by the Assistant Secretary General for Humanitarian, Cultural, and Social Affairs, Amb. Tariq Ali Bakheet and the Director General of the Secretary General's Cabinet Dr. Mahamat Adoum Koulbou.

Mr. Taha had stated that this extraordinary meeting is a continuation of the OIC's efforts to address the situation in Afghanistan. The Organization has held, at the invitation of Saudi Arabia, an extraordinary open-ended meeting at the level of permanent delegates, on August 22, 2021 at the General Secretariat. The meeting affirmed its solidarity with the people of Afghanistan and reiterated the commitment of the OIC member states to assist them in bringing peace, security, stability and development to Afghanistan. The meeting also expressed grave concern over the deterioration of the humanitarian situation in Afghanistan as a result of the influx of displaced people and refugees due to the current situation in the country.

## Appointment of Secretary-General's Special Envoy to Kabul

### OIC Coordinates the Provision of Aid to Afghanistan



The Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) held the senior official meeting preparatory to the OIC extraordinary meeting of the OIC Council of Foreign Ministers (CFM) on the humanitarian situation in Afghanistan, held on 18 December 2021 in Islamabad, the capital city of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan. In a statement at the opening session of the senior officials meeting, OIC Assistant Secretary General for Humanitarian Affairs, Amb. Tariq Ali Bakheet stressed that after decades of war, suffering and insecurity, the people of Afghanistan need relief and peace.

"It is crucial for the international community to take swift action to ensure that the people of Afghanistan have unimpeded access to life-saving assistance, and that humanitarian support is scaled up," said Amb. Tariq. "The OIC humanitarian Office in Kabul will assume its responsibility in coordination with the various international agencies in delivering the required assistance to the millions of people in need," he added.

Amb. Tariq expressed his confidence that the OIC, the United Nations, regional partners as well as key stakeholders would take all necessary steps to bring sustainable solutions to the catastrophic humanitarian situa-

tion in Afghanistan in which millions of lives are at stake. He expressed his sincere gratitude to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia as the Chair of the Islamic Summit for taking the important initiative calling for an extraordinary session of the CFM. At the same time, he expressed his deep appreciation to the Government of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan for hosting the Conference.

The OIC Secretary General Mr. Hissein Brahim Taha, announced the appointment of Assistant Secretary General for Humanitarian, Cultural and Social Affairs Amb. Tariq Ali Bakheet as his Special Envoy to Afghanistan, to follow up on the implementation of the resolution of the CFM, particularly as regards coordinating efforts for the supply of humanitarian assistance to the Afghan people. The Special Envoy will coordinate delivery of humanitarian assistance and support, and is mandated to pursue economic and political engagement with Afghanistan. The OIC General Secretariat welcomed Saudi Arabia's announcement on commencing a major relief operation for the Afghan people, as the first batch of airlift of this aid arrived in Afghanistan and the Secretary General, Mr. Hissein Taha hailed this step and appealed to member states and Islamic

financing institutions to provide support to the Afghan people to mitigate the impact of the current humanitarian situation.

In press statements, the Secretary General stressed that the international community is required now more than ever to ensure that Afghanistan is not used again as a platform or a safe haven for terrorists and not to allow a foothold for terrorist organizations, explaining that in order to prevent this from happening, the international community is required to find sustainable political solutions to the situation in Afghanistan so that it can quickly rejoin the international community, and benefit from the global economic and financial systems.

The Secretary General of the organization reiterated the full support of the General Secretariat for regional and international efforts aimed at helping Afghanistan, and the organization's willingness to follow-up on the implementation of what was issued by the extraordinary meeting, and to play its role in supporting humanitarian work in Afghanistan in coordination with the relevant institutions of the organization, relief organizations and institutions in the Islamic world, and United Nations agencies and other international institutions.

## OIC Council of Foreign Ministers Set-Up a Humanitarian Fund for Afghanistan



The Council of Foreign Ministers (CFM) of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) affirmed its solidarity with the Afghan people in their quest for a peaceful, united, stable, sovereign and prosperous Afghanistan.

Accordingly, the meeting decided to establish a trust fund for humanitarian affairs under the auspices of the Islamic Development Bank (IsDB), to serve as a means to direct humanitarian aid to Afghanistan, including through partnership with other international actors. The meeting also urged Afghanistan to abide by the principles and purposes enshrined in the UN Charter and the Charter of the OIC and respect its commitments under international agreements and conventions, including its obligations under international human rights covenants, especially with regards to the rights of women, children, youth, elderly and people with special needs as well as the preservation of family values, as enshrined in Islamic teachings and principles.

This came in the resolution adopted by the CFM of the OIC at its 17th extraordinary session in Islamabad, Islamic Republic of Pakistan on December 19, 2021, which welcomed the initiative of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, as Chair of the Islamic Summit, to convene an extraordinary session of the CFM on the humanitarian situation in Afghanistan.

Meanwhile, the resolution praised the Islamic Republic of Pakistan for hosting the meeting in Islamabad on December 19, 2021, recalling the efforts made by the Republic of Indonesia to highlight the serious humanitarian situation in Afghanistan

on the sidelines of the proceedings of the United Nations General Assembly, as well as the concerns and preoccupations that unite Islamic countries in order to move forward with addressing the humanitarian situation in Afghanistan.

The resolution took note of the UN system-wide reports that the humanitarian crisis in Afghanistan is unfolding at a pace and scale hitherto unknown in the recent memory, and encouraged in particular UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), UN Office for Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), World Food Program (WFP), United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF), and United Nations Development Program (UNDP), to pursue joint operation with the OIC for the delivery of urgent humanitarian aid.

The meeting welcomed the initiative of Uzbekistan to create under the auspices of the United Nations a regional Logistic Hub in Termez City to provide urgent humanitarian assistance to the people of Afghanistan, and called upon the international community to provide urgent, and sustained humanitarian assistance to Afghanistan as well as to the major Afghan refugee-hosting countries.

The meeting urged the international community in general, and the UN Security Council in particular, to ensure that existing targeted sanctions do not impede the provision of humanitarian aid or economic resources to preserve the institutions, schools and hospitals in Afghanistan and to allow multilateral development institutions, United Nations Agencies, Funds and Programs and other humanitarian organizations to channel existing assistance and assets towards

humanitarian assistance, and affirmed the importance of sustained engagement of the international community with Afghanistan, especially in supporting humanitarian and development needs of the Afghan people.

The extraordinary meeting of the CFM decided that the OIC will play a leading role in the delivery of humanitarian and development assistance to the people of Afghanistan, and requested the General Secretariat to take immediate steps to reinforce the OIC Mission in Kabul with human, financial and logistical resources, enabling it to forge global partnerships and streamline aid operations on the ground.

The CFM acknowledged that Afghanistan is facing serious liquidity challenges, and resolved to continue focusing on measures to ease access to legitimate banking services. The CFM underscored that Afghanistan's access to its financial resources would be pivotal in preventing a collapse and in reviving the economic activity and in this regard, recognizes the importance of taking related actions such as unlocking the channels of financial and in-kind flow of assistance and resources to the people of Afghanistan, and exploring realistic pathways towards unfreezing Afghanistan's financial assets.

The CFM also decided that the OIC General Secretariat, together with the Islamic Development Bank and Humanitarian Trust Fund, shall commence discussions with the UN system organizations to devise a road map for mobilizing actions in relevant fora to unlock the financial and banking channels to resume liquidity and flow of financial and humanitarian assistance.

## OIC Calls for Contribution to the Afghanistan Food Security Initiative



The resolution adopted by the 17th session of the Extraordinary Meeting of the Council of Foreign Ministers (CFM) of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), which was held in Islamabad in the Islamic Republic of Pakistan on the 19th December, 2021, encouraged OIC member States, international donors, the UN Funds and Programs and other international actors to generously contribute to the Afghanistan Food Security Program.

It called on the OIC Secretary-General to engage with donor financial institutions to provide necessary humanitarian and economic assistance to Afghanistan as well as Afghan refugees in neighboring countries.

It urgently appealed to OIC member States, international community including the UN system, international organizations, and international financial institutions to continue to provide all possible and necessary recovery, reconstruction, development, financial, educational, technical and material assistance for Afghanistan as policy tools to promote realization and enjoyment of fundamental rights and freedoms by all Afghan citizens and reaffirmed the importance of combating terrorism in Afghanistan and ensuring that the territory of Afghanistan is not used as a platform or safe haven by any terrorist group or organization.

The resolution called upon Afghanistan to take concrete steps against all terrorist orga-

nizations in particular Al-Qaeda, Daesh and its affiliates, ETIM, and TTP and reaffirmed that peace, security and stability in Afghanistan would also contribute to the safe and dignified return of all Afghan refugees, and internally displaced persons and to play their constructive role in the development of Afghanistan.

The resolution also urged the international community to remain cautious against the possibility of incitement and the role of spoilers, both inside and outside the country, to derail efforts aimed at peace and stability in Afghanistan.

It called upon the Afghan authorities to continue to work towards greater inclusiveness including by developing a roadmap to strengthen participation of all Afghans including women and girls to participate in all aspects of the Afghan society.

The meeting also recognized that development, peace, security, stability, and human rights are inter-linked and mutually reinforcing, and reaffirmed strong commitment of the OIC Member States to the sovereignty, independence, territorial integrity and national unity of Afghanistan. It recalled that the current humanitarian, social and economic situation is, inter alia, linked to the prolonged conflict in Afghanistan and in this regard, underlining the importance of investing in human development for achieving sustainable peace and development in the country.

The meeting also expressed solidarity with the people of Afghanistan and reiterated the commitment of the OIC Member States to help bring peace, security, stability, and development to Afghanistan. It noted the UN's estimates that the 60% of Afghanistan's 38 million people face "crisis levels of hunger" and that the situation is getting worse every day, while expressing deep alarm at the deteriorating humanitarian crisis in Afghanistan, in particular the warning issued by the World Food Program that 22.8 million people - more than half the population of Afghanistan - face acute food shortage; 3.2 million children and 700,000 pregnant and lactating women are at a risk of acute malnutrition.

The resolution noted the necessity for continuation of economic cooperation to improve humanitarian situation in Afghanistan and in this regard implementation of largescale energy, transport and communication projects including the Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-India Pipeline (TAPI) pipeline, Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan (TAP) electricity transmission line, to create new opportunities for increasing social well-being of the Afghan people. The resolution also noted the importance of the 15th Summit of the Economic Cooperation organization, which took place in Ashgabat on 28 November 2021, and the Ashgabat consensus for actions adopted at this Summit to address the humanitarian issues in Afghanistan.

## International Support for the Humanitarian Role of the OIC in Afghanistan

Many countries around the world expressed their support for the extraordinary meeting of the council of foreign ministers (CFM) of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), on the situation in Afghanistan, which was held in Islamabad, and for the outcomes of the meeting.

Tweets expressing support came from the US Secretary of State Anthony Blinken, US Special Representative for Afghanistan Thomas West and the Chinese Ambassador to Islamabad who participated in the meeting in Islamabad, in addition to tweets from the United Nations Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator, Martin Griffiths, and the Director-General of the International Committee of the Red Cross, Robert Mardini, who

stressed the need to put the lives and dignity of the Afghan people before politics.

The resolution of the CFM in its extraordinary meeting in Islamabad on the situation in Afghanistan highlighted the international community's expectations that all Afghans seize this historic opportunity to promote national reconciliation, observe the international conventions and agreements, and adhere to the international governing norms enshrined in the UN Charter and its resolutions.

The resolution underscored that an economic meltdown in Afghanistan would lead to a mass exodus of refugees, promote extremism, terrorism, and instability, with dire consequences for regional and international peace and stability, and stressed the need to support Afghanistan in addressing poverty, creating

employment opportunities, and provision of essential services to its citizens, in particular food, clean water, quality education, health services.

The resolution acknowledged the efforts of the international community, neighboring countries, donor agencies and other international organizations in urgent provision of humanitarian assistance to Afghanistan, and that institutions and capacity building developed during decades of international assistance and support to Afghanistan are at the verge of being lost. Rebuilding state institutions and necessary capacity will take decades if urgent actions are not taken to stem the negative trajectory.

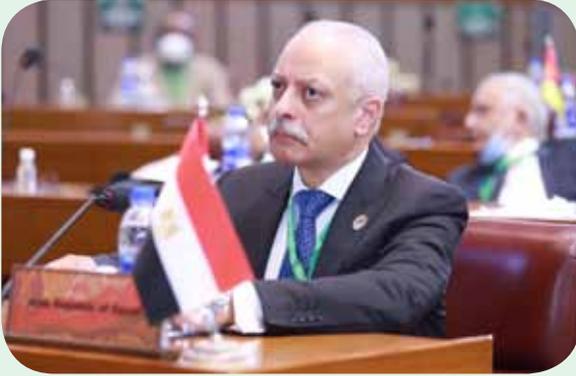


## Snapshots from the Extraordinary CFM on Afghanistan



Islamabad – Islamic Republic of Pakistan

## Snapshots from the Extraordinary CFM on Afghanistan



Islamabad – Islamic Republic of Pakistan



## Islamabad Declaration Reaffirms the Centrality of the Palestinian Cause

The Islamabad Declaration of the Extraordinary Meeting of the Council of Foreign Ministers (CFM) of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) condemned the repeated attacks by the Israeli colonial occupation authorities on the blessed Al-Aqsa Mosque/Al-Haram Al-Sharif and its continuous attempts to change the historical and legal status quo there using flimsy religious pretexts. It condemned the increasing and repeated incursions by extremist colonists under the protection of the Israeli occupation forces, as well as the incursions by the Israeli occupation forces with all its arms into Mosque's yards, the closing of the doors of the blessed Al-Aqsa Mosque. It also condemned the continuous attempts to impose racist Israeli laws, as well as the repeated attacks on the waqf (endowment) properties and the facilities of the blessed Al-Aqsa Mosque. It held Israel, as the occupying power in East Al-Quds, responsible for any measures that affect the safety of the blessed Al-Aqsa Mosque / Al-Haram Al-Sharif and the safety of worshipers and of the cadres of the Jordan-run Department of Al-Quds Waqf, in accordance with its obligations under international humanitarian law, and demanded Israel to immediately stop all illegal violations and irresponsible provocations that constitute a violation of the sanctity of the blessed Al-Aqsa Mosque / Al-Haram Al-Sharif and offends the feelings of Muslims everywhere.

The Islamabad declaration, issued on 19 December 2021, praised the steadfastness of

Al-Quds residents and the Palestinian people in the face of Israeli schemes and measures that undermine international efforts to end the occupation and establish a just and comprehensive peace.

The declaration reaffirmed its rejection of all attempts that would undermine the cultural and religious status of the city of Al-Quds Al-Sharif and stresses the need to maintain the historical status quo in the city, and preserve the right of the Palestinian people to full sovereignty over Al-Quds Al-Sharif, the capital of the State of Palestine. It called on all states and officials to refrain from participating in any activity, making any statements or holding any official meeting therein that serve the objective of Israel, the illegitimate occupying power, to dominate the city, and embolden it to pursue its violations, illegal occupation, and annexation of Al-Quds Al-Sharif

The declaration also condemned the relocation by some countries of their embassies or opening of commercial or diplomatic offices in the city of Al-Quds Al-Sharif, as well as any declaration or measure that may affect the legal status of the occupied Palestinian territory, particularly the city of Al-Quds Al-Sharif. It calls upon the OIC Member States to take all necessary steps and measures in this regard, and to fulfill their obligations under International Law, and in conformity with the resolutions adopted by the Islamic Summit Conferences and the meetings of the OIC Council of Foreign Ministers to face such hostile positions.

The Declaration commended the efforts of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan and the role of His Majesty King Abdullah II Bin Al Hussein, the custodian of Islamic and Christian holy sites in Al-Quds Al-Sharif, in defending, protecting and preserving the city of Al-Quds and its Islamic and Christian holy sites, and supporting the steadfastness of its Palestinian Arab residents on their land in the face of Israeli violations and illegal measures aimed at changing the Arab, Islamic and Christian identity of the city. It renewed its rejection of all Israeli attempts that affect the Hashemite guardianship and trusteeship, which was reaffirmed in the significant agreement signed between His Majesty King Abdullah II bin Al Hussein, King of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, and His Excellency President Mahmoud Abbas, President of the State of Palestine, in Amman on 3/31/2013. It also commended UNESCO's resolutions confirming that Al-Aqsa Mosque is a synonym for Al-Haram Al-Sharif and emphasizing that the Mughrabi Gate hill is an integral part of the blessed Al-Aqsa Mosque, and the right of the Jordanian Department of Al-Quds Waqf and the Affairs of the blessed Al-Aqsa Mosque in the restoration of the Mughrabi Gate as the only exclusive legal authority responsible for the Al-Haram and its total area of 144 dunums, and as a place of worship exclusively for Muslims, including its management, maintenance and preservation, and the regulation of entry to its courtyard.



## Israeli Violations against Palestinians on the Increase

The Palestinian territories are witnessing violations daily that had varying severity and media impact. Over October and November 2021, the OIC Journal monitored a number of major violations mentioned in this report, most notably the decision of the Israeli occupation authorities to build thousands of new colonial settlements in the occupied territories.

The Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) had strongly condemned the crimes committed by the Israeli occupation forces against the Palestinian people, including the killing of Omar Abu Assab in Al-Quds, which constituted a dangerous escalation in the pace of Israeli violence and the continuous attacks on the Palestinian people. The Organization also condemned the policy of deliberate medical negligence that led to the death of Palestinian prisoner Sami al-Amour in the prisons of the Israeli occupation, which came as a result of medical negligence and inhumane treatment of Palestinian prisoners.

The organization held the Israeli occupation authorities fully responsible for the consequences of these crimes, which call for accountability, and demanded the United Nations and the relevant international bodies to form an investigation committee to identify the circumstances of the martyrdom of prisoner Sami Al-Amour and teenager Abu Assab, and called for intervention to save the lives of the Palestinian prisoners on hunger strike and to ensure their freedom and dignity.

Earlier, Israeli President Isaac Herzog stormed the Ibrahimi Mosque in the city of Hebron, which the Organization condemned, being part of further plans to Judaize it and consolidate control over it. The OIC stressed that the storming of the Ibrahimi Mosque constitutes a provocation to the feelings of Muslims, and a continuation of the Israeli infringement of the rights of the Palestinian people, their land and their holy places.

The Organization also called on the international community to move quickly to protect these holy sites and historical places, and to compel the Israeli occupation authorities to respect the sanctity of the holy sites, implement the relevant UN resolutions and provide protection for the Palestinian people, their land and their holy sites.

As these violations that affected the holy places in Palestine continued, the General Secretariat strongly condemned the decision of the so-called Israeli "Jerusalem Court" to allow Jews to pray in the blessed Al-Aqsa Mosque, deeming that such illegal decisions constitute an unprecedented violation of the inalienable religious rights of the Islamic Ummah and its heritage, a provocation to the feelings of Muslims all over the world, and a violation of freedom of worship and the sanctity of holy places.

The General Secretariat reiterated the OIC's rejection of any measures taken by the occupying power, Israel, which affects the status of occupied East Al-Quds and the Palestinian presence therein, or jeopardizes the Islamic and Christian holy places, as this

would constitute a grave violation of international law, international humanitarian law and relevant UN resolutions. It held Israel, the occupying power, fully responsible for the consequences of these decisions, which would lead to instability and ignite a religious conflict in the region.

The OIC called on the international actors to assume their responsibilities and to intervene urgently in order to preserve the historical and legal status quo in Al-Quds and the blessed Al-Aqsa Mosque, and to spare no effort to resume a political path that leads to the realization of the two-state solution in accordance with the relevant United Nations resolutions.

Israel had intensified daily incursions by extremist settlers' groups, raising Israeli flags in its courtyards under the protection of the Israeli occupation police, and restricting the freedom of access of Palestinian citizens to pray there, in flagrant violation of the sanctity of holy places and freedom of worship. The organization condemned these violations and warned of the consequences of continuing Israeli occupation policies based on colonial settlement, ethnic cleansing, and forced displacement of Palestinians.

The organization unequivocally condemned the attack on the Islamic cemeteries in the city of Al-Quds, and the opening by Israel, of the so-called "Museum of Tolerance" located on a part of the Mamilla Islamic cemetery in occupied Al-Quds.



## 104 years since the infamous Balfour Declaration

November 2, 2021, marked the 104th anniversary of the issuance of the infamous promise of the former British Foreign Minister "Arthur Balfour" on November 2, 1917, to establish a national home for the Jewish people in Palestine. The dangerous repercussions of the infamous promise marked the beginning of the ongoing Palestinian catastrophe in all its dimensions, as a result of the establishment of the occupying Israeli state with its colonial policies based on aggression, forced displacement, ethnic cleansing, colonial settlement, Judaization, land confiscation, destruction of property, and denial of the legitimate national rights of the Palestin-

ian people. On this occasion, which remained a black mark against the history and conscience of humanity, and a setback for the values of freedom and justice, the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) renewed its permanent commitment to support the struggle of the Palestinian people and their legitimate rights. It also called on the international community to assume its historical, legal and political responsibilities in ending the Israeli occupation and enabling the Palestinian people to regain their inalienable rights, including their right to return and the establishment of their independent state

on the borders of June 4, 1967, with East Al-Quds as its capital, and to achieve the vision of the two-state solution based on the relevant United Nations resolutions and the Arab Peace Initiative.

On a different note, the OIC General Secretariat condemned the arbitrary and illegal decision of the Israeli occupation authorities to designate six Palestinian civil society organizations as "terrorist organizations", as this constitutes a flagrant violation of international humanitarian law and international treaties that guarantee the right to form associations and practice humanitarian and human rights work.

### Lecture on Cultural and Religious Heritage of Al-Quds Al-Shareef

On the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People, which is observed on the 29th of November every year, the General Secretariat of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) held an interactive virtual lecture titled: "The Cultural and Religious Heritage of Al-Quds Al-Shareef: Challenges and Opportunities." This was part of the OIC General Secretariat's series of lectures held at its Jeddah headquarters.

Dr. Nazmi Amin Jubeh, associate professor at the Department of History and Archeology, Birzeit University, former co-director of Riwaq Center for Architectural Conservation, and director of the Islamic Museum at the Al-Aqsa Mosque, delivered the virtual lecture on Thursday, 2 December 2021. In the lec-

ture, Dr. Jubeh presented a comprehensive historical review of the stages of development of Al-Quds and its legal status in the cultural heritage of divine religions. He also gave an overview of the key historical figures that influenced the city and its architecture, which reflect its identity as a land of peaceful coexistence among adherents of different faiths.

Dr. Jubeh also highlighted the danger threatening the Al-Aqsa Mosque and Al-Quds city because of repeated Israeli aggression and relentless attempts to change the city's features, Judaize it and change its Islamic identity by way of archeological excavations and demolition of Islamic historic sites. Dr. Jubeh also cited the efforts made by the Palestin-

ian authorities to confront these threats and defend the blessed al-Aqsa Mosque and its surrounding buildings.

Dr. Jubeh's lecture included presentation of images and manuscripts showing the historical development of Al-Quds city and the transformations it has witnessed over time. It also focused on areas with strong symbolism, such as the Church of the Holy Sepulcher, the Nea Church, the Dome of the Rock, Al-Aqsa Mosque, Maghariba Quarters and the like, which are targeted by the Israeli occupation through surface and underground archeological excavations and attempts at Judaization and imposition of fait accompli.



## Solidarity Day with Palestinian People Celebrated in Jeddah, New York, and Geneva

The General Secretariat of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) celebrated the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People, which is observed on November 29 of each year, by holding a ceremony addressed by the OIC Secretary-General, Mr. Hissein Brahim Taha, at the headquarters of the Organization's General Secretariat in Jeddah, on Monday, November 29, 2021.

The OIC Secretary-General said that this year's celebration of the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People comes at a delicate and dangerous stage in the Palestinian cause due to the continued practices of Israel, the occupying power, that perpetuate its colonial occupation of the Palestinian land through its policies of aggression, forced displacement, and ethnic cleansing, settlement, Judaization, land confiscation, property destruction, the sustained siege on the Gaza Strip, and the denial of the legitimate national rights of the Palestinian people.

The Secretary-General affirmed the OIC's rejection and condemnation of all Israeli occupation measures and illegal practices to impose *fait accompli*, change the demographic character of the occupied

city of Jerusalem, obliterate its Arab identity, expel Palestinian citizens from their homes in Sheikh Jarrah and Silwan neighborhoods, desecrate its holy sites, violate the freedom of worship, and to isolate the city of Jerusalem from its Palestinian environs.



In turn, Ambassador Mahmoud Yahya Al-Asadi, Consul General of the State of Palestine in Jeddah, said that these inalienable

rights of the Palestinian people, including the right to live a free and dignified life on their land, which were stolen from them by the usurping occupier, are not subject to discussion, cancellation, or equality. They are enshrined in international human rights principles and the Charter of the United Nations.

For his part, Ambassador Maher Al-Karaki, Permanent Representative of the State of Palestine to the OIC, said that the marking of Solidarity Day comes after 73 years of the catastrophe of 1948, and after 54 years of occupation in 1967. Throughout these years the Palestinian people have faced the violations and systematic attacks by Israel, the occupying power.

In the same context, the Secretary-General addressed the United Nations headquarters in New York and Geneva, on the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People. Delivering the speech in New York, on behalf of the OIC Secretary-General was the Permanent Observer of the Organization, Ambassador Agshin Mehdiyev, and in

front of the United Nations Headquarters in Geneva, Director of the Organization's office in Geneva, Ambassador Nassima Baghli.

## Disasters Caused \$140 billion Losses from 1970 to 2011

Natural disasters have casted a shadow over the Islamic world after six member states of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) witnessed in recent months earthquakes, volcanoes and floods that led to numerous setbacks, in addition to man-caused accidents and tribal conflicts that resulted in dozens of deaths and injuries. The Secretary-General of the OIC, Mr. Hissein Brahim Taha, had followed with great concern the humanitarian situation in Chad in light of the influx of thousands of Cameroonian and Sudanese refugees into Chadian lands, after renewed tribal conflicts in the Darfur region and northeastern Cameroon. In this regard, and in response to the call for assistance by His Excellency Major General Mahamat Idriss Deby, President of the Transitional Military Council in Chad, last December, the Secretary-General called on the member states and financial institutions of the OIC as well as the international partners to provide urgent assistance so that Chad can address this humanitarian emergency.

In the same vein, the OIC Secretary-General expressed his sincere condolences to the people and government of Malaysia for the lives lost in the worst floods that hit the country in decades, which resulted in the displacement of thousands. The OIC also offered its sincere condolences to the people and government of the Republic of Indonesia for the victims of the Semeru volcano which erupted on the island of Java. It also expressed its sincere condolences and sympathy with the government and people of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan following the earthquake that struck the south of the country, causing loss of life and massive destruction of property. In Sierra Leone, following the explosion of a fuel tanker, Hissein Taha expressed his condolences to the government and people of the Republic of Sierra Leone following the accident that occurred in a suburb of Freetown in November 2021, killing more than 100 people. The organization also expressed its solidarity with all the victims and their families and wished a full and speedy recovery for the injured. The Secretary-General of the OIC offered the government and people of the Republic



of Niger his deepest condolences after the collapse of a gold mine last November that killed dozens of workers, in addition to a classroom fire that killed 25 children in the Maradi region, southern Niger.

Recent studies have shown a significant increase in the number of natural disasters that OIC member states have witnessed. The number of disasters in the Islamic world increased from 20 disasters annually during the 1970s of the twentieth century to nearly 120 disasters in the first decade of this century. In the past forty years the whole world has witnessed a significant increase in the frequency of natural disasters, from less than 100 disasters annually in the 1970s of the twentieth century to 450 disasters in the first ten years of the current millennium.

According to the Statistical, Economic and Social Research and Training Center for Islamic Countries (SESRTC), it is clear that OIC Member States are facing more challenges with regard to natural hazards, conflicts and disputes. The development gains accumulated over many years face greater risks of devastation as disasters strike. According to statistics, it is estimated that the average cost of natural disasters in the OIC mem-

ber states during the period 1970-2011 is about \$140 billion. Accordingly, the economic damage of natural disasters has doubled in all OIC member states as a percentage of GDP on average from 0.11% in the 1970s of the twentieth century to 1.25% in the first decade of the twenty-first century. The main reasons for this rapid increase in the number of natural disaster incidents in OIC countries are floods, epidemics, earthquakes, storms, land erosion and drought. Faced with this tragic situation, Member States need to carefully consider risk management and other humanitarian crises as one of the priority areas of cooperation, including the global framework for disaster risk mitigation.

The increasing burden of natural disasters and various conflicts in many OIC member states requires strengthening joint Islamic humanitarian action, developing appropriate mechanisms to respond to disasters and enhancing the capacity of OIC member states to confront disasters through the development of integrated and comprehensive measures that reduce vulnerability in the face of disasters and enhance readiness for response and recovery.

Photo caption: Worst floods hit Malaysia.

## Secretary-General Urges Support for Palestine and Lake-Chad

### 1,800 Projects Worldwide Worth \$241 million



The Secretary-General of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), Mr. Hissein Brahim Taha, called on member states to support the Islamic Solidarity Fund. The Secretary-General addressed the meeting of the Permanent Council of the Islamic Solidarity Fund (ISF) in its 65th session, with the participation of Ambassador Nasser bin Abdullah bin Hamdan Al Zaabi, Chairman of the ISF Permanent Council. The meeting took place at the headquarters of the General Secretariat in Jeddah on Monday, January 3, 2022. The Secretary-General said that the ISF has proven its effectiveness through its noble humanitarian services for the benefit of Muslims everywhere, within the framework of the OIC. But he noted that the ISF is still limited in its financial capabilities to meet the needs of the Muslim world, especially while facing many challenges due to wars and natural disasters, in addition to the plight and suffering of Muslim refugees. The OIC Secretary-General urged Member States to increase budgetary support for the ISF projects.

Regarding the Palestinian and Al-Quds Al-Sharif cause, and in response to repeated calls to pay attention to this city as it is at the heart of the Palestinian cause, the Fund has made an appreciable achievement in supporting the projects of the State of Palestine in general, and the projects of the city of Al-Quds in particular. The most important of these contributions is the Fund's continued support for the infrastructure of the city of Al-Quds.

Mr. Brahim Taha said it was important to pay attention to the suffering of other regions in the Islamic world, especially the Sahel region and Lake Chad, which have been greatly affected by various incidents, including drought, terrorist attacks, and conflicts between nomads and farmers, which led to mass displacement and increased rates of poverty and unemployment. He added that this calls for directing humanitarian and development support to this region.

The resolution to establish the Islamic Solidarity Fund as a subsidiary organ of the OIC was a practical step to consolidate the

concept of Islamic solidarity among Muslims around the world, and so this became one of the important historical resolutions by the Second Islamic Summit Conference held in Lahore in the Islamic Republic of Pakistan in 1974.

After the formation and establishment, the Fund began to serve the urgent issues of Muslims, and thanks to this success, the Fund had a prominent position among the international institutions concerned with humanitarian aspects. The Fund's projects included all of its educational, cultural, health, social and religious activities, which is a cause for pride, especially the Islamic Universities of Niger and Uganda, for which the ISF is the main financier. These outstanding results and achievements of the ISF call for paying attention to this important Islamic edifice that highlights Islamic solidarity and cooperation. The number of projects financed or contributed to by the Fund has exceeded 2800 projects around the world with a total amount exceeding \$241 million.

## Two Palestinians Open Restaurant on a Boeing Plane



**Ramallah** - Eva Krafchik and Maher Abu Khater (DPA): As the Palestinians were denied the construction of their own international airport, due to the intransigence of Israel, the occupying power, 60-year-old twin brothers, Atta and Khamis Al-Serafi, chose a civilian plane to convert to a restaurant in the city of Nablus, the West Bank.

From afar, this derelict Boeing 707 appears to be crouching amidst weeds, dirt and bits of stones. The plane may look as if it had made an emergency landing on this strip of asphalt, but to the brothers, the plane's presence in that place is the reward of decades of work. Nevertheless, the idea of the restaurant became very appealing to the residents of Nablus, since there is no airport in the West Bank.

With its wings and tail fin painted in the colors of the Palestinian and Jordanian flags, the plane shimmers brightly against the background of the mountains as it prepares to embark on a new type of flight. The twins have only a few weeks to open a restaurant inside the plane, making their long-time dream come true.

The twin brothers grew up in the «Askar» refugee camp in Nablus, and lived off of buying and recycling scrap metal for years, but they kept dreaming of working in the tourism and entertainment sector. About 30

*As for moving the plane, they also needed special vehicles, as well as roadblocks for the vehicles to pass through*

years ago, they heard about the old Boeing plane, from the 1980s of the 20th century, and is based in the city of Tiberias overlooking the Sea of Galilee in historical Palestine. Atta Al-Serafi says "The last flight of this passenger plane was to Berlin."

Their hearts were filled with enthusiasm, and they hoped to buy the plane and turn it into a restaurant. However, they discovered that

buying the plane, which was completed in 1999, is the easiest step. It turned out that they needed a permit from Ben-Gurion Airport, in order to transport it after removing its engines, flight equipment and seats installed on board.

As for moving the plane, they also needed special vehicles, as well as roadblocks for the vehicles to pass through.

Transporting the plane was more complicated than they had expected. In this regard, Atta says, "We had to cut down some trees so that the plane could pass."

Among the factors that made transporting the plane more difficult, was the confiscation of land and the establishment of a temporary camp for the Israeli occupation army on the site where the plane was currently located. The project was delayed after the outbreak of the second Palestinian Intifada during the period from 2000 to 2005, and the opening of the restaurant, which was scheduled to be during that period, was delayed. After the site was approved for civilian purposes, the COVID-19 pandemic created new obstacles.

## Narrow Space for Broad Social Media!

It is not possible to ignore the change that the media is experiencing in its traditional and familiar concept and its fusion in social media platforms that has prevailed in the recent years and developed in a manner that does not help its followers to grasp the reality of the huge change and its cluster and web-like interactions. So, how can any of us get a clear idea of what this acceleration in the dissemination of micro-news may lead to, now a feature of today's fast-paced media.

The growth of the media, however, its formation and re-formation, urges the need to read the scene more closely, especially since the new media targets the elite and decision-makers, just as it deeply touches the hearts of the people – it is the called social media.

Everyone knows that the traditional media used by specialized news websites and the media institutions and news organizations was, and still is, reserved, mindful and considerate – never crossing many red lines and often subject to self- and external censorship. Meanwhile, social media, seemingly, is about spontaneous expression of opinion, an improvisational depiction of events, or an individual handling of an issue, and it is because of these characteristics that it is difficult to domesticate and why it remains subject to negative emotional reactions. We see this in the comments that are not devoid of prejudicial language, the dominance of ignorance of the issues at hand, and the emotional non-specialist followers. The comments, in themselves, are a mechanism or space that was created to measure the popularity of any given post on any of the available platforms.

In short, the current media is about both action and reaction- it is not enough anymore to publish the news in a silent environment as was the case in paper newspapers or radio and television channels. Rather, the direct monitoring of the reaction to the news is as important as the news itself – and sometimes even more important. Together, they create what we know as a Trend. In the past, the public opinion was formed over long intervals, and on major events and issues that truly make an impact.

Remarkably, social media mainly depends on openness, spontaneity, and going beyond the reasonable to cause enough shock and ensure the continued following. All of this is done without regard to precautions that the traditional media take into account. In fact, social media focuses on details because it is mostly individual media. It is simple and must express a common language used by everyone.

In the face of this fragmented scene, it seems difficult to be aware of (populist) social media, but any process, no matter how chaotic, adheres to a specific path, even if it seems random. And social media usually begins with an illustrated story on which other stories are built and together making a tsunami-like response that can crowd out any other issue and be the topic of the hour through monitoring views and direct interaction.

Clearly, anyone who attempts to contain a negative media attack must be quick to respond, without getting involved in the fussy and passive controversy resulting from that issue, but rather providing logical responses that are accepted by the collective mind of the public. Meanwhile, reluctance to respond at times proves successful in containing any fuss made by social media, while realizing the fact that any public opinion issue will soon fade away when other issues or (trends) come to the forefront of the scene.

The danger of social media remains in its reliance on factional alignment, a feature that does not serve the official media, which maintains the same distance with everyone, distancing itself from the populist disputes that stimulate controversy that would double the spread of news and prolong its life on social media platforms.

The paradox is that if objective neutrality, diplomatic language, and commitment to a unified collective stance do not generate the required excitement among the followers, and some may think of them as weaknesses in the reserved media, it is this media that ultimately answers the outstanding questions that are usually lost in the chaos of social media. And if social media can mix everything together, it does not have the stamina, nor the ability to resolve the controversy - it was not invented as a serious press platform or an e-library, but rather it is an evolution of what was known as (chat) rooms that were characterized by mixed and overlapping discussions that do not achieve anything.

The responsible traditional media remains a reliable platform that captures the truth, no matter how daring the other improvisational media is. Ordinary people know that fast news that will easily disappear in cyberspace will not constitute an alternative to the concept of components that together build the foundations of civil society that is disciplined by laws and charters, and in the end, we will find ourselves part of a group subject to regulations and procedures that form the infrastructure of the state and the provider of security and stability.



**Aiman Abboushi**

*Editor of OIC Journal*

*it seems difficult to be aware of (populist) social media, but any process, no matter how chaotic, adheres to a specific path*

## BILATERALS



Advisor to the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques, Governor of Makkah Region Prince Khalid Al-Faisal received Secretary-General of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) Hissein Brahim Taha on the occasion of assuming his duties.

Prince Khalid Al-Faisal congratulated the OIC Secretary-General on his new position and wished him full success in fulfilling his mandate. He described the OIC's task as instrumental in the development and promotion of joint Islamic action.



The Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, His Highness Prince Faisal Bin Farhan Al-Saud, in his office in Riyadh, received the Secretary-General of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) H.E Mr. Hissein Brahim Taha, where he congratulated the latter on his assumption of office. The Foreign Minister assured the Secretary-General of the Kingdom's support as chair of the fourteenth Islamic Summit, in the service of the OIC's objectives of promoting joint Islamic action.



The Secretary-General of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) Hissein Brahim Taha, on 29 December 2021, received the Director-General of the Islamic Organization for Food Security (IOFS) H.E. Yerlan Baidalet.

During the meeting, they discussed the efforts undertaken by IOFS in enhancing food security for member states, especially in light of the repercussions of the coronavirus pandemic, in addition to supporting the least developed countries.



The Secretary-General of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), Mr. Hissein Brahim Taha, on 18 December 2021 met with His Excellency Sheikh Dr. Ahmed Nasser Al-Mohammed Al-Sabah, Minister of Foreign Affairs and Minister of State for Cabinet Affairs of the State of Kuwait. The meeting took place on the sidelines of the 17th extraordinary session of the OIC Council of Foreign Ministers, to which the capital city of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, Islamabad, played host.



OIC Secretary-General H.E. Mr. Hissein Brahim Taha, received on December 27, 2021, at the headquarters of the General Secretariat, Ambassador Akram Karimi, Ambassador of the Republic of Tajikistan to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and Tajikistan's Permanent Representative to the OIC.



The Secretary-General of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), Mr. Hissein Brahim Taha, received, on December 26, 2021, at the headquarters of the General Secretariat, Ambassador Omar Jibril Salah, Ambassador of the Republic of the Gambia to Riyadh, and the Permanent Representative to the Organization.



The Secretary-General of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), received on November 30, 2021 at the headquarters of the General Secretariat, the Ambassador of the Republic of Sudan to Riyadh, the Permanent Representative to the Organization, Mr. Adel Bachi.



Secretary-General of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), Mr. Hissein Brahim Taha, on November 30, 2021 at the headquarters of the General Secretariat, received Mr. Yahaya Lawal, Ambassador of the Federal Republic of Nigeria to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, and Permanent Representative to the OIC.



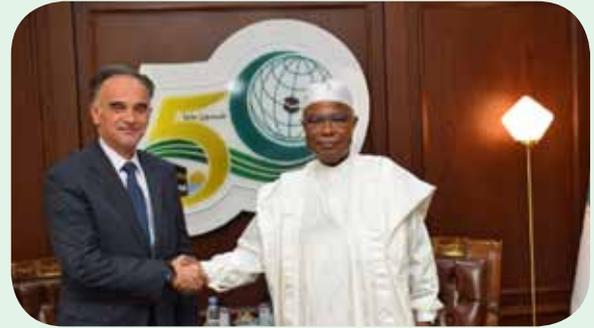
The Secretary-General of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), Mr. Hissein Brahim Taha, received, on December 12, 2021, Mr. Wael Yousef Al-Enezi, Consul General of the State of Kuwait and permanent representative to the OIC.



The Secretary-General of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), Mr. Hissein Brahim Taha, received, on December 5, 2021, the Ambassador of the Kingdom of Morocco to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and the Permanent Representative to the Organization, Ambassador Mustafa Mansouri.



The Secretary-General of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) received on December 1, 2021 at the headquarters of the General Secretariat, His Excellency the Ambassador of the Republic of Chad to Riyadh, and the Permanent Representative to the Organization, Mr. Zakaria Fadoul Kitir.



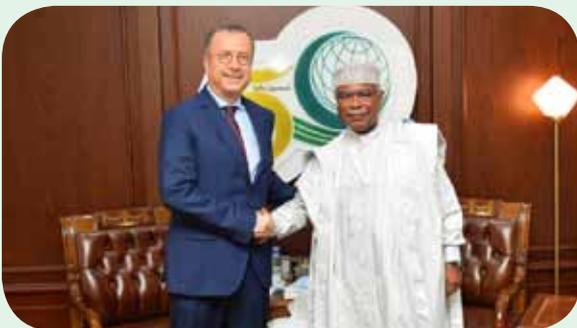
The Secretary-General of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), H.E. Hissein Brahim Taha, received Mr. Jaafar Muhammad Jaafar, Consul-General of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan in Jeddah, and its permanent representative to the OIC.



The Secretary-General of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) Mr. Hissein Brahim Taha, received on December 13, 2021, in his office at the headquarters of the General Secretariat, the Consul General of the Republic of Gabon in Jeddah, Mr. Abdelaziz Branly Oupolo.



The Secretary-General of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) Hissein Brahim Taha received on December 13, 2021 the Acting Consul-General of Togo in Jeddah Mr. Bassirou Essotakou Tchasanté.



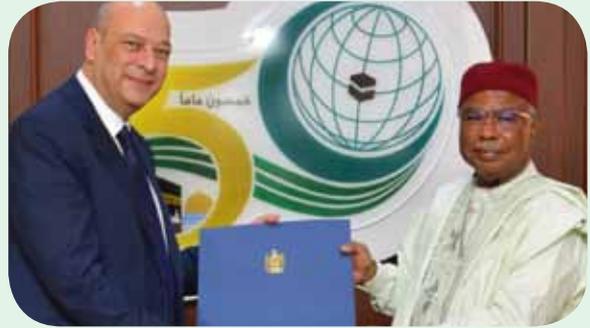
The Secretary-General of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) received, on December 14, 2021, at the headquarters of the General Secretariat, the Permanent Representative of the Republic of Turkey to the OIC, Ambassador Mehmet Metin Eker. The two sides stressed the importance of cooperation between the OIC and Turkey and discussed ways to enhance the existing cooperation.



The Secretary-General of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) received at the headquarters of the General Secretariat the Ambassador of the People's Republic of Bangladesh to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, and the Permanent Representative to the Organization, Mr. Muhammad Javed Batwari.



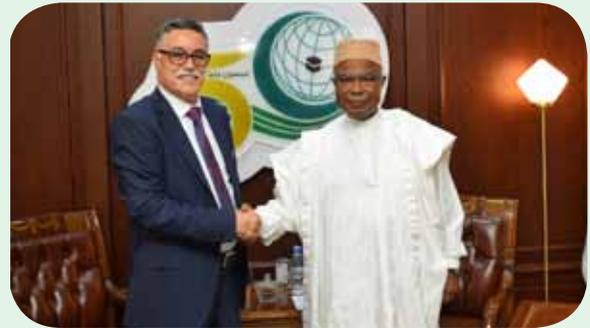
The Secretary-General of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) received in his office at the headquarters of the General Secretariat in Jeddah, Ambassador Mohamed Negm, the former Egyptian permanent representative to the OIC, on the occasion of the end of his duty.



OIC Secretary-General H.E. Mr. Hissein Brahim Taha, received, on December 5, 2021, the Permanent Representative of the Arab Republic of Egypt to the Organization, Ambassador Shadi Gamal El-Din Mohamed El-Sharqawi, who presented his credentials as the permanent representative of Egypt to the OIC.



The Secretary General of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), received on January 3, 2022, H.E. Ambassador Maher Al-Karaki, the Permanent Representative of the State of Palestine to the OIC. During the meeting, they discussed the latest political and field developments in Palestine.



The Secretary-General of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) received on December 23, 2021, at the headquarters of the General Secretariat, Mr. Kamal Bashir Dahan, the permanent representative of Libya to the OIC. During the meeting, the Secretary General stressed the importance the OIC attaches to Libya.



The Secretary General of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) Mr. Hissein Brahim Taha, received on December 15, 2021, Mr. Dino Sidi, Ambassador of the Republic of Guinea-Bissau to Riyadh, who presented his credentials as the permanent representative of his country to the organization.



The Secretary General of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) received, on December 29, 2021, at the headquarters of the General Secretariat, the Ambassador of the People's Democratic Republic of Algeria to Riyadh, and the Permanent Representative to the Organization, Ambassador Ahmed Abdel-Sadouk.



On December 6, 2021, the Secretary-General of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) received, His Excellency Ludovic Pouille, Ambassador of France to Riyadh, in the presence of Mr. Mustafa Maharaj, Consul General of France in Jeddah and Special Envoy of France to the OIC. During the meeting, they valued the long-standing ties that unite the member states of the OIC and France.



The Secretary-General of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) received on December 14, 2021, Mr. Faris Asaad, the US Consul General in Jeddah and the official representative of his country to the OIC. During the meeting, the two sides stressed the strength of relations between the organization and the United States.



The Secretary-General of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), Mr. Hissein Brahim Taha, received, on December 28, 2021, at the headquarters of the General Secretariat, Ambassador Muhammed Josic, Ambassador of the Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina to Riyadh, and its permanent observer to the Organization.



The Secretary-General of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), Mr. Hissein Brahim Taha, received, on January 2, 2022, in his office at the headquarters of the General Secretariat, Ambassador Hisham Mustafa, the Consul General of the Arab Republic of Egypt in Jeddah.



On December 01, 2021, the Secretary-General of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) received, at the headquarters of the General Secretariat, the Ambassador of the Kingdom of Norway to Riyadh and the Special Envoy to the OIC, Thomas Led Bull.



The Secretary-General of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) Mr. Hissein Brahim Taha received, November 22, 2021, the Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of the Netherlands, Mr. Thijs van der Plas. During the meeting, international issues of common interest were reviewed.



## Promoting Girls' Education in 4 African Countries

Soukeyna Kane, Country Director of the World Bank for Mali, Burkina Faso, Niger and Chad, stated that: "By promoting the empowerment of girls and women, the World Bank's Sahel Women's Empowerment and Demographic Dividend Agreement (SWEDD), which was signed with a number of African countries, helps meet the human capital challenge facing Africa." Given the encouraging initial results of the SWEDD agreement, it is currently being expanded in Chad, Côte d'Ivoire, Mali and Mauritania. Other African countries, outside the Sahel region, are also considering joining the project.

For many girls who are reaching adulthood, in poor areas of the Sahel region of Africa, there is not enough time to indulge in pondering over who they could become or what they would like to do. Their aspirations, hopes, and dreams often fade as they move from helping with chores in their homes to doing their own house chores. They often have to drop out of school, marry soon after reaching puberty, and become young mothers - a vicious cycle that reduces their economic potential and affects their health.

SWEDD also supports a unique 'school'. Welcome to the Husbands and Future Husbands School in Mamboué, a village in

western Burkina Faso. Wembabi, a married father, regularly attends discussion workshops on a variety of topics related to family planning and home life, with 15 other men and two facilitators. His wife Martine said: "Since he started attending Husbands School, our relationship has improved tremendously." She added that it re-ignited the spark between them. Now he brings water and wood and helps around the house, and for the first time, he wanted to be present at the birth of their last child.

Today, more than 1,640 schools for couples have already been established in all countries of SWEDD.

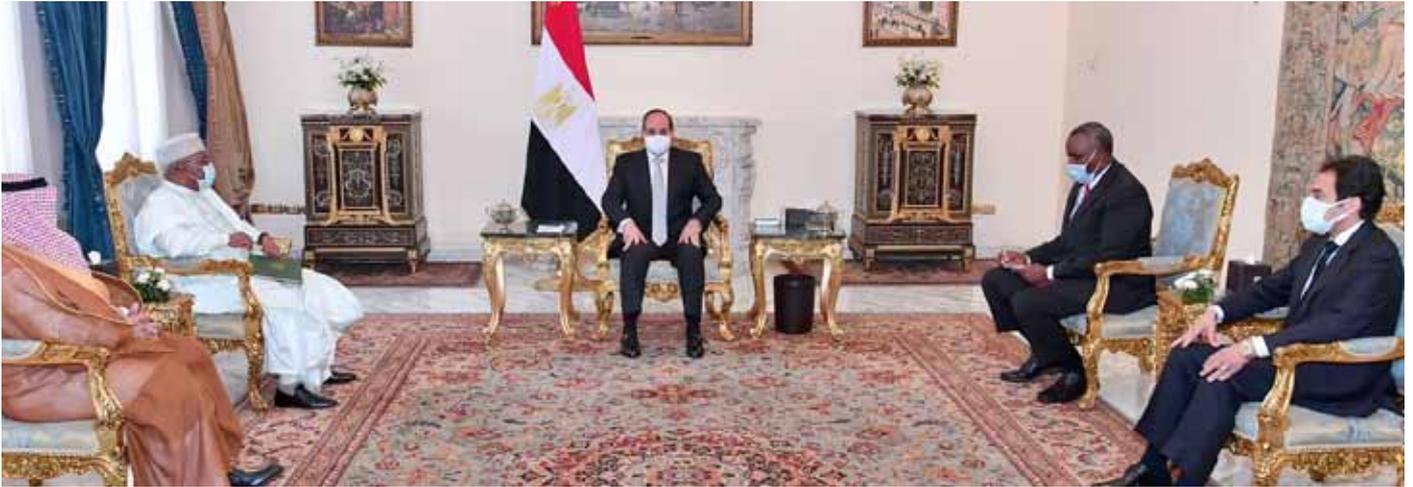
Alice Adja, for example, dropped out of school when she was eight years old, as her parents could not afford her education in addition to taking care of her and her six siblings. At the age of eleven, her family sent her to live with her aunt in Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire, where she had a set of must-do errands and chores, despite her young age.

Alice is now 21 years old and works in a house in Abidjan. But she has other dreams for her future. She wants to run her own business and be independent. Alice said: "One day, I will be a professional pastry chef... And I will have my own pastry shop." Alice Adja is among thousands of young women who have a new look at life be-

cause of the SWEDD Project in the Sahel region. The project is funded by the World Bank and implemented by the governments of Benin, Burkina Faso, Chad, Côte d'Ivoire, Mali, Mauritania and Niger. SWEDD aims at empowering women and adolescent girls and facilitating their access to quality education, and to reproductive, maternal and child health services.

The project begins with ensuring that girls stay in schools, and investing in their education and; but most importantly, preventing girls from dropping out of school. This is a critical first step in creating opportunities for women in the Sahel region and an important facet of the World Bank's plan.

In Niger, for example, only one in 10 girls finishes secondary education. Girls from poor families drop out of school due to lack of resources and the need to take care of their children, since they often marry and become mothers at a very young age. SWEDD is making a difference in the lives of many of these girls, including 15-year-old Inayatou Suradji who lives in the village of Kiota, about 100 kilometers from the capital, Niamey. Inayatou said: "My mother and grandmother never went to school because they got married at an early age. I am fortunate to have received a scholarship to pursue my studies."



## President Al-Sisi Stresses that the Palestinian Cause is a Pivotal Issue Hissein Taha in Cairo on an Official Visit

H.E. Mr. Abdel Fattah Al-Sisi, President of the Arab Republic of Egypt, congratulated H.E. Mr. Hissein Brahim Taha on assuming his duties as Secretary-General of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC). President Al-Sisi assured the Secretary General of his support, and underlined the special interest Egypt attaches to enhancing and promoting joint Islamic action and activating the mechanisms of the OIC's work in all fields. President Al-Sisi, received the Secretary-General of the OIC at Al-Ittihadiya presidential palace on Tuesday December 7, 2021. During the reception President Al-Sisi stressed the importance of member states' consensus on fundamental issues of the OIC, citing Palestine as a central and pivotal issue. He emphasized the importance of intensifying efforts to combat terrorism, extremism, and consolidating security, stability and development in the region.

For his part, the Secretary-General thanked President Al-Sisi for the audience and praised Egypt's effective role in supporting the OIC and its programs. He asserted his determination to activate the General Secretariat's work mechanisms, enhance its role in the service of member states, and collectively address the various challenges facing them. Taha also met with the Egyptian Minister of Foreign Affairs, Mr. Sameh Shoukry, at the Ministry headquarters in Cairo, where the two sides discussed bilateral relations and issues of common interest between the OIC and Egypt, in addition to the programs and projects that the OIC undertakes.

The Secretary-General commended the important role of Egypt as it continuously supports the progress of the Organization since its establishment, and contributes to strengthening Islamic solidarity among its member states. In his meeting with the Minister, Mr. Hissein Taha touched on a number of issues, including Afghanistan, Somalia and Libya.

Minister Shoukry had congratulated the Secretary-General for assuming his position in the OIC General Secretariat, and praised the OIC's efforts to strengthen Islamic solidarity, stressing his country's support for the Secretary-General.

On the other hand, the Secretary-General met with H.E. Mr. Ahmed Aboul Gheit the Secretary-General of the League of Arab States (LAS), in his office at the League's headquarters in Cairo. The friendly meeting discussed OIC-Arab League bilateral relations and means of enhancing them. The two sides also discussed aspects of cooperation on issues of common interest.

The OIC Secretary-General underlined the importance of working with the Arab League and strengthening institutional collaboration between the two organizations, in view of the Arab League's importance to the OIC where Arab states constitute one-third of the OIC member states.

The Secretary-General of the League of Arab States congratulated the Secretary-General of the OIC on assuming his position, and expressed his keenness and interest to enhance cooperation with the OIC in various

fields through mutual consultations.

During the visit, the Secretary-General addressed the eighth meeting of the Islamic Advisory Group for Polio Eradication (IAG), which was hosted in Cairo. His Eminence the Grand Imam of Al-Azhar Sheikh Ahmed Al-Tayeb chaired the meeting. The Secretary-General called on the IAG to focus on assisting Afghanistan and supporting its recovery and rehabilitation so that it can assume its role in the international community.

The Secretary-General also expressed his support to the Government of Pakistan in its endeavors to fully combat polio. He also praised the efforts made by the Government of Somalia and partners to ensure that the children of Somalia receive life-saving vaccines in a timely manner to protect them from diseases. He also stressed the importance of assisting the African Sahel countries, especially those facing economic, social and health difficulties.

The Secretary-General valued the significant contribution made by the IAG in combating polio and promoting maternal and child health, noting that the team was highly appreciated for its efforts in raising awareness and knowledge of Sharia-compliant preventive measures to stop the spread of the pandemic at the early stages, and encouraging communities to receive the vaccine as an essential lifesaving tool.

The Secretary-General affirmed the OIC's determination to continue assisting countries with cases of polio in combating this disease.



**OIC Calls on its Member States to Support Farmers and Population in Rural Areas to Achieve Food Security**

## **Hissein Taha and the Turkish President Discuss the Issues of the Islamic World**

On November 24th, 2021, H.E. Mr. Recep Tayyip Erdogan, President of the Republic of Turkey, inaugurated in Istanbul the 37th Session of the OIC Standing Committee for Economic and Commercial Cooperation (COMCEC), in the presence of H.E. Mr. Hissein Brahim Taha, the OIC Secretary-General, and member states' Ministers concerned. In his speech, H.E. the President congratulated the Secretary-General on assuming his office on 17th November, 2021 and pledged his support to the new OIC Secretary-General and the activities of the OIC for the implementation of its programs and projects aimed at the benefit of the Islamic nation and humanity at large.

Speaking at the opening ceremony of the 37th Session of COMCEC, Mr. Hissein Brahim Taha, the Secretary-General of the OIC, acknowledged the constant support of President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, Chairman of COMCEC, which facilitated the realization of various programs and projects of the COMCEC and the OIC in general.

In his statement, the Secretary-General called upon all OIC member states to support the farmers and population in the rural areas to achieve food security, promote export-oriented agricultural products, and reduce unsustainable rural-to-urban migration in OIC countries. He called for further cooperation and coordination among OIC member states.

The 37th Session of COMCEC was attended by Ministers in charge of trade and econo-

my of OIC member states, as well as OIC institutions and relevant international organizations. The opening ceremony was also addressed by Dr. Muhammad Al Jasser, President of Islamic Development Bank Group (IsDB), who among other issues, reviewed the current programs of IsDB aimed at mitigating the impacts of COVID-19 Pandemic on the economic status in the Islamic world. The Session reviewed the status of implementation of various projects under the COMCEC in the areas of trade, investment, agriculture, tourism and financial development, private sector and poverty alleviation, among other issues of concern to the OIC in the economic field.

The COMCEC is the OIC Standing Committee for Economic and Commercial Cooperation, which meets annually to review OIC activities in the fields of economic and trade development.

H.E. the Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, received H.E. Mr. Hissein Brahim Taha, Secretary-General of the OIC, on Thursday November 25, 2021 in Ankara. The reception was on the sidelines of his visit to attend the activities of the 37th session of the COMCEC on November 24-25, 2021 in Istanbul, Turkey.

During the meeting, aspects of joint cooperation between the Republic of Turkey and the OIC were reviewed, as well as means of activating joint Islamic action and enhancing the spirit of solidarity. The Secretary-General of the OIC, Mr. Hissein Brahim Taha, ex-

pressed gratitude to the Republic of Turkey for its efforts in supporting the projects and programs of the Organization.

For his part, Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan congratulated Mr. Hissein Brahim Taha on assuming his new position as Secretary-General of the OIC, wishing him success in performing his duties and expressing the Republic of Turkey's constant willingness to support the efforts of the Organization. Prior to this meeting, Turkish Foreign Minister Mevlüt Çavuşoğlu invited Secretary-General Hissein Brahim Taha and his accompanying delegation to a working lunch during which the two sides reviewed aspects of joint cooperation between the Republic of Turkey and the OIC.

Following the conclusion of the opening ceremony of the COMCEC meeting, Turkish Vice President Fuat Oktay, received Mr. Hissein Brahim Taha, Secretary-General of the OIC, where they discussed issues of concern to the Islamic world and the role of the OIC in resolving conflicts and strengthening mediation efforts. They also discussed the need to intensify efforts towards greater activation of joint Islamic action and overcoming the various challenges facing Islamic countries, especially combating terrorism, Islamophobia and intolerance, and achieving comprehensive economic development, in addition to other issues of concern to the Islamic world and OIC member states.



## World Children's Day: Taha Calls for Facing COVID-19 Challenges

Secretary-General of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), H.E. Mr. Hissein Brahim Taha, called on OIC member states, relevant institutions, and international and non-governmental organizations, to intensify their efforts in tackling the challenges facing children, particularly refugees and displaced children living under occupation and armed conflict, in light of the measures taken by states to address the COVID-19 pandemic. The Secretary-General stressed that securing the rights of children is key to securing the future of societies.

This came as part of the international community's commemoration of the World Children's Day marked annually on November 20th since 1954. The objective of the commemoration was to promote interna-

tional cooperation and raise awareness of children's rights, improve their well-being around the world, and support basic priorities for the protection of children's rights.

The statement issued by the General Secretariat of the OIC stated that "Given the importance of children's welfare and well-being in building societies and future generations, particularly children in asylum and displacement, the OIC ministerial conference on social development held in Turkey in December 2019 called on member states and relevant OIC organs and institutions to integrate children protection in all assistance programs and activities provided to the refugees." It also called on the relevant authorities in the field of humanitarian work in member states to develop and promote

comprehensive policies in response to the situation of refugees, particularly children.

To implement the Council of Foreign Ministers (CFM) resolutions, the Independent Permanent Human Rights Commission (IPHRC), in coordination with the General Secretariat, reviewed the OIC Covenant on the Rights of the Child in light of international human rights instruments, in order to align it with the global challenges in the field. The General Secretariat is preparing for the open-ended meeting of the intergovernmental group of experts to discuss the revised OIC Covenant on the Rights of the Child in February 2022 at the General Secretariat headquarters, in coordination with the IPHRC.

## OIC Congratulates Azerbaijan on "Victory Day"

The Republic of Azerbaijan marked the thirtieth anniversary of its accession to the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) at a reception held at the headquarters of the OIC's General Secretariat in Jeddah on Thursday, November 11, 2021.

The former Secretary-General of the OIC, Dr. Yousef A. Al-Othaimen, had addressed the ceremony, expressing the OIC's pleasure to participate in celebrating the occasion. He asserted his deep appreciation to the permanent representative of the Republic of Azerbaijan to the OIC, Amb. Shahin Abdullayev. The former Secretary-General indicated that since it acceded to the OIC, Azerbaijan has consistently demonstrated its

strong commitment to the OIC's principles, has shown its support for its mission, and contributed to its activities.

For his part, Amb. Abdullayev said that Azerbaijan pays particular attention to its relations with the OIC, noting that these relations are among his country's priorities and are constantly developing.

It is noteworthy that the General Secretariat of the OIC has extended its warmest congratulations to the Republic of Azerbaijan on the occasion of the Victory Day, corresponding to November 8th, in commemoration of the victory of the 44-day war of liberation, and honored the memory of all the martyrs with deep reverence.

The OIC statement said that "it has been striving to resolve the conflict between Azerbaijan and Armenia in accordance with the relevant resolutions and decisions of the OIC and the UN Security Council." The Secretariat called again upon the Republic of Armenia to respect the sovereignty of the Republic of Azerbaijan and the security and sanctity of its internationally recognized territories, and to refrain from any regional claims against it.

The General Secretariat commended the efforts of the Government of Azerbaijan in post-conflict rehabilitation and reconstruction to ensure the safe and dignified return of the displaced Azerbaijanis.



## Free Trade in OIC African Member States is Expected to Grow

**Source: (Peace Gate)**

Africa stands at a turning point in its history. The continent has the opportunity to transform itself from a fragmented set of commodity-dependent economies into an integrated global power under the African Continental Free Trade Area agreement (AfCFTA). Trading under the AfCFTA began in January 2021. Out of the 55 African Union countries, 37 have ratified the AfCFTA Agreement, among which 27 are member states of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) representing half of the continent's countries. The Islamic economy is expected to make significant gains under this historic agreement.

According to the International Islamic Trade Finance Corporation (ITFC), the 27 member states of the OIC collectively constitute more than 60% of the GDP and more than 55% of total trade of African countries. The AfCFTA has the tacit potential to enhance food security, increase export volumes and industrial capacity. Its benefits could also extend across many sectors including Islamic finance and transport infrastructure.

Hani Salem Sonbol, CEO of the ITFC, told Peace Gate that the AfCFTA has the potential to stimulate a greater level of cooperation among its participants, which will benefit the global Islamic economy.

Greater intra-African cooperation is also expected to lead to opportunities for capacity

building, technology transfer, and product and process innovation that can address the challenges arising from the agreement. Sonbol added: "The 27 African member states of the OIC are likely to benefit more from the AfCFTA in the early stages of implementation, through the enhancement of current intra-regional trade.

Sub-Saharan member states will have free access to North African countries and vice versa. Other neighboring countries can also benefit from the new free trade area, particularly Arab countries that share historical, economic, social and cultural ties with Africa."

As the implementation of the agreement expands, Sonbol expects the OIC member states in Africa to strengthen their partnerships to create comparative advantages that allow them to increase intra-trade as well as with the rest of the world. All of the 57 OIC member states enjoy great opportunities of benefiting from the development of the agreement, considering the historical relations between them.

Sonbol added that these countries collectively constitute part of 19 regional economic cooperation agreements at the least, including customs unions and monetary unions across the five continents.

The main objective of the AfCFTA is to eliminate trade barriers. The most important barriers to eliminate are the tariffs on at least

97% of the tariff lines that represent 90% of intra-African trade, for a period of 5 years for developing countries, and 10 years for the least developed countries.

A recent study by the ITFC and the Statistical, Economic and Social Research and Training Centre for Islamic Countries in Ankara (SESRTC), on the impact of the AfCFTA on six OIC countries -namely, Ivory Coast, Egypt, Guinea, Mozambique, Tunisia and Uganda- has found that their total trade with other African countries could grow by 30%.

The transportation infrastructure needs to be radically improved in order for countries to benefit from the advantages of the AfCFTA. The poor intra-African transportation network is a major problem that impedes trade across the continent.

In this context, Nigeria plans to spend significant amounts of money on its railway network. The projects are set to be worth \$5 billion this year alone. One of the most important projects is the 283-kilometer railway track that will connect the country with the Republic of Niger. Work on the project has already started in February of last year after signing a contract with Portuguese construction company Mota-Engil. The railway is expected to be completed by 2023, according to the Nigerian Ministry of Transport.



## OIC General Secretariat Stresses the Importance of Protecting the Family Institution

The General Secretariat of the OIC held the meeting of the open-ended Intergovernmental Group of Experts (IGGE) to finalize the internal and financial regulations of the OIC Family Committee, at its headquarters on October 18, 2021. The 47th session of the Council of Foreign Ministers held in Niamey had called for the convening of said meeting.

The General Secretariat expressed its sincere thanks and appreciation to the Ministry of Family and Social Services of the Republic of Turkey, Chair of the Ministerial Conference on Social Development, for its invitation to convene this meeting as part of its efforts and continuous support for the General Secretariat, to follow up on the implementation of the decisions of the first session of the Ministerial Conference and the decisions of the seventh session of the Council of Foreign Ministers in the field of social development. The General Secretariat also thanked the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia for its efforts in following up on the implementation of the decisions issued by the first Ministerial Conference on the institution of marriage and family, which it hosted in 2017 in Jeddah, and also thanked the Arab Republic of Egypt for expressing its willingness to host the second session of the Ministerial Conference for Social Development. The functions and roles of the family have been defined by religions teachings and international charters and agreements, and families were considered the essential fac-

tor in achieving social security and sustainable development. Article 16 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights states that the family "is the natural and fundamental group unit of society." In an effort to strengthen international cooperation in the field of family protection and empowerment, the UN General Assembly declared 1994 the "International Year of the Family", at its 78th plenary session on December 8, 1989. In 1993, the UN General Assembly also approved the commemoration of the International Day of Families on the fifteenth of May of each year. The Economic and Social Council called on member states, the United Nations system, and relevant international and regional organizations to take into consideration the leading role of the family within their development policies. The United Nations system aims, through these initiatives, to raise awareness among governments, policy makers and the public, of the role of the family as the building block of society as stipulated in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

Despite the efforts of the international community and its recognition of the role of the family in achieving the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals, a family-specific goal has not been included among the SDGs. The OIC has paid special attention to family issues, emphasizing the importance of the family in upbringing and protection as a main source of morals, values, and religious references that define the individual's

attitudes and behaviors. Article 15 of the Organization's charter stipulates the need to strengthen, protect and develop the role of the family as the natural and fundamental unit of society.

The Council of Foreign Ministers approved the convening of a ministerial conference to discuss "preserving the institution of marriage, the family, and its values in the member states of the Organization" at its 42nd session (Kuwait 2015). The first session of the conference was held in February 2017 in Jeddah. The conference issued decisions calling for the preparation of the OIC strategy to empower the institution of marriage and the family in the Muslim world, and to form a ministerial committee to follow up on the implementation of the decisions issued by the conference and to prepare the strategy.

The General Secretariat prepared the OIC's strategy to empower the institution of marriage and family, in cooperation and coordination with the relevant organs and institutions of the OIC, and in light of the decision issued by the Family Conference. The strategy was approved by the first session of the Ministerial Conference on Social Development held in December 2019 in Istanbul. The strategy urged, among its objectives, to consider the establishment of a steering committee at the level of the OIC to support member states and monitor the progress of the implementation of the strategy.

## Message of the General Secretariat on the occasion of the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women

The General Secretariat of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) issued a press statement to mark the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women, in which it expressed its pleasure to join the international community in commemorating the occasion.

On this important international occasion, the General Secretariat appealed to all OIC member states to strengthen cooperation and joint action aimed at implementing the necessary measures to protect women. These should include enacting strict laws and taking necessary security measures to guarantee the safety of women and girls, and promoting the work of national institutions in the Muslim world that are active in this field. The goal will be to eliminate such cases in our societies, given their negative effect on the society's development and prosperity.

This occasion is of special significance because it provides an opportunity to governments, international organizations and relevant civil society institutions, to assess the progress made in the efforts to eradicate violence against women, and to outline the measures

necessary to move forward in addressing this matter with greater commitment and determination. This occasion is also an opportunity for OIC member states to renew their determination and cooperation to continue efforts to eliminate violence against women, this includes do-

mestic violence, which has been on the rise across the world because of the outbreak and spread of the COVID-19 pandemic since early 2020.

In this context, the OIC Plan of Action for the Advancement of Women (OPAAW), the Ten-Year Program of Action (POA-2025), and relevant resolutions adopted by the summit and ministerial conferences on women, provide guidelines on means of addressing the challenges facing women, including eliminating all forms of violence against them. The most recent was the eighth session of the OIC ministerial conference on women in the OIC member states, which was held in Cairo, Arab Republic of Egypt from 6 to 8 July 2021 under the theme: "Preserving the Achievements of Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment in Light of the COVID-19 Pandemic and Beyond." The session adopted important resolutions on women protection and empowerment, integrating the gender equality perspective in strategies and policies to address the COVID-19 pandemic, and promoting the economic and social empowerment of women in member states.

The session was honored by the presence of H.E. President Abdel Fattah Al-Sisi. The issues relevant to women's empowerment

and means of sustaining the gains made by member states in this field were discussed, in light of the session's theme in the field of women's empowerment. Moreover, the take-off of the Women Development Organization in OIC Member States (WDO) as one of the OIC specialized organs, will contribute effectively to studying and addressing the issue of violence against women with seriousness and commitment, and working to identify means to eliminate it in the OIC member states. On this occasion, the General Secretariat called on OIC member states that are yet to ratify the WDO statute to accelerate their ratification and accession procedures, so that the OIC can assume its expected role in promoting and empowering women and in advancing their status in the Muslim world.

The General Secretariat took this opportunity to commend the efforts of the Arab Republic of Egypt, the headquarters country of the WDO, in allocating a separate building equipped with the necessary provisions, for the organization's headquarters. The General Secretariat called on the OIC member states that have not yet ratified the statute of the WDO to expedite the completion of the ratification and accession procedures, as the WDO has started to assume a central role in strengthening the OIC in the field of women's empowerment and advancement.



## Senior Officials Meeting Preparatory to 48th Session of OIC Council of Foreign Ministers Held in Jeddah



The Organization of Islamic Cooperation's (OIC) Senior Officials Meeting (SOM) preparatory to the 48th session of the Council of Foreign Ministers, due to take place in Islamabad, the capital city of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, in March 2022, was held at the Jeddah-based headquarters of the General Secretariat. The inaugural session witnessed the handover of the chair from the Republic of Niger to the Islamic Republic of Pakistan.

The Secretary-General of the Organization, His Excellency Mr. Hissein Brahim Taha, delivered his speech, which tackled issues of concern to the Islamic world. In his speech, the OIC Secretary-General said that the Palestinian cause, the central issue for the Organization, is witnessing a number of dangerous developments that constitute a challenge before the Islamic World. He affirmed that Israel, the occupying power, has persistently defied the will of the international community with its policies that are based on settlement, killing, torture, arrests, confiscation of land, Judaization of the Holy City of Al-Quds, its ongoing aggression against defenseless Palestinian civilians, and its repeated attacks on Islamic and Christian holy sites, especially the blessed Al-Aqsa Mosque.

The Secretary-General reiterated rejection

of these illegal measures and policies, which constitute a flagrant violation of international law and United Nations resolutions, and ongoing crimes that require investigation and accountability, and entail mobilization of political will to address them firmly and responsibly.

His Excellency the Secretary-General said that the Afghan people are facing difficult humanitarian conditions and enormous political and economic challenges that have grown in severity since last August. He pointed out that the General Secretariat, along with the member states, followed up on the current situation. The Executive Committee, at a Saudi initiative, held an extraordinary meeting at the level of permanent representatives, in the few days that followed the developments in Afghanistan. The meeting affirmed its support of and solidarity with the people of Afghanistan and stressed the need to work towards providing and coordinating urgent humanitarian assistance to Afghanistan.

In the same context, an extraordinary ministerial meeting was organized at the invitation of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, the Chair of the Summit, which was hosted by the Islamic Republic of Pakistan on 19 December. This meeting was an important event that made it possible to reach a con-

sensus on the establishment of a humanitarian fund to assist the Afghan people and the appointment of a special envoy of the OIC Secretary-General to Afghanistan. It is a major step forward in implementing the organization's plan to provide humanitarian assistance to Afghanistan. The efforts of the OIC were widely welcomed by the international community, which recognizes the central role of the Organization in addressing the situation in Afghanistan.

H. E. the Secretary General said that the issue of Jammu and Kashmir is still a major concern to the General Secretariat, as the situation is still tense in light of the developments in this issue. The position of the Organization and the content of the resolutions of the Council of Foreign Ministers were conveyed directly to the Indian ambassador to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, during his meeting with the Secretary General on July 5, 2021. The rejection of the illegal measures unilaterally taken by India on August 5, 2021 to change the internationally disputed status of Indian-occupied Jammu and Kashmir was emphasized, along with the need to find a peaceful solution to the disputed region in accordance with the resolutions of the United Nations Security Council in this regard.

To follow up on the situation, the OIC Con-

## Palestine, Afghanistan, and Kashmir Issues to be Discussed in Islamabad

tact Group on Jammu and Kashmir held a ministerial-level meeting on September 23, 2021 in New York, on the sidelines of the 76th session of the United Nations General Assembly. The meeting emphasized the importance of the OIC's principled position in support of the people of Jammu and Kashmir and their right to self-determination, and the need for the international community to double its efforts to settle the issue in accordance with the relevant Security Council resolutions. The meeting called on India to respect the fundamental human rights of the people of Jammu and Kashmir and to refrain from changing the demographic status of the disputed region.

With regard to the disputed region of Nagorno-Karabakh, although the Tripartite Agreement between Azerbaijan, Armenia and the Russian Federation, concluded on November 10, 2020, has put an end to hostilities, the Republic of Azerbaijan has expressed its concern because the Republic of Armenia continues to ignore its obligations and duties as stipulated in the Tripartite Agreement. The General Secretariat has always affirmed the organization's support to resolving the conflict in accordance with the decisions and resolutions of the Summit, the CFM, and the International Security Council.

The Secretary-General said that the situation in Yemen remains a major concern to the organization, which has committed to supporting Yemen's unity, sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity, refusal to interfere in its internal affairs and the alleviation of the human suffering of its people. He stressed that the Organization has always called for a political solution to the conflict in Yemen on the basis of the three references represented in the initiative of the Gulf Cooperation Council and its executive mechanisms, the outcomes of the Yemeni National Dialogue Conference, and the resolutions of international legitimacy, especially UN Security Council Resolution No. 2216.

In this context, he pointed out that the General Secretariat has held several meetings with senior officials from international organizations and with international envoys concerned with the Yemeni crisis. He affirmed the full support of the Organization

to all efforts aimed at reaching a political solution that ensures the achievement of security, peace and stability in Yemen and the region. He also welcomed the announcement by the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, Chair of the 14th Islamic Summit, to present a mechanism to accelerate the implementation of the Riyadh Agreement between the Yemeni government and the Southern Transitional Council on November 5, 2019.

The General Secretariat monitored with concern the political developments that took place in Sudan in the past months and called on all Sudanese parties to adhere to the democratic path. It stressed that dialogue is the way to overcome differences in order to give priority to the interest of the Sudanese people and to achieve their aspirations for security, stability, development and prosperity. In this context, the General Secretariat welcomed the United Nations' announcement to facilitate the dialogue process between the Sudanese political parties with the aim of reaching an agreement to end the current crisis and establish a sustainable path to democracy and peace. With regard to Somalia, the General Secretariat, and out of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation's keenness on the security, stability and territorial integrity of the Republic of Somalia, welcomed the agreement reached at the end of the National Consultative Conference on Elections held in Mogadishu between the Federal Government of Somalia and the leaders of the federal states to hold elections according to the 17 September Agreement. The General Secretariat urged all parties to expedite the implementation of the agreement, uphold dialogue and accord, and intensify efforts to hold the elections, which will allow Somalia to channel its efforts and energies towards achieving security, stability, growth and prosperity for the Somali people.

On a different note, the Secretary General said that the organization was keen on following up on the conditions of Muslim societies in a number of countries, especially in light of the worrying developments that India and Sri Lanka have known for years, as seen in the systematic targeting of and unacceptable discrimination against members of the Muslim community. The Gen-

eral Secretariat monitored with great concern the situation of the Rohingya Muslim community in Myanmar, and has affirmed the OIC's principled and unwavering support for this oppressed people, and urged Myanmar to ensure their safety and security and to recognize their fundamental rights, including the right to full citizenship.

Developments in the situation in Myanmar called for more involvement from the international community to continue to support the various efforts aimed at achieving justice and accountability for the Rohingya and an immediate cessation of all forms of violence against them, as impunity for the genocide against the Rohingya should not be tolerated or ignored.

Therefore, the organization expressed its full support to the efforts made by the Turkish and Greek Cypriot leaders to reach a negotiated settlement, calling on the international community to encourage the two parties to do so. Meanwhile, the General Secretariat intends to continue its efforts with countries that have major Muslim communities, such as China, the United States of America and a number of European countries, as part of ongoing consultations with these countries.

The OIC also joined the international community in commemorating the tenth anniversary of UN Resolution 18/16 which was hailed as a turning point for pluralism and an important achievement for the OIC and the UN in their efforts to combat incitement to hatred, discrimination, stigmatization and violence based on religion or belief.

In the field of media efforts to address the phenomenon of terrorism, the General Secretariat, upon the mandate of the Ministers of Information and the approval of the Council of Foreign Ministers, finalized a media guide to qualify media professionals to deal with terrorist incidents and provide appropriate media coverage in the Member States, in cooperation with the Islamic World Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization ICESCO; it monitored with deep concern the development in the phenomenon of Islamophobia, which is still highlighted in the global discourse.

## OIC Welcomes International Efforts Against Terrorism Targeting its Member



In recent months, the OIC Journal monitored the position of the General Secretariat in condemning the terrorist attacks against some of its Member States. The Secretariat strongly condemned and denounced the two ballistic missile attack on Riyadh and Khamis Mushait, in Saudi Arabia, by the Houthi militia in December 2021. The missiles were intercepted and destroyed by the coalition forces supporting legitimacy in Yemen. The OIC Secretary-General, Mr Hissein Brahim Taha, has condemned the Houthi militia's continuous escalation of explosive drone attacks, targeting civilians and civilian objects in Saudi Arabia. He described the actions as criminal and a violation of international law and norms.

The General Secretariat condemned in the strongest terms the attempted Houthi strike using explosive drones on the Saudi international airport of Abha, which the coalition forces intercepted. The General Secretariat expressed its strong condemnation of the piracy and hijacking perpetrated by the Houthi militia against a civilian ship carrying the flag of the United Arab Emirates. The ship was carrying equipment for the Saudi field hospital.

Politically, the General Secretariat expressed appreciation for the statement, issued by the UN Security Council, which condemned

the attacks perpetrated by the Houthi terrorist militias against the Saudi territories and Saudi civilian facilities. The Secretary-General said that the Council's condemnation underlines the special importance its members attach to the crisis in Yemen. It also reflects an awareness of the importance of a political settlement of the crisis to contain its adverse impact resulting from the terrorist Houthi militias' rejection of calls for a cease-fire and their refusal to engage positively in political negotiations that will lead to the restoration of peace and stability in the Republic of Yemen. At the same level, the Organization welcomed the Security Council's listing of three leaders of the terrorist Houthi militia on the international sanctions list, due to their direct threat to peace, security and stability in Yemen, and their role in spilling the blood of the Yemeni people and causing a humanitarian crisis. The Organization expressed its hope that including these leaders on the terrorist list will reduce the threat of the Houthi militia and prevent supplying it with missiles, drones, and the money it uses to buy weapons to threaten the Yemeni people, the security of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, and the international navigation.

On the African level, the OIC General Secretariat strongly condemned the attack that

targeted the Malian army in the center of the Republic of Mali. It also condemned in the strongest terms the heinous terrorist attack carried out by gunmen on a bus in the village of Mopti in the center of the country, which resulted in the death and injury of a large number of civilians.

The OIC General Secretariat also condemned in the strongest terms the terrorist attack that targeted an army barracks in Sanmatenga Province in the Centre-Nord region of Burkina Faso and resulted in several deaths and injuries. It also condemned in the strongest terms the terrorist attacks on a village in Banibangou municipality and a brigade in the Tillabéri region in Western Niger, near the border with Mali. Dozens of civilians and military personnel lost their lives, and several others were either injured or missing. The General Secretariat expressed its condemnation of the two terrorist attacks carried out by three suicide assailants in the Ugandan capital Kampala, which killed three people and wounded several others.

The Secretary-General of the OIC also expressed his strong condemnation of the bloody terrorist attack that targeted a passenger bus in northwestern Nigeria, leaving at least 30 people dead and several wounded.

## OIC Delegations Observe Elections in 4 Member States



The General Secretariat of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) sent delegations to the Republics of the Gambia, Iraq, Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan, for the purpose of observing the parliamentary elections that took place in those countries over the months of October, November and December 2021.

H.E. Mr. Hissein Brahim Taha, Secretary-General of the OIC, congratulated the people of the Republic of the Gambia on the occasion of the presidential elections that was held peacefully across the country on December 4, 2021. The Secretary-General also extended his heartfelt congratulations to President Adama Barrow on his re-election.

The Secretary-General expressed his satisfaction with the overall conduct of the presidential elections, praising all parties concerned for their commitment to entrenching the democratic rule in the country.

The Secretary-General underlined the importance of continuing to cooperate with the National Electoral Commission to fulfill the will of the people as expressed by the voting results, and to resort to constitutional means to address any grievances that may arise from the poll.

The OIC General Secretariat congratulated the Iraqi government and people on the parliamentary elections, which were held

in October 2021 in a peaceful, orderly and safe atmosphere. The Secretariat expressed its appreciation of the efforts put into organizing the elections and ensuring their success, and its hopes of achieving greater stability and prosperity in the country.

The OIC Secretariat has previously sent a mission to participate in observing the parliamentary elections. The delegation visited a number of polling stations in various districts of the capital Baghdad and its suburbs and observed closely the various aspects of the electoral process.

The delegation held a meeting with the Vice President of the Independent High Electoral Commission during which various preparations and arrangements to organize and supervise the elections were reviewed. The head of the delegation conveyed the greetings of the OIC's Secretariat to the Commission and its wishes for the success of the electoral process and stability, security and progress for the Iraqi people. The mission stressed the importance that the OIC attaches to the process of observing elections in Member States based on the relevant provisions of the OIC Charter, the decisions of the summits and the Council of Foreign Ministers.

The OIC Secretariat also sent a mission to observe the presidential elections held in October 2021 in the Republic of Uzbekistan. The delegation observed the elections

in the capital Tashkent and its suburbs, and noted with satisfaction the peaceful, transparent and orderly manner of conduct.

The General Secretariat congratulated the government and people of the Republic of Uzbekistan on the success of the presidential elections, and praised the deep sense of responsibility shown by its people throughout this process.

Earlier, the OIC General Secretariat sent a delegation to monitor the parliamentary elections in the Kyrgyzstan Republic in November 2021. The mission, chaired by Ambassador Boubakar Adamou, participated in a meeting of heads of international missions to observe the elections, which discussed preparations to ensure free, fair and transparent process.

The delegation conveyed the greetings of H.E. Mr. Hissein Brahim Taha, the OIC Secretary-General, and expressed the OIC's readiness to support the commitment of the Kyrgyzstan people to the consolidation of democracy and economic and social development.

The OIC mission sent by the H.E. Mr. Hissein Brahim Taha, the OIC Secretary-General, to the Kyrgyzstan Republic to observe the parliamentary elections held on 28 November 2021, noted with satisfaction that the elections were conducted in a peaceful, transparent and orderly manner.

## Signing the Regional Mission Headquarters Agreement in Niger Enhancing the Presence of OIC in the Sahel and Lake Chad Basin



The Government of the Republic of Niger and the General Secretariat of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), represented respectively by H.E. Mr. Hassoumi Massaoudou, Minister of State in charge of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Niger, and H.E. Ambassador Boubakar Adamou on behalf of the Secretary-General of the OIC, signed a Headquarters agreement to establish the OIC Regional Mission in Niger for its Member States in the Sahel and Lake Chad Basin. The agreement was signed on December 28, 2021, in the capital Niamey.

The signing of this agreement constitutes a complimentary step to strengthen the distinguished bilateral relations between the Republic of Niger and the OIC, and represents a critical turning point in achieving the OIC's vision and aspirations for its Member States in the Sahel and Lake Chad Basin.

The regional mission is the OIC's link and practical tool to lead essential activities related to supporting the development ef-

forts of its Member States in the Sahel and Lake Chad Basin, given its various functions which include among others: representation, maintaining bilateral relations, implementing political, humanitarian, and development measures.

On the sidelines of signing the agreement, the OIC's delegation held important meetings in Niamey with the high authorities in the Republic of Niger as well as the heads of diplomatic missions of the OIC Member States from the Sahel and Lake Chad Basin. Following the signing of the agreement, His Excellency Mr. Mohamed Bazoum, President of the Republic of Niger, received the delegation of the OIC General Secretariat, which was on a business trip to Niamey. The delegation was also received successively by: H.E. Mr. Ouhoumoudou Mahamadou, the Prime Minister; H.E. Mr. Seyni Oumarou, President of the National Assembly; H.E. Mr. Hassoumi Massaoudou, Minister of State, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Cooperation and African

Integration and Nigerians Abroad; and H.E. Dr. Idi Illiassou Mainassara, Minister of Public Health, Acting Minister of Humanitarian Action and Disaster Management in the Republic of Niger.

The delegation also met with the ambassadors and consuls general of some OIC Member States of the Sahel and Lake Chad Basin, in the capital Niamey.

During these meetings, the various parties exchanged views on issues of common concern, reviewed the main challenges facing the countries of the Sahel and Lake Chad, and discussed the current and future activities of the regional mission. In addition, the OIC delegation took the opportunity to express to H.E. Mr. Mohamed Bazoum, President of the Republic of Niger, as well as to all the authorities in Niger, the heartfelt thanks and gratitude of H.E. Mr. Hissein Brahim Taha, the OIC's Secretary-General, for the Republic of Niger's continuous cooperation and support of the OIC of which it is a founding member.

## OIC Renews its Support for the Policy of Neutrality and the Establishment of Friendship among Nations

The Secretary-General of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), His Excellency Mr. Hissein Brahim Taha, addressed the International Conference on “Peace and Trust Policy - Basis of International Security, Stability and Development”, in Ashgabat, the capital of Turkmenistan. In his speech, the Secretary-General stressed the importance of values based on the policy of neutrality and its role in establishing peaceful and friendly relations between nations.

In his speech, delivered on his behalf by the Assistant Secretary-General for Economic Affairs, Dr. Ahmad Kawesa Sengendo, he extended warm felicitations to His Excellency Mr. Gurbanguly Berdimuhamedov, President of Turkmenistan, and to the government and people of Turkmenistan on the 30th anniversary of the National Independence Day. He stressed that Turkmenistan is an active member of the OIC and is committed to its ideals.

He added that the OIC is highly appreciative of Turkmenistan’s initiative to strengthen the international system through the achievement of a peaceful and trustful coexistence among the people of the world, which resulted in the adoption of the United Nations General Assembly resolution proclaiming 2021 as the International Year of Peace and Trust.

Turkmenistan’s policy of neutrality, mutual respect and interests, and its endeavor to resolve international issues through a peace-

ful dialogue is consistent with the objectives and principles of the Charter of the OIC. Turkmenistan’s vision of sustainable development based on equality, mutual interest and international cooperation is within the objectives of the OIC-2025 Program of Action. The Secretary-General recalled that the OIC Council of Foreign Ministers, in its 47th Session in Niamey, Niger, has recognized the values of the policy of neutrality and its contribution to establishing peaceful and friendly relations between nations, as well as cooperation and sustainable development. Consequently, the OIC Council of Foreign Ministers adopted a resolution entitled “The Role of the Policy of Neutrality in Maintaining and Strengthening International Peace, Security and Sustainable Development in the Region of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation and in the World”.

He stressed that the OIC supports all international and regional efforts aimed at combating international terrorism, extremism and violence, and achieving international peace and security. The Organization has consistently drawn the attention of the member states and the international community to the need to address the root causes and underlying factors of violent extremism and terrorism, if sustainable development is to be achieved.

In this regard, the Secretary-General indicated that the OIC’s Voice of Wisdom Center, is the intellectual arm of the OIC in its fight



against extremism and terrorism. The Center uses an innovative strategy through social media to deliver daily positive messages on topics of public concern. The Secretary General stressed that the international community must come together to promote pluralism, considering that the world is currently rife with conflicts and instability.

## OIC Takes Part in the “Non-Aligned Movement” Meeting

The Organization of the Islamic Cooperation (OIC) took part in the High Level Commemorative Meeting of the 60th Anniversary of the Non-Aligned Movement held in Belgrade on 11-12 October 2021. The OIC General Secretariat addressed the meeting in a statement delivered by Ambassador Ismat Jahan, Permanent Observer of the OIC to the European Union.

The speech commended the great achievements accomplished during the past sixty

years in various fields, but also warned of the increasing challenges facing the world in the areas of climate change, terrorism, violent extremism and global peace and security, which require further cooperation and solidarity. It expressed the concern of the OIC and its member states over the situation in the Middle East and the occupied Palestinian territories. The speech urged reviving the peace process to establish an independent Palestinian state on the pre-1967 borders,

with East Al-Quds as its capital. The speech also stressed the need to address challenges to peace and security, and highlighted the situation of the Rohingya in Myanmar.

The speech of the General Secretariat reiterated the determination of the OIC and its member states to contribute to the promotion of the well-being of people and to achieve a more just, equitable and secure place for all.

## Russia and the Islamic World: Cooperation and Broadening Partnership



The Secretary-General of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), His Excellency Mr. Houssein Brahim Taha, addressed the World Strategic Vision Group Conference (Russia - Islamic World: Prospects for Dialogue and Cooperation), which was held under the auspices of the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques King Salman bin Abdulaziz, Chair of the Fourteenth Islamic Summit, and in the presence of His Royal Highness Prince Khalid Al-Faisal, Advisor to the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques, Governor of Makkah Al-Mukarramah Region, and His Excellency President Rustam Minnikhanov, President of Tatarstan and Chairman of the Strategic Vision Group, in Jeddah, on November 24, 2021.

His Excellency the Secretary-General said that the meeting of the Strategic Vision Group (Russia - Islamic World) in Jeddah, confirms the spirit of cooperation between two countries of local and global influence, to assert that the relationship between countries is based on cooperation and dialogue instead of inaction and alienation, to promote goodness to combat evil, expand partnership to neutralize exclusionary voices, and encourage convergence around human commonalities to neutralize the regressive tendencies that divide humanity. The Secretary General added that the positive par-

ticipation of the OIC member states in such civilized gatherings, aims to affirm the true purposes of Islam, namely unity not division, construction not destruction, sanctifying the human spirit, and preserving human dignity.

His Excellency added: "The Russian Federation's interest in establishing relations with the Islamic world, and with the OIC and its member states, is certainly matched by a genuine desire of the Islamic member states and the Muslim communities in non-member states to continue cooperation and develop cultural and economic ties between Russia and the Islamic world." His Excellency noted that the OIC and its Secretary-General personally, look forward to contributing to the support of these relations in the various fields that serve the common interests, and to promoting dialogue, cooperation and peace among people.

Mr. Houssein Brahim Taha added that this conference is being held under the slogan "Prospects for Dialogue and Cooperation", which is in tandem with the wide fields common to both sides the Russian and Islamic sides. He stressed that in addition to issues of peace and security, including conflict resolution, combating extremism and terrorism, as well as issues of sustainable development; the Islamic world and Russia can contribute

greatly to the dialogue of civilizations, cultures and religions, in a way that enhances understanding, rapprochement and harmony among the various people of the world. He added: "The OIC has been keen to adopt clear principled positions that support just causes and peaceful conflict resolution, reject extremism and violence, condemn terrorism in its various forms and manifestations, and address feelings of hatred and Islamophobia." He expressed his appreciation for the positions of the Russian Federation in support of the Palestinian people's cause and their legitimate rights, and its relentless endeavor to strengthen its relationship with the OIC as it celebrates 15 years as an observer state in the OIC. He added that the relations between both sides witnessed a remarkable development, as they continuously exchanged high-level visits and held regular consultations to discuss views on issues of common interest and explore areas of cooperation. His Excellency the Secretary-General expressed his hope to hold the next session of political consultations as soon as possible in Jeddah, after the COVID-19 pandemic prevented the exchange of visits and meetings.

At the end of his speech, the General Secretary congratulated His Excellency Rustam Nurgaliyevich Minnikhanov, President of Tatarstan and Chairman of the Strategic Vision Group "Russia - Islamic World", on the success of this session of the Vision Group, and expressed gratitude to His Excellency for his keenness to involve the OIC annually in the Group's forums. He also praised the success of the conference for designating the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia as a partner and sponsor of this meeting under the auspices of the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques King Salman bin Abdulaziz, and in the presence of Prince Khaled Al-Faisal. He further expressed his thanks to the Saudi Ministry of Foreign Affairs, which organized the meeting.

On another occasion, the Secretary-General of the OIC, His Excellency Mr. Houssein Brahim Taha, received His Excellency Ramazan Abdulatipov, Permanent Representative of the Russian Federation to the OIC, on December 02, 2021, at the headquarters of the General Secretariat.



The Islamic World Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (ICESCO) has chosen Yaoundé, as the capital of Islamic culture for the year 2022. Yaoundé is the capital of the Republic of Cameroon, it is located at 720 m above sea level in the middle of the country, and is the second largest city after Douala.

Yaoundé was established in 1888 by German merchants who roamed the Cameroon, where the ancient city was an agricultural research station. It was also the headquarters of the Belgian forces during the First World War. After the Germans were defeated, France occupied western Cameroon and Yaoundé became the capital of French Cameroon; after the Cameroon became independent, Yaoundé remained the official capital of the country.

The city's economy relies on the cigar industry -one of the most important industries in Yaoundé- as well as dairy and glass products. Yaoundé is a regional distributor of coffee beans, cocoa, plastics and sugar cane. Yaoundé, the second largest urban city in Cameroon, is famous for its open street markets and the presence of international embassies. Initially established as a center for the ivory trade, it still produces and dis-

tributes some of the country's major exports. It is also one of the cultural centers of Cameroon; as it hosts the National Museum, the Afhemi Museum and the Benedictine Museum of Mont-Febe, all of which aim to preserve the country's traditional arts and crafts. The area of the city is about 180 square kilometers; with a population of 2,765,200 people, and a variety of tourist hotels. Yaoundé is often referred to as a heart that beats with life and fills the soul with joy. Large and small cities in the Cameroon are complemented by vast areas of mountains, rainforests, and beaches.

The terrain is as varied as the language (there are more than 230 local languages in Cameroon with some English and French speaking areas).

The diversity of wildlife in the large number of natural parks in the Republic of Cameroon provides nature lovers with plenty of opportunities to see rare and exotic creatures. Yaoundé is definitely one of the most beautiful cities in Africa.

The city was fittingly planned to be spread over seven hills, which meant that buildings are separated by vast green spaces that can be easily viewed; the scenery is lush and located on high terrain with trees, flowers and

plenty of landscapes.

In addition to its peculiar design, the city is very clean and safe and has many points of interest. Government buildings have been erected in the 1970s but appeal to culture enthusiasts. The old places look unusual to say the least due to Yaoundé's central location; it is also an ideal city for anyone to add to their tour of the country.

The rapidly expanding city of Yaoundé features an array of Art Deco, Independence Era, and 1970s government buildings in various styles. While it may be difficult to look away from the steady and action-packed traffic to enjoy the architecture, one can still feel the national pride and confident prosperity in the capital of the country.

This is the center of government and administration in the Republic of Cameroon and visitors will undoubtedly be fascinated by the staff in their official uniforms with bright African fabrics that are tailored according to the functions of each department. Yaoundé can be a useful stop to get adequate introduction before heading to the rest of the country. The city's relatively mild climate also makes it a pleasant place to start a trip from Douala.

## A Muslim Immigrant becomes a Professional Boxer to Fight Discrimination



Berlin - Philippe Znidar (DPA) – Duha Taha Baydoun, a young woman of Lebanese descent; as a boxing coach, not only does she fight in the ring, but also outside of it, for equality and against discrimination and prejudice.

Duha is 20 years old, married and four months pregnant. Her parents immigrated from Lebanon to Germany when she was a child. The young Muslim woman seems “strange” to some because her nationality, religion, and sport do not match. Others see her as a role model, as she herself says “I fight against all prejudices.”

Duha began training herself as a boxer five years ago, and she was active in sports at school, but she was shy. “I wasn’t too self-confident, I was very shy, and I never dared to say anything at school,” Duha says, adding that it was so important for her to be among the girls only when playing sports so she could feel comfortable and relaxed. With these conditions in mind, Duha searched the Internet and found the Girls Boxing club in Berlin.

Founded in 2005, this club has set the goal of supporting girls and women to live independently and courageously in their neighborhoods and communities, thus providing spaces for equal opportunity and inclusion.

The club provides regular boxing training - a sport that is still largely dominated by men. Moreover, the female coaches also go to schools, hold workshops and participate in various projects.

Duha has worked as a boxing coach for three years at the Girls Boxing club and another club, where she trains women over the age of 25, making her the youngest among them. But at the Girls Boxing Club, the focus is on teenage girls; Duha says that working in two clubs is a huge challenge, as she must train in boxing rings four times a week.

“It takes a lot of time, patience and strength, but it’s also very rewarding when you see how the children develop in a positive way,” Duha says, referring to the young girls training. Duha explains that in addition to training, there is a lot of social work in the club, including holding discussions there on the topics of preventing bullying, and self-development, for example. For a long time, Duha lacked the self-confidence that she now instills in children. Duha adds: “When I’m new somewhere, I think to myself: “How will I be received and accepted, at the university or something like that.”

Duha, who walks the streets wearing a

headscarf, says: “In the past, I was frequently exposed to hostile practices on the tram, the subway, and other public transport, whether with looks, offensive words, or loud insults.” Therefore, she likes to refer to the groups she’s coaching as self-support groups, because the experiences have formed a connection between them.

“I feel I’m in good hands here,” says Annette, one of the girl trainees. Annette has been training at Zeitevixel boxing club for the past six years and was boxing before in a mixed gym, but finds training more difficult among women, as it is more about fitness and stamina as well as teamwork - factors that are not overlooked during the formation of training units at the club. In this club Annette feels like she is in a “safe space”.

“It is important to me that no one is marginalized,” Duha concludes, explaining that she has made anti-discrimination her mission. “For me, this means that whoever comes here, they are accepted for who they are – irrespective of their skin color, nationality, or religion... All these things fade away; we must look at the human beings and accept them just the way they are.”

## Muslim Emergency Companions to Support the Muslim Community in Germany



Köln - Eurico Val-Emel (DPA) - In Germany, a child dies in a traffic accident, search for a missing person fails, and a spouse perishes in a house fire. When the role of the emergency doctor, police, or firefighter ends after a crisis or disaster, relatives are left in devastation. Families of the victims also need psychological and spiritual support in severe crises.

A few years ago, Muslim emergency escorts in Germany became available, but they remain limited in numbers. Melanie Mel of the Christian-Muslim Association (CIG) in Köln says: «There is an enormous need for social and spiritual pastoral care among the Muslim community.»

Muslim volunteers were present even after the flood disaster in the summer of 2021. A project was developed ten years ago to train Muslims as emergency escorts with the support of Islamic organizations. The project is receiving attention in Germany, where there is a desire for this type of training in many cities and regions, given the presence of more than five million Muslims in Germany. Khalil Aydemir was one of the first to receive training and has been working in this field since 2011. Aydemir says: “When I receive a call, I don’t know what awaits me. If the bereaved is a person of Turkish descent, he may not necessarily be a devout Muslim... We have to find out if the person is religious and desires religious therapy.» If the persons

affected are Muslims and desire Islamic spiritual care, the emergency escort is notified through the church’s emergency pastoral care at the scene of the accident. According to the Christian-Muslim Association in Köln, this is a good option that is irreplaceable when it comes to interfaith cooperation.

Male and female assistants require several qualifications: they must have knowledge of Islam and Islamic burial ceremonies, as well as the Quran, and the culture of the bereaved person if possible; Aydemir asserts. He believes that spiritual support should be offered only, and not provided if the person concerned shows no sign of approval. He explained that sometimes escorts also have to act as a link between Muslim relatives and the emergency services instead of the police, when, for example, reporting a person’s death.

Every year there are more applicants for courses than there are vacancies. Interested applicants come mostly from the North Rhine-Westphalia state, and the majority are men and women from Turkey, Algeria, Syria, Afghanistan or Iraq. Mel says: “We also have many applicants who came as refugees in 2015 and now wish to pay it forward.” It takes approximately 80 hours for trainees to learn how to conduct a conversation, as well as the principles of trauma and theology. They learn how emergency and police services are organized and how

they operate, and how to merge with the team.

The important factor -which is consequently the selection criterion- for admission to these courses, is language fluency. Aydemir knows that in trauma, the bereaved who are fluent in German often revert to their mother tongue. The assistants speak Arabic, Turkish, Dari and Farsi. So far, the Association has trained more than 100 assistants, but more are needed. There are a few similar projects in the states of Bavaria, Baden-Württemberg and Berlin.

Training emergency escorts has become a central task for the Association, which was founded 39 years ago and is considered the largest German organization for Christian-Muslim dialogue. The Association’s executive director, Dr. Thomas Lemmen, says: «When the Association was founded, the dominant feature of the tasks was dealing with the arrival of the new Muslim immigrant workers,» noting that it was initially a matter of caring for Muslims. Dr. Lemmen added: “Today, our tasks revolve around a dialogue that is based equally on partnership and parity. Muslims have always been an integral part of society.»

According to Lemmen’s data, the Association was barely able to keep up with the demand for lectures related to Islam, following the attacks of September 11, 2001. The increasing influx of refugees in 2015 put an enormous strain on the members of the Association. Lemmen says: “Our work is not static. We orient ourselves towards the needs of the society, which are constantly changing.”

The Association’s president, Dunya Elemenler, says that the integration of immigrants from Islamic countries is proceeding well, but the view of Islam has become increasingly negative. She added that reservations regarding Muslims are on the rise, especially among people who are not personally acquainted with any Muslims, as their first encounters of Islam are sometimes bad examples. Elemenler also says: «We often lack communication with Muslims,» adding that the 215 members of her Association are working to strengthen these ties. She stressed that providing emergency escorts to Muslims in accidents is also an expression of the society’s appreciation.



## Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) Commends the Dubai Expo Supports Riyadh's Candidacy to Host the Exhibition

The General Secretariat of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) addressed the celebration of the Organization's Honorary Day at the World Expo 2020 -Dubai, which kicked off in Dubai in the United Arab Emirates on 1 October 2021.

The delegation of the OIC General Secretariat was a guest at the World Expo on 2 November 2021. In its speech, the General Secretariat thanked His Highness Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum, Vice President and Prime Minister of the United Arab Emirates, and Ruler of Dubai; and His Highness Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed Al Nahyan the Crown Prince of Abu Dhabi and Deputy Supreme Commander of the UAE Armed Forces, for inviting the OIC to participate in the exhibition and providing it with the opportunity to highlight its mission of serving the issues of the Islamic world and reinforcing joint Islamic action.

The speech of the General Secretariat noted that the Islamic nation is facing several challenges at the present, on top of which is the challenge of knowledge, pointing to the strong involvement of the OIC member states in this technological race and their efforts in keeping pace with its rapid development. The speech added that it is heartwarming that the United Arab Emirates has placed the human element as an essential

axis for current and future development, and has accomplished development, progress and rapid achievements in all fields in the country.

This major global event is a great opportunity for the OIC member states, organs and institutions, and the whole world to exchange ideas, visions, viewpoints and expertise, and present successful experiences, thus enhancing multilateral cooperation and joint action among countries in order to achieve development.

The OIC had participated in the official opening of Dubai Expo 2020 entitled Connecting Minds - Creating the Future, which was launched by His Highness Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid, Ruler of Dubai, Vice President and Prime Minister of the United Arab Emirates, and hosted by Al Wasl Plaza, the official avenue for Dubai Expo 2020.

On the other hand, the General Secretariat of the OIC confirmed the organization's support for the request of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, chair of the Islamic Summit, to nominate the city of Riyadh to host the World Expo 2030, as announced by His Royal Highness Prince Mohammed bin Salman, Crown Prince, Deputy Prime Minister and Chairman of the Board of Directors of the Royal Commission of Riyadh City.

The General Secretariat said that Riyadh's hosting of the World Expo will be the culmination of the great efforts made to achieve the goals of Saudi Vision 2030, and a live review of its products and outputs, noting at the same time that Saudi Arabia has the potential and capabilities that enable it to host a distinctive and historical version of this global forum, considering that it is a global destination and convergence point of human cultures and civilizations. In this regard, the General Secretariat stressed that Saudi Arabia was a magnet for the world in the recent past as it has succeeded in embracing many global summits and events, both in-person and virtually.

The statement of the General Secretariat added that Riyadh's hosting of the World Expo will be an opportunity for the world to benefit from the Saudi experiences, examine its experience in qualitative shifts in all sectors, and take a close look at the next model of Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

The speech stressed that Riyadh's success supported by OIC member states will strengthen its position on the global map as the headquarters country of the OIC, an investment and economic front, and place it in the ranks of advanced countries in the fields of artificial intelligence and other fields that open the door for a bright future.



## OIC Reviews Implementation of the OIC-2025 Program of Action

The OIC General Secretariat held a meeting of the Intergovernmental Group of Experts, which discusses the draft document of the mid-term review of OIC-2025 Program of Action. The meeting was held at the Secretariat headquarters on December 27 and 28, 2021. The mid-term review of the Program of Action was titled: (Road to 2025: Gains, Challenges and Opportunities).

Dr. Ahmad Sengendo, the OIC Assistant Secretary General for Economic Affairs, delivered the speech of Secretary-General, His Excellency Mr. Hissein Brahim Taha, in which he stressed the utmost importance of having a core multidimensional development program, such as the OIC-2025 Program of Action, was evident in light of recent challenges and major crises facing the Muslim

world.

The Secretary General's speech stressed that the Program is now at a critical point, as the OIC is going through the second term of the period covered by the OIC-2025 Program of Action. Therefore, it is necessary to conduct an in-depth review of its implementation status at national levels in order to highlight the accomplishments, lessons learned, challenges encountered, and the initiatives needed to overcome these challenges.

The report submitted to the meeting indicated that significant progress has been made in implementing the OIC-2025 Program of Action in several priority areas. These include inter-Islamic trade, tourism, investment, agriculture and food security, education, health, good governance, human rights, science, technology and innova-

tion, women's empowerment, information and communication technology and others.

The OIC's Program of Action, adopted by the 13th Session of the Islamic Summit held in Istanbul in 2016, is a continuation of the Ten-year Program of Action launched by the Third Extraordinary Session of the Islamic Summit held in Makkah in December 2005. Experts and delegates of the member states reviewed the various files addressed by the OIC, such as political affairs, the question of Palestine, the anti-poverty efforts, Islamophobia, extremism, terrorism, violent and sectarian extremism, economic and investment topics, free trade, education, health, science and technology, women's empowerment, the maintenance of the family institution, minorities, and scientific research.

## OIC Addresses the Middle East Green Initiative Summit

The OIC General Secretariat praised the Middle East Green Initiative announced by His Royal Highness Prince Mohammed bin Salman, Crown Prince, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Defense of Saudi Arabia; as well as the Saudi Green Initiative, which aims at contributing to the efforts of combating climate change by increasing vegetation, reducing carbon emissions, pollution control, land degradation and preserving wildlife in the Middle East.

The General Secretariat's speech noted that the countries covered by the Initiative are all member states of the OIC and other international and regional organizations. As a result, the Initiative received considerable support from international organizations, given that it is in the interest of member states of these organizations, which place environmental

and sustainable development issues at the forefront of their agenda and interests.

The Secretariat commended the important and pioneering role of Saudi Arabia, led by King Salman bin Abdul Aziz and Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, for their appreciated endeavors to unite and strengthen international efforts to address the various challenges facing the world, particularly in the field of environment and climate.

The speech stressed that these outstanding initiatives are in line with the objectives of the Charter of the Organization, which calls for the protection and strengthening of all aspects related to the environment for the benefit of current and future generations, and for making all efforts to achieve sustainable and comprehensive human development and economic well-being of the

member states. Furthermore, the initiatives strengthen the decisions of the Islamic Summit and the Council of Foreign Ministers, which stress the need to address the economic and social challenges associated with the environmental situation in the region and the world, and increase the use of clean energy and number of nature reserves as a means of contributing to achieving sustainable development in the region and enhancing the population's quality of life.

On the other hand, this initiative is in line with the OIC's Ten-year Program of Action 2015-2025, which calls on member states to intensify their efforts to address environmental degradation and climate change and follow a multidimensional approach that includes recruiting relevant institutions and strengthening cooperation among them.

## OIC Follows up on the Situation in Somalia

The international community welcomed the agreement of the National Consultative Conference among Somali leaders on specific timetables for holding elections in the country. In its outputs, the consultative conference agreed to conduct free and transparent elections for the House of Representatives by February 25, 2022. The elections will be a crucial and necessary step towards lasting peace in Somalia through peaceful interaction and dialogue.

The General Secretariat of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) followed with concern the recent political developments in the Republic of Somalia. It urged all parties in Somalia to exercise restraint, de-escalate the situation, and reduce tension.

The General Secretariat also called on all political parties in Somalia to display wisdom, opt for dialogue, and ensure the implementation of the agreements of 17/9/2020 and 27/5/2021, which form the basis for completing the electoral process and promoting development in the country.

The African Union has urged Somali politicians to exercise restraint and promote interactive political dialogue for political stability, stressing that it stands ready to increase its support for all efforts that will lead to peace, progress and prosperity for Somalia.

The United Nations Assistance Mission in Somalia welcomed the consensus reached by political leaders in Somalia, with the aim of expediting the electoral process. The mission urged, in a tweet on Twitter, giving priority now to implementing the decisions



reached in order to achieve a credible and widely acceptable outcome, by the new deadline of 25 February.

Following the National Consultative Council meeting, the United Nations encouraged Somalia's political leaders to move in the spirit of cooperation, avoid provocations that risk erupting new tensions or conflict, and remain focused on delivering a credible and speedy electoral process for the benefit of all Somalis.

The country had witnessed tensions and international partners called on Somalia's leaders to put the country's interest first, de-escalate political tensions, and refrain from provocations "that would undermine peace and stability."

The International partners expressed grave

concern over the current situation and political developments in the country. They also expressed growing concern over procedural irregularities and delays in the Somali electoral process.

The International partners stressed the need to implement the agreements of September 17, 2020 and May 27, 2021 – being the basis for the elections. According to the United Nations, the international partners are the African Union Mission in Somalia, Belgium, Canada, Egypt, the European Union, Finland, Germany, the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD), Italy, Japan, Kenya, the Netherlands, Norway, Sudan, Uganda United Kingdom, the United States and the United Nations.

## General Secretariat Welcomes the Launch of UN-facilitated Dialogue in Sudan

The General Secretariat of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) welcomed the announcement by the UN that it stands ready to facilitate dialogue between all political actors in the Sudan to resolve the current crisis and build sustainable peace and democracy in the country.

The General Secretariat affirmed its support for all regional and international efforts in support of dialogue and reconciliation between the Sudanese parties to prioritize national interests and meet their people's aspiration for peace, democracy, security and development. The OIC is committed

to channeling its full potential to facilitate dialogue in the current political transitional phase, in line with the resolutions of the Islamic Summit and the Council of Foreign Ministers (CFM). The Secretary-General, H.E. Mr. Houssein Ibrahim Taha, said the OIC stands with the Sudan to ensure security, stability, national unity, and prosperity for its people. In the same vein, the organization had welcomed the political agreement that was signed on November 21, 2021 between the President of the Sovereign Council, Lieutenant-General Abdel Fattah Burhan and Prime Minister Dr. Abdullah Hamdok, thanks to

the national initiative led by Sudanese parties and the regional and international efforts in support of this important step that would contribute to defusing the crisis in Sudan and leads to a comprehensive and sustainable solution to all issues of the transitional period.

Notably, the organization had been supportive of the Sudan and the transitional government since its formation, and witnessed the signing of the Political Declaration on August 17, 2019.



## OIC Observatory: November Witnesses Increase in “Islamophobia”

The report of the Islamophobia Observatory of the OIC’s General Secretariat reviewed the phenomenon of Islamophobia through November and December 2021. The Observatory’s report indicated that last November witnessed a record rise of the phenomenon since December 2020. Although Islamophobia declined during several months in the last monitoring period, especially in February 2020 and July 2021, reaching its lowest over the past two years; the period from August 2021 to November, however, witnessed a steady rise of the phenomenon where it reached its highest point in 2020 and 2021.

According to the Observatory’s report, it is evident that Islamophobia manifested the most in Europe over the mentioned period; Asia came in second place, followed by North America, Australia and Latin America which came last. No incidents were recorded in Africa. The report stated that the United Kingdom and the USA experienced the most abuses and violations in this context, over the mentioned periods of time.

The Observatory showed that discrimination was evident in Asia over the same time period, Europe came second, followed by North America. The negative government policies appeared more in the European countries, and the report documented that the physical and verbal assaults were the highest in the Europe and North American countries when compared to other continents.

While monitoring the violations, the report indicated that the physical and verbal as-

saults amounted to 11% of the total classification of violations documented in the report to assess the growth or decline of the phenomenon. Hate speech accounted for 9%, online hate speech for 7%, far-right campaigns 20%, attacks on mosques and places of worship 11%, and the percentage of attacks related to Hijab-wearing women reached 4%.

The highest rate of these attacks and violations combined was in Britain, at 19%, and the United States of America, France and India came in second place, with 18% each, followed by Canada at 7%, Germany at 6%, Israel and Sri Lanka each at 4%. In Australia and New Zealand, the rate was only 2%.

With regard to the positive developments related to the phenomenon of Islamophobia, the European countries came first, despite being at the fore of negative aspects. North America and some Asian countries came in third place, followed by Australia.

The efforts exerted to confront the growth of the far-right movement accounted for 29% of all the positive efforts exerted through November and up to December 21st. Constructive public policies aiming at undermining the phenomenon of Islamophobia reached 23%, the growth of the positive view of mosques reached 6%, the growth of the positive view of Hijab and other positive manifestations of Islamophobia reached only 2%.

On the other hand, the General Secretariat of the OIC condemned the “systematic per-

secution and violence” against the Muslim community in Assam, India”, which resulted in the killing of three Muslims in the capital Dispur, in northeastern India, during protests against the displacement of hundreds of Muslim families.

The OIC’s General Secretariat said that the reports circulated by the media and social networks are disgraceful, and call for a responsible stance on the part of the government and officials in the Republic of India.

The OIC’s General Secretariat called on the Indian government to protect the Muslim minority and respect all of their religious and social freedoms, noting that establishing a dialogue is the best way within the framework of national sovereignty.

At another level, the General Secretariat welcomed the US House of Representatives’ adoption of the Combating International Islamophobia Act, on December 14, 2021, and considered it an important step to counter the phenomenon of Islamophobia and incitement to hatred, intolerance, discrimination, stigmatization and violence based on religion or belief. The General Secretariat commended the decision to establish an office in the US Department of State and appoint a special envoy to monitor and combat Islamophobia worldwide, expressing its aspiration to cooperate with this envoy.

The General Secretariat renewed its call to the international community to unite efforts to promote understanding, peaceful coexistence and harmony among all faiths.

## Report Predicts Economic Recovery in Brunei



In a report by the Star Newspaper, Brunei's economy should have rebounded moderately by 2.1% in 2021, according to the report of the 2020 annual consultation on Brunei Darussalam published by the ASEAN+3 Macroeconomic Research Office (AMRO).

The report was prepared based on AMRO's virtual annual advisory visit to Brunei, and the data and information available until September 10, 2021. Regarding recent developments and forecasts, AMRO said Brunei's economy grew by 1.1% in 2020, after expanding by 3.9% in 2019. The slowdown was attributed to lower oil and gas production, which was offset to some extent by a boom in downstream manufacturing activities.

The decline in the oil and gas sector in 2020 reflected the drop in global oil prices and demand, and transformation activities in offshore facilities for maintenance purposes. In 2021, growth should have moderately re-

bounded by 2.1%, after a slower, but still positive, growth in 2020 amid the global economic slowdown due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Backed by higher oil revenues, bolstering of containment measures and expansion of support measures should help mitigate the economic impact of the current wave of coronavirus infections. The country also needs to accelerate economic diversification to enhance its economic resilience.

The report added that the total balance of payments recorded a deficit of 3.7% of the GDP in 2020, largely due to capital outflows in the financial account and the narrowing of the current account surplus, which led to a decline in the global GDP. The country's fiscal deficit also increased sharply to 20.1% of the GDP in 2020 from 5.6% in 2019, mainly due to the significant decline in oil and gas revenues.

Looking to future prospects, Brunei's ex-

ternal position and fiscal balance should improve significantly, benefiting from the rising global oil prices amid better global economic prospects. RBA staff expected a significant improvement in the current account and fiscal balance to 7.2% of the GDP and -7.0% of the GDP in 2021.

Regarding risks and vulnerabilities, the RBA said that the main downside risks facing the economy still revolve around the oil and gas sector.

It is noteworthy that the state's heavy dependence on the sector makes it highly vulnerable to domestic and external shocks in this sector. Domestic risks include disruptions to oil and gas production in mature fields, and the uncertain commercial viability of new field explorations in a low oil price environment. In terms of external factors, the decline in prices and global demand for oil will have negative effects on the economic outlook.



## Tunisia's Potters Struggle to Withstand Recession

Tunis - Tariq Al-Qizani (DPA) - Wadie dusts off the colorful utensils displayed in front of his shop and is careful not to knock them over, while passers-by are satisfied with taking quick glances without taking the trouble of stopping to examine his exhibits. As the early hours of the day pass quietly in the middle of the alley, Wadie is still waiting for the opportunity to make his first sale.

The waiting period may extend until the evening, forcing the seller – in his 40s - to return empty-handed to his home, and it is not the first time that Wadie has failed to sell anything all day. "We are not in a good position," says Wadie. "But we are working hard and patiently to weather the storm." "Tourists hardly come to the market," Wadie grumbles. "We have offered discounts that are below the actual cost so that we can sell our products to local customers, but we are still facing a recession."

Like most countries in the world, Tunisian tourism received a heavy blow with the outbreak of the Coronavirus pandemic, as the number of tourists dropped by no less than 70% in 2020 compared to the previous year, while revenues fell by more than 64%

in the same period. Wadie, who inherited the shop from his father since 2018, faces a double challenge; he must maintain a profession inherited by the family and avoid closing the shop for the first time since it opened in 1969. The shop has earned its reputation among the souks of the old city of Tunis as the only one offering handmade earthenware.

Pottery is a very popular and ancient craft in Tunisia and has been greatly influenced by incoming cultures, including the ceramics industry in ancient Baghdad, Egypt during the time of the Fatimid state, Turkey, Sicily, Morocco and Andalusia. Andalusians who migrated from Spain to Tunisia since the sixteenth century are known for their influence on this industry in the northern cities, most notably Nabeul, nicknamed the Pottery Capital. The capital, Tunis, organizes an annual international forum for artistic ceramics in the house – or *Zawiya* - of the famous Tunisian potter Qasim Jelizi, who died in 1469. According to historians' accounts, Qasim Jelizi was a righteous man known as "Sidi Qasim" and he made by himself the glaze squares that still adorn the inner and outer

walls of the *Zawiya*. Therefore, he bore the nickname *Al-Jelizi*, as a descendent of Andalusia, the hometown of major glaze makers. Narratives tell us about the great influence that Jelizi had on the lives of his contemporaries, as well as being a prominent ceramics artist in the heart of Tunis. However, despite the great legacy of this craft, the number of pottery workshops run by craftsmen is very small in the old city.

In general, the craftsmen divide the manufacturing of ceramic pots and pottery into two types. The first is based on pottery with a circular wheel, which is the specialty of men, and the second is wrought pottery, which women do, and it is a widespread activity in rural areas to make products for domestic use mainly.

Two other workers help Wadie in the workshop near the shop; they specialize in the handmade ceramic pots. Because of the recession and the outbreak of the Coronavirus pandemic, which disrupted the massive influx of foreign tourists to the country for nearly two years, they were forced to accept a reduction in their salaries to face the crisis.



## Domestic Air Travel in Malaysia Recovers Despite Coronavirus

# AVIATION

From The Edge Markets: Although the global aviation industry is still struggling to recover from the devastating impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, Malaysia's civil aviation industry regulator approved the launch of two new low-fare airlines, and it is expected to launch MYAirline Sdn Bhd (MYAirline), a newly established Ultra Low-Cost Carrier (ULCC), according to sources.

A report published on the Malaysian Aviation Commission (Mavcom) website by theedgemarkets.com showed that the new ULCC, previously registered as Z9 Elite Sdn Bhd, was granted conditional approval for an air service license by the commission on December 22, 2021. This license is valid for 12 months from January 1 to December 31, 2022. It allows the holder of this license to perform many services including passenger transport and scheduled freight services. MYAirLine is the second Malaysian airline to be granted the license at the end of 2021 by the relevant committee, which was established in 2016 to act as an independent economic regulator of the civil aviation industry in Malaysia.

In this context, the registration of the new MYAirLine with the Malaysian Companies Commission revealed that it owns two million shares at a price of one million Malay-

sian ringgits per share, with a value of 2 million Malaysian ringgits in the paid-up capital. The Trillion Cove website also showed that Goh, CEO and director of the company in question, has an extensive background in auditing and corporate finance of this type, and that Goh is an experienced entrepre-

*Air passenger traffic in Malaysia in 2021 saw a recovery of 30% to 45% of 2019 volume, and SKS Airways, wholly owned by Johor-based SKS Group, aims to launch its first flight from Subang to Bangor in 2022. The company now operates a fleet of DH Twin Otter turboprops.*

neur who has founded and built companies in e-commerce, online business, electronic tickets, fintech, retail and tourism spaces. Specialized sources added "A new airline starting from scratch means that it has a new balance sheet that is not affected by the

pandemic." Raymond Yap, aviation analyst at CGS-CIMB Research, wrote that a new ULCC is currently in the process of obtaining regulatory approval for its establishment in Malaysia, after the latter signed deals to lease two Airbus A320 aircraft at relatively cheap rental rates. A320s also make up the majority or 168 of AirAsia's current fleet of 210 civilian aircraft, based on its annual report published in 2020.

Air passenger traffic in Malaysia in 2021 saw a recovery of 30% to 45% of 2019 volume, and SKS Airways, wholly owned by Johor-based SKS Group, aims to launch its first flight from Subang to Bangor on January 25, 2022. The company now operates a fleet of DH Twin Otter turboprops.

According to its website, SKS Airways focuses on short-haul domestic flights to island resorts in Malaysia and coastal resorts from major cities on Peninsular Malaysia.

Mavcom predicted the best possible scenario for total air passenger traffic for 2022, which ranges between 32.6 million and 49 million passengers, which means a recovery of 30% to 45% of the total air passenger traffic for 2019 of 109.2 million passengers. Air passenger traffic in 2021 was estimated at a total of 6.9 million to 7.8 million passengers.

## Nigeria: “Fadama” - An Agricultural Project that has Become a National Brand



From the World Bank - CHAKIB JENANE and ADETUNJI A. OREDIPE:

In Hausa, “fadama” means irrigable lowland, usually the low-lying plains that overlay shallow aquifers that straddle Nigeria’s major river system.

FADAMA I, which started in 1992, was a pilot agricultural project, designed to offer basic irrigation and other support to farmers in selected states.

In 2003, FADAMA II introduced a groundbreaking Community-Driven Development model and helped institutionalize local stakeholder engagement in community decision making.

In FADAMA III, the project expanded geographically and became a well-known, national brand of local agricultural development.

The FADAMA project series ended in 2019. Before it, most rural projects in Nigeria were managed centrally, with decisions made at higher levels of government.

FADAMA grew from seven states to all 36 and Nigeria’s Federal Capital Territory, establishing itself as a key instrument to be used to stimulate agricultural growth and reduce rural poverty.

Nigeria’s experience with the FADAMA Project Series created a large repository of knowledge on the challenges of delivering local development. From the outset, it recognized the importance of strengthening smallholders’ organizations to empower them to administer shared assets and other resources, facilitate project activities, and improve their bargaining power. Group for-

mation was the foundation of the design, with various users—crop farmers, pastoralists, fishermen and women, and on- and off-farm entrepreneurs—sensitized to the advantages of doing business as a group.

Quotas were introduced to include other segments of the community, such as women and youth, who were not traditionally involved in decision-making.

The community groups, called FADAMA User Groups (FUGs), were the organizational unit. Based on economic interests, they were the beneficiaries’ closest representatives. Each FUG was composed of 20 members, including at least five farmers, five women, and five youth. Each member took part in one subcommittee to strengthen their involvement and avoid elite capture. User groups were bundled together with other groups nearby into broader FADAMA Community Associations (FCAs).

The FCAs were, in essence, a coalition within a wider regional area. They were structured to share knowledge systematically, to identify the most important subprojects for the community at large, and to devise a coordinated approach to activities, especially funding requests. They oversaw collective bargaining and were responsible for its final preparation and presentation. Operating through these, members could agree how to use common resources to their mutual advantage.

The process was moderated by professional facilitators charged with helping individual beneficiaries, FCAs and their constituent FUGs to reach their goals. Financial and

technical advisors helped the groups. This training proved an integral part of the success of the FADAMA Project.

The facilitators helped the user groups craft more robust plans and the community associations identify their priorities (through participatory planning). They underwent social mobilization, group formation, sensitization, and training on inclusive decision-making and local development planning. They also helped create partnerships between community organizations, service providers, and local governments.

For the sustainability of the model, forming the groups involved different resource user groups learning to respect each other’s rights and consider the impact their decisions had on others.

Institutional building received a boost under the FADAMA project series. About 9,239 user groups were created in FADAMA I. These quickly recognized the power of association and mutual support, particularly in shaping decisions at the local level and increasing farmers’ control of irrigation management. In FADAMA II, about 12,570 user groups and 1,470 community associations were created across 12 states. In FADAMA III, about 64,347 user groups and 5,407 community associations were created and the FADAMA Users Equity Fund (FUEF), was introduced. FUEF is a revolving fund in which beneficiaries can hold back and save at least 10% of the replacement value of their common assets annually.



# New Electronic Qur'an

## to Help Blind and Visually Impaired at Makkah's Grand Mosque

From Arab News: An electronic Qur'an is being introduced at Makkah's Grand Mosque to help the blind and visually impaired.

Advanced braille-based technology is being used to create the Haramain electronic Qur'an, allowing blind and visually impaired visitors and pilgrims to read and access the verses of the Holy Qur'an more easily.

Ghazi Al-Thubyani, from the General Presidency for the Affairs of the Two Holy Mosques, said special shelves were being prepared for the electronic braille devices that had been designed for the visually impaired. The device, which is nearly six inches long and four inches wide, means users can move smoothly between pages using high-quality braille cells.

Each cell can accommodate six dotted points, as well as 10 digital keys that allow the users to enter the page number for swift navigation, as well as rotation buttons. They can also scroll the lines on each side of the texts in braille".

Al-Thubyani said "This service will be provided very soon. We are nearly finished with preparing shelves for these devices to be at the reach of the sightless worshippers who visit the holy mosque."

He added that the Grand Mosque offered paper copies of the Qur'an in Braille in addition to the new devices. Each Mus'haf (Qur'an copy) consists of six volumes. We also have booklets in braille tailored for blind

children to help them learn about monotheism and the basics of Islam."

Blind and visually impaired Muslims face challenges when reading the Qur'an copies available in Braille, as they must have up to six paper volumes to read the 600-page Qur'an. As part of its plans to digitalize the services provided, the Presidency is making every effort to facilitate people's experience when visiting the Two Holy Mosques.

Al-Thubyani stated that the first phase of the project, which lasted about 10 months, focused on the Holy Qur'an, and there will be another phase in which elucidations and explanations of the Holy Qur'an will be added using the same technology. He added that the presidency was keen to utilize technology in all its services in the Two Holy Mosques, and that their plans are in line with the Saudi Vision 2030.

The project began when a meeting at the presidency concluded that the help of inventors should be sought to come up with a device that could spare the exertions and time of the blind and visually impaired when they were reading paper copies of the Qur'an in braille.

Mishaal Al-Harasani, who led the team that created the new device, described the invention as an electronic board consisting of 28 characters, each character having six Braille letters, and the board page contained 28 rows.

Al-Harasani added in previous statements that: "The visually impaired can read the electronic Qur'an easily and navigate through the pages the same way that the entire Qur'an is recorded on the board." He explained how the digital Qur'an or Mus'haf would facilitate the process of reading of the Qur'an for the visually impaired, compared to the regular version of the Qur'an in Braille. "The visually impaired read the Qur'an in Braille in six large volumes which makes it difficult for them to reach the page, section or surah. It is also difficult to carry and store due to the size."

Al-Harasani realized the necessity of designing the digital Qur'an when he visited the King Fahd Complex for the Printing of the Holy Qur'an in Medina to participate in a Qur'an teaching seminar for people with special needs.

He said that with the help of a team working under his supervision, research was conducted on Quran recitation for people with special needs, especially for the visually impaired. From there, the idea of creating a digital Mus'haf for the visually impaired came to be. Al- Al-Harasani, whose previous inventions for the visually challenged included a mobile phone, currency and a plane passenger seat, said that part of the team he worked with were visually impaired individuals.



# International Financing

## for Inclusive Development and Human Capital in Mozambique

From the World Bank website:

The World Bank approved a \$100 million grant from the International Development Association (IDA) in support of the Investing in Inclusive Human Capital Development Project, which aims to improve inclusive access to effective basic social services for the most vulnerable populations in Cabo Delgado, Nampula, and Niassa in Northern Mozambique.

"This is an important undertaking by the government, which we are wholeheartedly supporting given the situation of the population in the project's target areas," noted Idah Z. Pswarayi-Riddihough, World Bank Country Director for Mozambique, Madagascar, Comoros, Mauritius, and Seychelles. "The overall goal is to educate, empower and enable current and future generations in vulnerable settings to accelerate inclusive growth, reduce extreme poverty, and mitigate the risks of conflict."

The project will target 32 districts across the provinces, accounting for more than 93 percent of all internally displaced persons (IDPs) in the north of the country, which are at risk of conflict and the most exposed to climate shocks.

"This operation proposes a decentralized multi-sectoral approach with high-impact

interventions in education, health, and social protection for local and vulnerable communities. It will strengthen institutions and systems for human capital development that have been damaged or destroyed and support the transition from emergency response to restoration," said Humberto Cossa, Senior Health Specialist, and the project's task team leader.

With a focus on expanding inclusive access to education, the project will invest in schools and health services with the goal of improving their accountability and quality by instituting scorecards and expanding the existing Direct Budget Support to School (Apoio Directo as Escolas).

"The project will ensure that the children of IDPs are enrolled and retained in schools and invest in life skills through vocational training. Support at the primary education level will focus on girls, given existing gender gaps in both educational outcomes and opportunities," added Lucia Nhampossa, World Bank Education Specialist, and the project's co-task team leader.

In addition to expanding productive social protection interventions for IDPs and host communities, the project will provide cash transfers to vulnerable populations to help mitigate the impact of shocks, build resili-

ence through increased food security, and support diversified livelihoods income generation activities.

This project will contribute to the achievement of government's strategies to build resilience in conflict-stricken areas, as well as its Five-Year Program 2020-2024. This operation is aligned with the World Bank Group Country Partnership Framework (CPF) for Mozambique FY17-21, especially on its focus on human capital development, as well as the need to support Mozambique's recovery from the recent cyclones and conflict.

The World Bank's International Development Association (IDA), established in 1960, helps the world's poorest countries by providing grants and low to zero-interest loans for projects and programs that boost economic growth, reduce poverty, and improve poor people's lives. IDA is one of the largest sources of assistance for the world's 74 poorest countries, 39 of which are in Africa. Resources from IDA bring positive change to the 1.3 billion people who live in IDA countries. Since 1960, IDA has provided \$458 billion to 114 countries. Annual commitments have averaged about \$29 billion over the last three years (FY19-FY21), with about 70% going to Africa.

## Hissein Brahim Taha Presides over the Second Meeting of IIFA Bureau



The Secretary-General of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), H.E. Mr. Hissein Brahim Taha, on 30 December 2021 presided over the Second Meeting of the Bureau of the International Islamic Fiqh Academy (IIFA), held via videoconference, along with H.E. Sheikh Dr. Salih bin Abdullah al-Humaid, Royal Cabinet Advisor, Member of the Senior Scholars Council and Imam and Preacher of the Grand Mosque of Makkah, the IIFA Secretary-General Dr Kou-

toub Moustapha Sano, and members of the Academy's Bureau.

He described the role being played by IIFA within the OIC, the collective mouthpiece of the wider Muslim community, as central in serving Islam and Muslims, commending as highly important the efforts and work of the Academy in promoting Islam's pristine values and principles of tolerance and moderation in the face of the fast-paced challenges of today's world.

The OIC Secretary-General expressed hope for a successful outcome of IIFA meeting, stressing that he would spare no effort in supporting the Academy and its intellectual and Islamic law-related projects. To this end, he called on the Member States to support the Academy for its invaluable role, within the OIC system, in promoting political and cultural synergy among the Muslim peoples and Muslim nations.

## OIC Secretary-General: Protection of Human Rights is one of my Major Priorities

The OIC Independent Permanent Human Rights Commission (IPHRC) held its eighteenth regular session at the OIC General Secretariat on 23 November 2021. This IPHRCH meeting is the first to be held in-person since the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic.

There, participants heard the statement of the OIC Secretary-General, Hissein Brahim Taha, which was delivered on his behalf by Dr. Mahamat Adoum Koulbou, Director General of the Secretary-General's cabinet. The Secretary-General declared that protection of human rights within and outside the OIC would remain one of his major priorities.

In his statement, the Secretary-General also observed that the COVID-19 pandemic has affected the situation of human rights, particularly the poor and the most vulnerable,



just as it has heightened economic and social inequalities.

The Chairman of the Independent Permanent Human Rights Commission (IPHRC), Dr. Saeed Al-Ghufli, delivered a statement in which he congratulated Secretary-General Hissein Brahim Taha for his unanimous elec-

tion. He emphasized that the election is a reflection of the member states' confidence, and expressed his optimism that the new Secretary-General will be a supporter of the IPHRC, and gave the assurance that the IPHRC will continue its cooperation with the OIC on human rights issues.



## Islamic Broadcasting Union (IBU) Holds “Virtual” General Assembly Meeting

The Islamic Broadcasting Union (IBU) held a virtual meeting of the General Assembly of the Union, on Tuesday, November 16, 2021. The meeting was attended by His Excellency Dr. Majid bin Abdullah Al-Qasabi, the Acting Minister of Media in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, the Chairman of the Executive Council and the General Assembly of the IBU, and their Excellencies the Ministers and Members of the IBU General Assembly, in addition to His Excellency the Director General of the Union, Dr. Amr El-Leithi.

The statement of the General Secretariat of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation gave a special welcome to their Excellencies, members of the Executive Council of the IBU and members of the IBU General Assembly at the meeting, which was held in order to discuss ways to support the Union and develop its work in light of the current global and health challenges, the vision and perspective of the new Director General of the Union, and the future development plan to advance the work and activities of the Union, especially in light of the great challenges facing the Islamic media in light of the spread of extremism and terrorism, and the rapid pace of events and multimedia.

The statement indicated that the meeting provided an opportunity for the General

Secretariat to express its sincere gratitude and appreciation to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia for embracing and supporting the IBU - an important media institution that contributes to strengthening joint Islamic solidarity in various fields of radio and television broadcasting, and supporting the Union to keep pace with developments in regional and international media.

The IBU meeting is part of the institutional reform of the Union, especially after the selection of a new Director General, Dr. Amr El-Leithi from the Arab Republic of Egypt, and the commencement of his work.

The institutional and structural reform carried out by the General Secretariat of the Organization and a number of other affiliated institutions, was previously voiced by the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques King Salman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud during his speech at the 14th Session of the Islamic Summit, which was held in Makkah Al-Mukarramah on 26 Ramadan 1440 AH (May 31, 2019). He called for developing the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, and reforming its organs, to be able to deal with the various challenges facing the Islamic world.

This call by the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques is very significant. The Kingdom

of Saudi Arabia, as the headquarters for the General Secretariat of the OIC, the IBU, and other institutions, and given its pioneering role in the Islamic world, remains always keen to look after the affairs of the organization and its institutions, and to provide all aspects of support that would enable it to perform its tasks in order to strengthen Islamic solidarity and advocate for common Islamic causes, with the continuous follow-up by the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques, and his trusted Crown Prince, His Royal Highness, Prince Muhammad bin Salman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud.

Media development, the reliance on social networks to spread reliable news, penetration of these platforms with rumors and misjudgments, and exploiting them to promote extremism and terrorism, all of this imposed on the Islamic world challenges and responsibilities to stand united and to implement media projects that keep pace with those changes, and to prepare a media discourse to spread moderation and refute the allegations of extremists.

The IBU meeting discussed the rationale for the development plan and all other issues on the meeting's agenda, and produced fruitful decisions that benefit the Union's work.

## ICESCO Program for Improvement of Water and Sanitation in Ugandan Schools

The Bugiri District in East Uganda saw the launch of the ICESCO Program for the Improvement of Water, Sanitation and Hygiene Services in rural Ugandan schools, a program implemented in cooperation with the Ugandan National Commission for UNESCO and ICESCO and several civil society institutions. The first phase of the Program benefits four ICESCO Member States, namely Mali, Morocco, Uganda, and Senegal, and aims to improve water and sanitation services in 1000 rural schools.

ICESCO Sector of Science and Technology took part, via videoconferencing, in the launch ceremony, held face-to-face on Tuesday, 11 January 2022, at the District City Hall, in the presence of the Secretary-General of the Ugandan National Commission for UNESCO and ICESCO, several City Hall officials, and representatives of the Islamic University of Uganda and the Conservation Efforts for Community Development (CE-COD).

In her address at the ceremony, Ms. Rosie

Agoi, Secretary-General of the Ugandan National Commission for UNESCO and ICESCO, expressed her thanks and gratitude to ICESCO for implementing such a program and choosing Ugandan schools to benefit from its outstanding services.

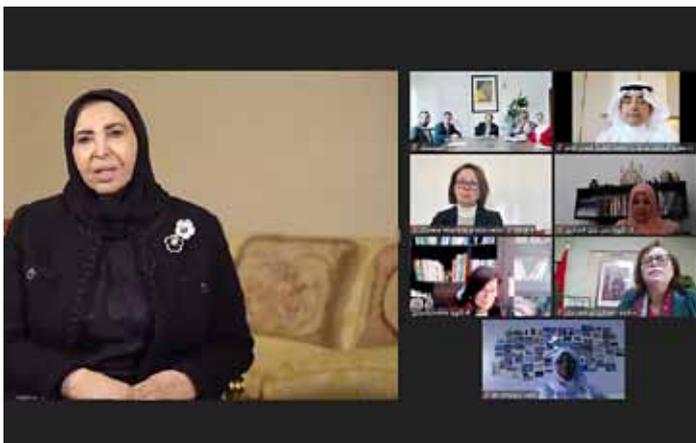
Ms. Agoi added that the Program is in line with the Ugandan Government's priorities to improve the quality of education and provide better learning environments for students in rural areas.

For his part, the Head of the Bugiri District thanked ICESCO and its national partners for choosing his district to benefit from the first phase of the Program, stressing that Bugiri will ensure continuous maintenance of the school facilities the Program will pro-



vide to guarantee the project's success.

Dr. Foued El Ayni, Expert at ICESCO's Science and Technology Sector, commended the fruitful partnership between ICESCO and the Ugandan National Commission, and the cooperation of the local Ugandan institutions taking part in this ambitious program aiming at improving the water and sanitation services in rural schools to protect students from diseases.



The participants in the ICESCO International Conference on "Women and Arabic Language: Realities and Future Prospects", that the Islamic World Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (ICESCO) held in celebration of the World Arabic Language Day 2021, underlined the importance of highlighting women's civilizational and human roles as well as their contributions and achievements in service of promoting Arabic. Participants also stressed the need to support women's initiatives aiming at developing the Arabic language and pro-

mote their literary creations. The conference was held on Tuesday, December 21, 2021, via video-conference, as part of the celebration of 2021 as the Year of Women, which was granted the high patronage of His Majesty King Mohammed VI of Morocco. The conference saw high-caliber participation including senior officials, poets, and specialists in the Arabic language.

The opening session was marked by the opening remark of the Dr. Salim M. AlMalik, ICESCO Director-General, followed by the addresses of the guests of honor. Afterwards, Dr. Fatima Houssaini, Vice-President of the National Coalition for the Arabic Language of Morocco, moderated the first

## ICESCO International Conference Recommends Supporting Women Initiatives to Develop Arabic language

working session, which discussed the topic of "Women's contributions to Arabic language promotion".

The second working session addressed the theme of "Women Leadership in Linguistic Upbringing" and was moderated by Dr. Widad Naibi, Director of Ibn Batouta African Institute in Benin, while the third working session was moderated by Dr. Nawal bint Sulaiman Al-Thunayan, Advisor at Princess Nora bint Abdulrahman University in Saudi Arabia and discussed "Women's future roles in Arabic language promotion".

The working sessions featured presentations on key academic studies and papers in the field of Arabic and yielded innovative ideas and practical proposals to promote women's presence and highlight their contributions to develop and preserve Arabic's status as a prominent world language.

Afterwards, Dr. Fatima Houssaini, Vice-President of the National Coalition for the Arabic Language of Morocco, moderated the first

## Enhancing the Contribution of “Arabic” to Development of Artificial Intelligence



Dr. Salem bin Muhammad Al-Malik, Director-General of the Islamic World Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (ICESCO), stressed that the Arabic language is one of the richest languages in terms of vocabulary and aesthetics, and owes its prominent status in the international arena to its beauty and richness. He highlighted the tremendous technical potential that artificial intelligence and digital transformation bear for raising the status of Arabic and developing programs aimed at teaching and learning the language for Arabic and non-Arabic speakers.

This statement is part of the scientific paper that Dr. Al-Malik presented during the first international conference organized by the Quran Language Endowment at King Abdulaziz University in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, under the theme “Arabic Language and Digital Transformation”. The Conference proceedings kicked off on Wednesday, December 15, 2021, in the presence and under the high patronage of His Royal Highness Prince Khaled Al-Faisal, Advisor to the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques, Governor of Makkah Al-Mukarramah Region, and Honorary President of the Quran Language Endowment.

The organization had announced the names of the winners of its “Bayan” award for expressive creativity in Arabic, which is organized by the ICESCO Center for the Arabic Language for Non-Native Speakers. It aims to stimulate expressive abilities and contribute to the development of the skills of written and oral expression among students of the Arabic language who speak other languages at all levels and from different countries of the world, through an expressive presentation that students accomplish through a short video based on a text edited in Arabic.

The Children’s Award went to three winners, Wareqa Nihad Bint Masoudin, from Al Ansar Mosque Kindergarten School, Republic of Singapore, Muhammed Aman bin Muhammad Rizal, from Primary School Raja Muda Musa Kuala Kangsar, Malaysia, and Umulkhairi Mansor MacedoMacedo, from Darussalam International School in Kaduna, Federal Republic of Nigeria.

Winners of the Boys and Girls Award were Hosna Madgrain, Institute of Religious Missions in Gala, Thailand; Ateeqa Maisara bint Ruslan, from the Religious High School Sultan Zine Al Abidin, Malaysia. The Youth Award went to Zebiniso Rasulova, from the

International Islamic Academy of Uzbekistan, Republic of Uzbekistan, and Muhammad Samoh, Prince of Songkla Pattani University, Thailand.

ICESCO also announced the names of the winners of its Women’s Poetry Prize “Poem of the Year of Women 2021,” as part of the Year of Women Program, held under the high patronage of His Majesty King Mohammed VI of Morocco. The first prize went to the poem “Hya Saydat al-Ard” (Greatest Woman on Earth), by Hajar Omar, from the Arab Republic of Egypt. The poem “Mir’at Vinus” (Mirror of Venus) by Sherihan Al-Tayeb Kalbash Daleel, from the Republic of the Sudan, and the poem “Ila Ikhdirari,” (Toward my self-fulfillment) by Laila Najji Ali al-Omari, from Yemen, received the second and third prizes respectively.

The contest, held by the ICESCO Center of Arabic for Non-Arabic Speakers, saw the participation of 333 women poets from more than 20 countries. The Center chose an international jury, in line with the criteria of technical quality, innovation and creativity, to examine the participants’ works and selected the poems meeting the conditions and criteria of the Prize.



## ICESCO Addresses Educational Challenges after COVID-19

The 14th General Conference of the Islamic World Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (ICESCO) was held in the Arab Republic of Egypt, under the patronage of His Excellency President Abdel Fattah El-Sisi, on December 9, 2021, and approved the formation of the Bureau of the General Conference and the Executive Council of ICESCO.

The conference witnessed fruitful discussions about the future of education and the importance of investing in space sciences. The sessions started with statements by the participating heads of delegations, during which they expressed their appreciation for ICESCO's efforts in meeting the needs of member states in the fields of education, science and culture, and its success in coordination, cooperation, innovation development, and exchange of knowledge and expertise.

The second working session revolved around the educational challenges post COVID-19, and included a lecture delivered by Mr. Kailash Satyarthi, founder of the Kailash Children's Foundation, 2014 Nobel Peace Prize laureate. He expressed his pleasure with the distinguished partnership between the Foundation and ICESCO, the latter being a beacon for the whole world, and not only the Islamic world, and stressed the importance of concerted efforts to protect children, confront their dropping out of school, and protect them from violations of their rights.

During the third working session on space

science in sustainable development, Mrs. Catherine Thornton, President of the US Space Foundation, highlighted the importance of space science in promoting sustainable development.

In the same context, a number of important resolutions were adopted, including the Executive Council's report on the work of the Council between the 13th and 14th sessions of the General Conference, ICESCO's report on its activities for the years 2019-2021, and the organization's financial reports for the years 2018-2020.

Also adopted were the ICESCO report on Member States' contributions for the years 2019-2021, the organization's vision and the draft horizon 2025 strategic directions, the draft bilateral and parallel work plan for 2022-2023, the draft regulations of ICESCO chairs, the draft Regulations of the Young Professionals Program, the draft charter of the national committees of member states, and the implementation of the new organizational structure of ICESCO and related development proposals.

The proposed amendments to the regulations for the status of observer states, and the staff statute were ratified; the report on the development of ICESCO external bodies and the general principles and guidelines for organizing work was adopted, and the members of the Executive Council were approved. The date of the 15th session of ICESCO General Conference was set in December 2025 at ICESCO headquarters in Rabat - the Kingdom of Morocco.

In his closing remarks, Dr. Salem bin Muhammad Al-Malik, Director-General of ICESCO, reiterated his thanks and gratitude to President Abdel Fattah El-Sisi, President of the Arab Republic of Egypt, for the generous presidential sponsorship of ICESCO's 14th General Conference. The Director-General also thanked His Majesty King Mohammed VI, King of the Kingdom of Morocco, for the continued support and supreme patronage of ICESCO's programs and initiatives, and thanked the Kings and Heads of Member States for their support to the organization. Dr. Al-Malik extended special thanks to Dr. Khaled Abdel Ghaffar, Minister of Higher Education and Scientific Research, Chairman of the Egyptian Committee for Education, Science and Culture, and President of the ICESCO 14th General Conference. He also thanked the representatives of the international and regional organizations participating in the conference, for their valuable interventions and fruitful recommendations on issues related to education, science, technology and culture.

Dr. Khaled Abdel Ghaffar, President of the ICESCO General Conference, announced the end of the conference proceedings, expressing sincere thanks and appreciation to the participants in the 14th session of the General Conference of ICESCO, for the tangible success that was achieved during two days of intense work where the discussions of the conference highlighted consensus on the ICESCO priorities for the benefit of the member states.

## ICESCO and Kyrgyzstan: Cooperation in the Field of Curricula Development

Dr. Salem Al-Malik, Director-General of the Islamic World Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (ICESCO), met with Dr. Aybak Artikbayev, Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Kyrgyz Republic, and discussed aspects of joint cooperation between ICESCO and Kyrgyzstan in the fields of education, through participation in the preparation and inclusion of religious curricula in all educational stages in Kyrgyz public schools.

The meeting, which took place on December 7, 2021, was held on the sidelines of the 14th General Conference of ICESCO in Cairo, Arab Republic of Egypt.

During the meeting, Dr. Al-Malik stressed ICESCO's willingness to cooperate with the Kyrgyz government in training and qualifying teachers in the field of developing religious curricula for inclusion in government schools, and participating in preparing these curricula to suit all educational levels. He also suggested that the President of the Kyrgyz Republic be a guest of honor in one of the upcoming international conferences to be held by ICESCO.

For his part, Dr. Aybak Artikbayev expressed the Kyrgyz government's keenness to cooperate with ICESCO in the field of prepara-



tion and inclusion of religious curricula for the first time in schools, and to ensure that a number of Kyrgyz competent employees will be hired by the organization, to qualify them and develop their capabilities and expertise.

He pointed out that the Kyrgyz Republic is fully prepared to pay the arrears to ICESCO's budget, and to benefit from the initiative presented by the organization to allocate a large proportion of these sums for the im-

plementation of programs and projects for the benefit of Kyrgyzstan. He also invited the Director General of ICESCO to visit Kyrgyzstan.

The meeting was attended by Mr. Omarbek Gabarov, Adviser to the Kyrgyz Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and Mr. Aydin Kalmatov, Attaché of the Kyrgyz Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

## A Call for Cooperation in Building Policies for Dialogue of Civilizations



Dr. Salem Al-Malik, Director-General of ICESCO, stressed the importance of cross-border partnerships and initiatives in building policies that achieve peace and consolidate civilized dialogue and comprehensive security, in order to achieve social cohesion and

sustainable development, calling for cooperation in such noble initiatives.

This statement came in the recorded speech he addressed to the Peace4Culture Partners Forum 2021, which was hosted by Ada University in the Azerbaijani capital, Baku, on

December 2, 2021 under the slogan "Global Appeal," and is held in partnership between the university, ICESCO and the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations, the Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Azerbaijan, and it is part of the activities of the Baku Dialogue Forum, which aims to promote intercultural dialogue and intensify efforts to achieve peace between societies.

In his speech, Al-Malik highlighted the pivotal role of culture in providing the necessary controls to prevent conflict and violence, by planting the seeds of peace and instilling the values of understanding and tolerance in societies, referring to the efforts of ICESCO, its frameworks, partners, and religious leaders, and their relentless pursuit of socialization through the rehabilitation of youth and women, and training them to lead for peace and security.



## IsDB: We Stand Ready to Work with All Development Partners towards Achieving SDGs

The President of the Islamic Development Bank (IsDB) and Group Chairman, H.E. Dr. Muhammad Al Jasser, has stressed that the IsDB Group stands ready to work together with all Multilateral Development Banks, International Finance Institutes, and other development partners towards achieving Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) for its member countries.

He made the statement during a high-profile panel discussion on: 'A Shared Sustainable Recovery Based on SDGs' on Tuesday 18 January 2022, as part of the "International Forum on the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development" at the Italian Pavilion in Dubai Expo 2020 during the "Global Goals Week" and aimed to foster a culture of sustainability, with a focus on the governance of the process and the role of the private sector and of civil society.

The panelists also included the Deputy UN

Secretary-General, Dr. Amina J. Mohammed, Italy's Minister of Infrastructure and Sustainable Mobility, H.E. Enrico Giovannini; the EU Commission's Deputy Director-General for International Cooperation and Development, Marjeta Jager; and Dr. Bala Yunusa, Senior Technical Advisor, Office of the Nigerian President on SDGs.

In his remarks, Dr. Al Jasser elaborated how IsDB Group, like all other Multilateral Development Banks (MDBs) provides a wide array of products and services to increase investment inflows to developing countries and how its sovereign lending through its different entities supports more than 1.7 billion people worldwide.

He then touched upon measures that the Bank Group has rolled out in order to mitigate the socio-economic aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic in its member countries and support their progress towards achieving

the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). "IsDB Group launched a US\$ 4.3 billion Strategic Preparedness Response Program (SPRP) in 3R's approach; to help member countries respond immediately to the challenges thrown by the COVID19 pandemic, and then support to restore their efforts to bring them back up on their feet and help restart their economies," Dr. Al Jasser stated.

Furthermore, he added: "More recently, to boost the economy and recovery of the member countries, the Bank has approved development programs and projects amounting to US\$1.6 billion."

The IsDB Group Chairman then referred to the redefined strategic objectives of the Bank and enumerated them as boosting recovery from the Covid-19 pandemic, tackling poverty, building resilience, and driving green economic growth.



## SESRIC: Training Courses on Strengthening Institutional Capacity on Vocational Qualifications

The Statistical, Economic and Social Research and Training Centre for Islamic Countries (SESRIC) organized a Training Course on “Risk Management in Islamic Financial Institutions” on 14-16 December 2021 through an online video conferencing platform, within the framework of SESRIC’s Central Banks Capacity Building Program (CB-CaB) and in line with the relevant resolutions of the 37th Ministerial Session of the Standing Committee for Economic and Commercial Cooperation of the Organization of the Islamic Cooperation (COMCEC). The training course was conducted by a competent expert from the Bank Indonesia for the benefit of 59 experts and executives from the Central Banks and Monetary Authorities of 18 OIC member countries. The main objective of the training course was to strengthen the technical capacities of the professional staff at the Central Banks

and Monetary Authorities of the OIC member countries through sharing of knowledge and experience. The training course provided insights into relevant technical subjects such as the macro prudential aspect of Islamic economics and finance, IFSB Standard of PSIFIS, Basel and IFSB Standard of risk management, risk-based capital for Islamic banks, among many others.

The Central Banks Capacity Building Program (CB-CaB) was developed and initiated by SESRIC in 2009 to strengthen institutional and human capacities by sharing knowledge, experiences and best practices among the Central Banks and Monetary Authorities in the OIC member countries. Within this framework, the Centre organizes capacity-building activities for the benefit of the staff of the Central Banks and Monetary Authorities in the OIC member countries by using various modalities such as training courses,

training workshops, and study visits.

And within the framework of the 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 collaboration with the Qatar National Committee for Education, Culture and Science, organised a Training Course on “Strengthening Institutional Capacity on Vocational Qualifications” on 13-15 December 2021 through an online video conferencing platform.

The training course was provided by competent experts from the College of the North Atlantic-Qatar (CNAQ) for the benefit of 73 experts and executives from the Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) Authorities and relevant national institutions of the 28 OIC member countries.



## IRCICA Participates in the “Nizami Ganjavi International Forum”

The Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Azerbaijan organized, in Baku, Azerbaijan, from November 24 to 26 2021, the International Nizami Ganjavi Forum on the topic “Nizami Ganjavi: A Bridge between Cultures”. The Forum took place within the framework of the Nizami Ganjavi Year 2021 marking the 880th anniversary of the great Azerbaijani thinker and poet. It was held at the Nizami Ganjavi International Center in Baku.

Panel discussions took place on the following topics: “Nizami’s impact on the political and social traditions in the Medieval Orient”, “Nizami Ganjavi: a view of the modern world”, “The influence of the Khamsa by Nizami on World Literature and Culture”, “The didactic role of the Khamsa dialogues”, and “Nizami studies in the Soviet period”.

The paper by Prof. Mahmud Erol Kılıç, IRCICA Director General presented in the context of the aforementioned second theme, was titled “What the Symbolism of Nizami Says to Today’s World”. The paper underscored the Sufi concept of the human being inherent to Nizami’s symbolism and the conception of a just ruler and hero; Nizami used the name of Alexander the Great to designate a mystical, ethical and warrior man and highlighted this symbol in his Iskandarnama;

also, in his Haft Peykar, he used the symbolism of the “Septenary Constitution of the Human Being” as did Farid ud-Din Attar in his Haft Vadi.

The panel discussions were accompanied by various cultural events, including exhibitions and bilateral meetings. During the Forum, the IRCICA Director General also met with H.E. Mr. Anar Karimov, Minister of Culture of the Republic of Azerbaijan, and H.E. Mr. Azadbek Nazarbayev, Minister of Culture of the Republic of Uzbekistan.

The Forum participants adopted the “Nizami Ganjavi Communique” where they acknowledged that the ideas and values of the great Nizami, along with inspiring prominent poets and thinkers of the Eastern world, such as Mevlana Jalaluddin Rumi, Yunus Emre, Amir Khosrov Dahlavi, Abd ar-Rahman Jami, Alisher Navai and Muhammad Fuzuli, as well as others, influence the formation of literary and poetic traditions in the region, the development of philosophical, socio-cultural and political life, as well as the progress of literary thinking; researchers who studied Dante, Boccaccio, W. Shakespeare, Goethe, Shota Rustaveli and other great classics of Western literature found traces of Nizami’s influence in their works.

The Communique also stated that the ideas contained in Nizami’s work Khamsa play a

key role in promoting universal values such as humanism, equality, justice, sustainable cooperation for peace and good neighborly relations which continue to be priorities of the global agenda in the modern world. It emphasized that the views of Nizami are important in terms of the formation of ideas about different cultures and civilizations on a global scale; “the rich heritage of Nizami’s genius is a source of inspiration that heralds a tradition of diversity and inclusion and thus serves as a unique platform for universal dialogue. The ideas and messages in Nizami Ganjavi’s work promote the concepts of multiculturalism, tolerance and peaceful coexistence.”

The Nizami Ganjavi International Forum was attended by Azerbaijani Deputy Prime Minister Ali Ahmadov, Azerbaijani Minister of Culture Anar Karimov, Turkish Minister of Culture and Tourism Mehmet Nuri Ersoy, Uzbek Minister of Culture Azadbek Nazarbayev, and the Special Representative of the President of the Russian Federation for International Cultural Cooperation, His Excellency Mr. Mikhail Shvydkoy. More than 40 researchers and specialists from 15 countries participated in the forum. The Director General of IRCICA, His Excellency Ambassador Prof. Dr. Mahmud Erol Kılıç, was among the invited professors.





## Will “Omicron” be the End of Coronavirus in 2022?

New York - Naomi Kresge, Tim Loh - DPA: Two years after recording cases of infection and death from the COVID-19, the virus mutated again, and the “Omicron” variant spread faster than any previous one, but it also proved to be less ferocious. According to Bloomberg, there were increasing reports that the worst pandemic in the last century will become an endemic disease soon.

For his part, Spanish Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez recently said that the time has come to think of new ways to live with the «COVID-19» in the long term, just as the world lived with the influenza. Then other countries embraced that idea, saying that they might be on their way to witness a new chapter for the disease.

However, health experts are calling for caution, as they say there is a lot of uncertainty about the way the virus will develop, the extent of society’s immunity to it, and the potential harm if people stop being vigilant. It is certain that governments will eventually need to treat COVID-19 as one of the many public health challenges that can be dealt with, rather than seeing it as a challenge that requires urgency and focusing on it as was the case since the beginning of 2020. The desire to impose lockdown decisions detrimental to the economy are long gone; and access to vaccines protects large sectors of the population, in addition to the

hope that the “Omicron” variant – although it spreads with greater speed but with less severe symptoms - will accelerate the end of the pandemic.

«We are probably starting to see a transitional phase towards this (pandemic) becoming endemic; that does not mean we should stop being so vigilant... but it does indicate that we must take completely different measures than we had to take two years ago.» Spanish Deputy Prime Minister Nadia Calvino told Bloomberg TV.

In recent weeks, the term «endemic» started appearing on Internet search engines, which means that the disease is still prevalent, but at a lower rate and in a more predictable manner, in addition to recording fewer cases of hospitalization.

The term sometimes means that the disease is confined to a specific area, but this does not have to be the case with “COVID-19”, just as influenza regularly spreads throughout the world. Seasonal infection patterns can also occur, with more cases recorded in the winter, in addition to local outbreaks at higher rates than expected.

However, there are reasons to make us hope that the pandemic will recede. The world has more tools than before, ranging from conducting rapid tests, the ability to improve and produce vaccines in large quantities, in addition to the high levels of immunity that

people acquired through vaccination, and that acquired through previous infections – herd immunity. And while the antibodies may diminish in size, or even fail to stop the infections caused by the new variant, the immune system’s other major weapon - T cells - appears to be powerful enough to prevent a serious disease.

Meanwhile, several studies indicate that the omicron variant is less severe than the previous ones. Moreover, it seems to be already regressing in some places. The rate of new infections in South Africa is declining after an increase in last December, and the number of COVID-19 patients hospitalized in the United Kingdom has decreased.

For his part, Nubar Avian, co-founder of Moderna Pharmaceuticals, says such evidence is «encouraging in some ways, but we have to remain very vigilant». In an interview with Bloomberg TV, Avian said that the booster dose of Moderna’s anti-Omicron could start entering the trial phase within weeks. As for whether boosters will be required in the spring versus the fall, he explained that health officials and the company still need to discuss this. He added that logistical arrangements are required to deliver vaccines to all parts of the world, noting the abundance of supplies in some countries.



## 1839 Died trying to Immigrate to Europe in 2021

London - (DPA) - Britain is facing increasing waves of refugees arriving by sea, despite the risks of drowning, which has raised differences in views between the Conservative Party government, which seeks to take tougher measures against refugees and illegal immigrants, and the charitable and human rights organizations, which justify immigration by the deteriorating and inhumane conditions to which immigrants are exposed.

In 2021, more than 28,300 people crossed the English Channel to Britain in small boats, three times the number recorded in 2020. The British news agency "PA Media" stated in a report that the arrival of immigrants will continue, and more people will be at the risk for drowning, in this narrow maritime area between France and Britain, if the British government continues its "dangerous and cruel policy", while ministers received warnings in this regard.

Last year's record, with an increase of 20,000 compared to the previous year, came despite promises of millions of pounds to the French authorities to address the issue. The past year has also seen smugglers pack more people into larger boats, which sometimes had fatal results. A Home Office minister said the government was "reforming the asylum approach" through the ministry's "new plan" on immigration. The figures for the small boat crossings are based on Inte-

rior Ministry data, which was obtained and analyzed by PA Media.

The number of immigrants who arrived on British soil reached its peak last November - 6,869 people, despite the severe cold. PA Media stated that between November 10 and 16, 3,100 people managed to cross, the largest number recorded in a week amid this current crisis.

The same month also witnessed a new record for the number of immigrants in one

*The largest number of immigrants during one day in 2020 was 416 people, in September*

day. On 11 November 2021, 1185 people arrived to the British coasts on board 33 boats. The largest number of immigrants during one day in 2020 was 416 people, in September. PA Media analysis indicated that a total of 28,395 people arrived in Britain, in 2021, on small boats. Despite international efforts to crack down on people-smugglers, gangs continued to ply the Strait of Dover in the English Channel with their deadly trade, receiving thousands of pounds in exchange for places in shoddy rubber boats.

The dangers of the English Channel became

unmistakable on November 24, when at least 27 migrants died after their boat sank. French Interior Minister Gérald Darmanin compared the boat sinking to the explosion of a rubber swimming pool. Commenting on this incident, Naor Hilton, executive director of the Refugee Action organization, which supports immigrants, said that the British government's policy would lead to more deaths in the Strait of Dover.

"Immigrants will continue to cross the Channel in weak boats, and smugglers will continue to reap the profits, unless the government provides more ways for refugees to apply for asylum in Britain," he added.

"However, the government is seeking to legalize this dangerous and cruel policy, through an 'anti-asylum bill', which if passed will only cause more people to drown, and the government should come to its senses and cancel this bill now," he added.

Although more refugees are arriving in Britain by small boat, their numbers represent a small number compared to those arriving in Europe.

Data issued by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, of the United Nations, indicate that at least 120,441 people arrived in Europe via the Mediterranean, by land and sea during 2021. According to the data, at least 1,839 people died or went missing.

## Guinea Bissau

**Capital:** Bissau  
**Area:** 36,120 square kilometers  
**Official languages:** Portuguese and Creole  
**Currency:** West African CFA franc



The Republic of Guinea-Bissau was officially recognized on September 10, 1974. It is a federal republic headed by His Excellency President Omar Cisco Embalo, who previously served as Prime Minister of the Republic of Guinea-Bissau from 2016 to 2018, before he was elected President of the country in 2019.

The Government of the Republic of Guinea-Bissau is headed by a president elected by the people for a period of five consecutive years. The Parliament consists of 100 elected members for a four-year term which is also the parliamentary term. In 1991, the Parliament of the Republic of Guinea-Bissau approved a constitutional amendment, according to which the Republic of Guinea-Bissau moved to a pluralistic democratic system.

The city of Bissau is the capital and largest city of the country; meadows and pastures cover about half of the land area, while forests and bushes cover about a third of the country. The Republic of Guinea-Bissau extends to the Bissagos or Bijagos Archipelago, a group of scenic islands off the west coast of the country. Many fresh rivers run through the country, and the ocean waters penetrate deep into the land.

The cultivated areas represent a small part of the land where savannahs cover the interior and forests cover the coasts. The country has a tropical climate, which is divided into only two seasons. Seasonal rains, accompanied by southwesterly winds, fall between June and November.

The population of the Republic of Guinea-Bissau is about 1,586,000 people, according to the last census in 2005; according to the 2002 census it was 1,345,479, and according to the 2009 census, it was 1,574,623. Africans constitute about 85% of the total population of the Republic of Guinea-Bissau. The remaining 15% includes mostly groups of dual African and Portuguese descent, known locally as mouladis. The ancestry of the African population is traced back to about twenty ethnic groups. The order of these ethnic groups in term of size is as follows: the Balanta, the Manjaco, the Fulani, the Malenkian or the Mandingo and the Hausa.

The Republic of Guinea-Bissau is divided into eight regions in addition to an independent sector, which is the capital Bissau, while the eight regions are divided into 37 sectors. Those regions are Bafata Province and its capital (Bafata), Biombo Province and

its capital (Quinhámel), Bissau Province and its capital (Bissau), Bulama Province, which bears the name of its capital (Bulama), Cacheu Province and its capital (Cacheu) as well, Gabu Province and its capital (Gabu), Oyo region and its capital (Farim), the Quinara region with its capital (Buba), and finally the Tombali region with its capital (Catio). The economy of the Republic of Guinea-Bissau depends mainly on agriculture and animal husbandry, and it has promising potential in the areas of forestry and fishing. Among the most important agricultural products are rice, sorghum, beans, cassava, cashews, peanuts, cotton, wood, and fish. American cashew, in particular, is the most important export product. The country also has a large stock of bauxite and phosphate. The Corubal River has significant hydroelectric power generation capabilities. The Republic of Guinea-Bissau depends on importing oil, despite the discovery of some offshore oil fields. Industrial activity is limited to small industries related to agriculture to produce light consumer goods. The national languages of the country are Portuguese and Creole, and the citizens of the country are called Bissau Guineans.



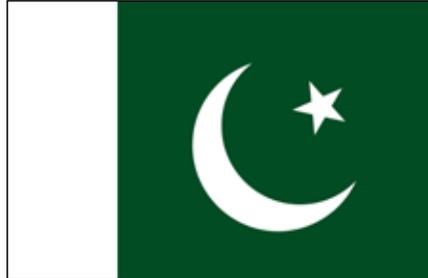
Augmenting Islamic cultures • Combating poverty  
 Protecting the rights of Muslim minorities • Promoting Science and Technology  
 Preserving Islamic heritage • Joint Islamic solidarity  
 Strengthening International relations • Promoting development  
 Combating terrorism • Achieving economic and trade 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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Islamic Republic of Pakistan is hosting the 48<sup>th</sup> Session of the Council of Foreign Ministers, Islamabad, March 2022



The capital city of Islamabad, located on the Pothohar Plateau in the northern Punjab, is one of the oldest human settlement sites in Asia.

