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OIC Holds an Emergency Meeting to Discuss the Developments in Sudan

OIC Calls on the International Community to Include Settlers on Terrorist Lists



دعاء دخول المسجد
اللهم افتح لي أبواب رحمتك

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.

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منظمة التعاون الإسلامي
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OUR MESSAGE

First Half of 2023: Tough Times!

I actually find it quite hard to write this message for the 52nd issue of the OIC Journal at a time when a number of our Member States are being hard hit by severe crises and historic disasters. The crises are many and varied, but they all raise similar worries and concerns. Tens of thousands of innocent human lives were, in fact, lost at the beginning of 2023, as a result of natural disasters or internal hostilities, or due to long-standing crises that are still plaguing the OIC and its Member States. Foremost among these is the persistent Israeli occupation of the Palestinian territory, whose bloody and barbaric attacks have, this year, increased in brutality, with pernicious practices that ignominiously bear witness to the horrors of the occupation and its hardline government, led by Benjamin Netanyahu.

In response to this situation, the OIC General Secretariat convened, on January 10th, 2023, an emergency open-ended meeting of the Executive Committee to consider the repeated Israeli aggressions on Al-Aqsa Mosque. Just a few weeks later, the OIC held another extraordinary meeting of the Executive Committee, on February 27th, to consider the Israeli attacks and crimes against the Palestinian people in the West Bank, especially in the city of Nablus where a number of Palestinians were martyred by the fire of the occupation forces. Then on April 8th, during the blessed month of Ramadan, the OIC convened a third emergency meeting to discuss the Israeli attacks on the blessed Al-Aqsa Mosque and the Holy City of Al-Quds.

This succession of emergency meetings came in response to the alarming increase of the Israeli aggressions on the Palestinian people and on their sanctities and cities, a fact that requires investigation, follow-up, and prompt action in international and regional fora.

We cannot, however, fail to take this opportunity to pay tribute to the steadfast and resilient Palestinian people who are standing firm for their rights and are bravely and steadfastly confronting the brutal Israeli attacks that pay no heed to international agreements or resolutions.

Another painful moment that marked the beginning of 2023 was the deadly earthquake that struck southern and central Turkiye and northern Syria on February 6th, 2023 claiming nearly fifty thousand lives, and destroying and disrupting the infrastructure of entire cities. Described as one of the most severe natural disasters, the earthquake left millions of people homeless in harsh winter conditions. It was followed by several aftershocks that further exacerbated the situation, causing widespread panic and suffering among the populations of the affected areas.

To see things first-hand, I paid a visit to Turkiye where I expressed the solidarity of the OIC and Member States with the Turkish Government and people, and where I saw the magnitude of the damage caused by the earthquake. We appealed to Member States and international organizations to provide assistance to disaster-stricken populations, and we issued several statements in this regard. We also expressed our thanks to all the Member and non-Member States that contributed to relief efforts and provided the needed humanitarian aid.

During this short period of time, from January to April, and at a time when we have not yet recovered from the shock of the Turkiye earthquake in February, bloody armed clashes broke out, in mid-April, in Sudan, a founding member state of the OIC. In this context, we cannot fail to commend the efforts exerted by the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia to organize talks between the Sudanese conflicting parties in Jeddah. We hope these talks, still under way, would yield positive results that would put an end to the conflict and bring about security and stability for Sudan.

In the face of this situation, the OIC convened an emergency open-ended meeting of the Executive Committee, at the kind invitation of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, Chair of the Islamic Summit and of the Executive Committee, and the headquarters country of the OIC. Saudi Arabia has, in fact, spared no effort to provide support and assistance to the State and people of Sudan. Other Member States have also given a helping hand and exerted significant efforts to stop the bloodshed in the country. To all of them we extend our thanks and gratitude for their standing by Sudan.

We pray to Allah to spare us further crises and lift the affliction. No doubt, adversities and disasters can be overcome only by solidarity, unity, and firm positions. This is actually what we felt and experienced during the 49th session of the Council of Foreign Ministers, held on March 16-17, 2023, in Nouakchott, Mauritania.

This session of the CFM, the annual flagship ministerial meeting of the OIC, was a significant occasion for us to meet in a fraternal atmosphere. It brought together Member States and gave all those present the opportunity to discuss various political, economic, cultural, social, scientific, media, legal and other issues. In all these areas, which are of key interest to the OIC, the Foreign Ministers adopted significant resolutions.



Hissein Brahim Taha

Secretary-General of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation

obstacles and challenges, however insurmountable they seem to be, cannot deter us from continuing to work. Crises and disasters are, in fact, cumulative experiences that give us the opportunity to learn from our mistakes. With hard work, solidarity and mutual support, we can look past the pain

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The Islamic University of Technology, Dhaka, www.iutoic-dhaka.edu
Statistical, Economic, Social Research and Training Center for Islamic Countries (SESRIC), Ankara, www.sesric.org
Research Center for Islamic History, Art and Culture (IRCICA), Istanbul, www.ircica.org
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Islamic World Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (ICESCO), www.icesco.org
Union of News Agencies of the OIC Member States (UNA), Jeddah, www.una-oic.org
Islamic Broadcasting Union (IBU), Jeddah, www.ibuj.org
Islamic Committee of the International Crescent (ICIC), Benghazi, www.icic-oic.org
Islamic Organization for Food Security (IOFS), Nur-Sultan
Women Development Organization (WDO) in OIC Member States, Cairo
The OIC Labor Center, Baku
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The Science, Technology and Innovation Organization (COMSTech General Secretariat), Islamabad

Affiliated Organs

Islamic Chamber of Commerce, Industry and Agriculture (ICCIA), Karachi, www.iccia.com
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Islamic Cooperation Youth Forum (ICYF), Istanbul
General Council for Islamic Banks and Financial Institutions (CIBAFI), Manama
Islamic World Academy of Sciences (IAS), Amman
Organization of Islamic Capitals and Cities (OICC), Makkah Al-Mukarramah
Global Forum for Moderation, Amman
The International Union of Muslim Scouts, Jeddah,
OIC Computer Emergency Response Team (OIC-CERT), Malaysia
Association of Tax Authorities of Islamic Countries (ATAIC), Khartoum
World Federation of Arabo-Islamic International Schools (WFAIIS), Cairo
Federation of Contractors from Islamic Countries (FOCIC), Casablanca
Federation of Consultants from Islamic Countries (FCIC), Istanbul
Real Estate Union in Islamic States (REUOS), Djibouti
Organization of the Islamic Ship-owners Association (OISA), Jeddah
OIC Media Forum, Türkiye
Organisation of Islamic Cooperation Broadcasting Regulatory Authorities Forum (IBRAF), Türkiye



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OIC Holds 49th Council of Foreign Ministers in Nouakchott



The Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) held the 49th session of the Council of Foreign Ministers of the OIC Member States on March 16-17 in Nouakchott, Capital of the Islamic Republic of Mauritania, under the theme of "Moderation: Key to Security and Stability".

The President of Mauritania, H.E. Mr. Mohamed Ould Cheikh El Ghazouani, delivered an opening speech in which he welcomed the guests of Mauritania, and stressed the need to work for a secure Islamic world and for peaceful solutions to crises. He indicated that Mauritania will spare no effort to support and develop joint Islamic action.

In his statement to the meeting, the OIC Secretary-General, H.E. Mr. Hissein Brahim Taha, congratulated the Islamic Republic of Mauritania for hosting and chairing this session, wishing it all success. He also expressed deep appreciation to the Islamic Republic of Pakistan for its presidency of the 48th session of the CFM.

The Secretary-General expressed his deep gratitude to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, the OIC Headquarters Country and Chair of the 14th Islamic Summit, for its generous support to the OIC under the patronage of the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques,

King Salman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud, and HRH Prince Mohammed bin Salman, Crown Prince and Prime Minister. He welcomed the agreement between the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and the Islamic Republic of Iran to resume diplomatic relations and reopen their embassies. This step, he said, would help strengthen the foundations of peace, security, and stability in the region and give a new impetus to cooperation among the OIC Member States.

The Secretary-General renewed his sincere condolences and solidarity with Türkiye and Syria following the devastating earthquake that struck several areas in both countries in February, calling for more humanitarian aid to be provided to them.

The Secretary-General stressed that the serious challenges facing the Palestinian Cause require uniting positions and redoubling efforts so that the international community assumes its responsibility to end the Israeli crimes and violations, implement international legitimacy resolutions, provide international protection for the Palestinian people, hold Israeli officials accountable for the crimes committed against the Palestinian people, through the available international justice mechanisms, and support efforts to re-launch a multilateral political process to

achieve the vision of a two-state solution, based on the relevant UN resolutions and the Arab Peace Initiative.

The Secretary-General added that the OIC is closely following developments in Afghanistan and the implementation of ministerial resolutions and the outcomes of the Executive Committee meeting held in January 2023. He indicated that his Special Envoy to Afghanistan, Amb. Tarig Bakheet, held meetings in Kabul and Kandahar with leaders of the de-facto authorities, to whom he conveyed the message of the OIC and its Member States regarding their commitment to supporting Afghanistan on the humanitarian level. The OIC Envoy also emphasized the need to reconsider the recent decisions taken by the de facto Afghan authorities regarding the education of girls and women's work, and to intensify efforts to combat terrorism in all its forms and manifestations. In this regard, the Secretary-General reaffirmed the OIC's full commitment to supporting the right of Afghan women to education and work in line with the principles of Islam, and indicated that humanitarian assistance to Afghanistan will continue through the OIC Office in Kabul in coordination with the King Salman Humanitarian Aid and Relief Center.

Preparation for a Donor Conference for the Sahel and Lake Chad



In his statement at the opening of the 49th session of the Council of Foreign Ministers, held in Nouakchott, Mauritania, under the theme of “Moderation: Key to Security and Stability”, the OIC Secretary-General, H.E. Mr. Hissein Brahim Taha, indicated that the report submitted to the ministerial meeting reflects the significant work performed by the Organization in the humanitarian field. He thanked all OIC Member States, institutions, and partners for supporting this work, and pointed out that the OIC is seeking to strengthen its presence and activity in the Sahel region and the Lake Chad basin through its Regional Office in Niamey. The OIC, he added, is arranging a donor conference in implementation of the relevant CFM resolution. He commended, in this regard, the offer made by Saudi Arabia to host the conference, which reflects the Kingdom’s keenness to support Islamic solidarity and help the countries of the region meet the various challenges with which they are confronted.

The Secretary-General reviewed the OIC’s efforts with regard to the Rohingya Muslim community in Myanmar, and the situation in Nagorno-Karabakh, Yemen, Syria, Sudan, Libya, the Sahel countries, Lake Chad, and the Central African Republic, as well as in

relation to such issues as combating corruption, investing in new media, developing intra-OIC trade, promoting science and technology, enhancing women’s empowerment, strengthening youth capacities and developing sports, and pursuing the implementation of the OIC-2025 Programme of Action.

With regard to Somalia, the Secretary-General noted that the situation in this country tops the OIC concerns. He recalled that the General Secretariat had dispatched, early March 2023, a high-level delegation to Somalia where they held important meetings with senior government officials. He commended, in this regard, the great efforts exerted by the Somali government to eradicate terrorism and provide services in the areas liberated from the grip of Al-Shabaab group. He called on Member States and all Islamic financial institutions to provide all necessary support to assist the government in achieving stability and development in these areas and to counter the adverse effects resulting from the drought disaster that struck the country. He also called on the international community to lift the arms embargo imposed on Somalia in order to support the government’s efforts to impose security throughout the country.

The Secretary-General reiterated the OIC’s official position regarding the issues of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Cyprus, Western Thrace, and Kosovo, based on the relevant CFM resolutions. In the context of following up on the conditions of Muslim communities and minorities in non-member states, he stressed that the OIC will pursue constructive dialogue and endeavors with the authorities of those States to preserve the rights and dignity of those communities.

Regarding the Rohingya Muslim community in Myanmar, the Secretary-General indicated that the progress made in the case filed by The Gambia before the International Court of Justice against Myanmar constitutes a significant step in the efforts to achieve justice and accountability for the Rohingya and protect the remaining Rohingya inside Myanmar. He commended, in this regard, the contribution of several Member States and the Islamic Solidarity Fund (ISF) in securing the financial resources needed for the case, and looked forward to contributions from other countries and institutions. He also welcomed cooperation with the UN, the UN Secretary-General’s Envoy to Myanmar, and other international partners to protect the rights of the Rohingya.

Preparatory Meeting to the 49th CFM Discusses Israeli Violations the Deteriorating Situation in Afghanistan, and other Issues

The Senior Officials meeting preparatory to the 49th session of the Council of Foreign Ministers of the OIC Member States took place on February 5, 2023, at the headquarters of the OIC General Secretariat in Jeddah.

Addressing the meeting, H.E. Mr. Hissein Brahim Taha, OIC Secretary-General, noted that the meeting takes place under severe circumstances in which the Palestinian Cause, the central issue that unites the system of joint Islamic action, is going through serious developments, including the escalation of the crimes of deliberate killing, colonial settlement, the Judaization of the city of Al-Quds, and the violation of the sanctity of the blessed Al-Aqsa Mosque, in addition to the formation of a new extremist, racist Israeli government, which threatens to further deteriorate the situation in the Palestinian territory.

The Secretary-General insisted that these challenges require uniting the positions of the OIC Member States and redoubling efforts so that the international community assumes its responsibility to put an end to the Israeli crimes and violations, implement international legitimacy resolutions, provide international protection for the Palestinian people, and foster a multilateral political process to end the Israeli occupation and achieve the vision of a two-state solution, based on the relevant UN resolutions and the Arab Peace Initiative.

With regard to Afghanistan, the Secretary-General indicated that the situation in this country is a major item on the agenda of his meetings with leaders and officials in Member States and international partners, and that the OIC has closely engaged during the past months, through his Special Envoy to Afghanistan, Amb. Tarig Bakheet, with the de facto authorities in Kabul, and held consultations with key regional and international stakeholders in Afghanistan. A delegation of prominent religious scholars was also sent to Kabul where they held a series of talks with the de facto authorities. He indicated that the OIC cherished the hope that those authorities would meet the expectations of the Organization and the in-

ternational community in terms of respect for human rights, women's rights, education and combating terrorism. However, in light of the recent developments in Afghanistan, the OIC has not yet come close to achieving that goal. It will intensify action and redouble efforts to implement the recommendations of the latest meeting of the Executive Committee, as part of the OIC's commitment toward the Afghan people.

As concerns the issue of Jammu and Kashmir, the Secretary-General indicated that the General Secretariat and the Special Envoy to Jammu and Kashmir, Mr. Yousef Aldobeay, continue to implement the action plan adopted by the Contact Group on Jammu and Kashmir during its meeting in Islamabad on the sidelines of the 48th CFM session. He added that he paid visit, in November 2022, to the Islamic Republic of Pakistan and Azad Jammu and Kashmir, accompanied by the Special Envoy, and that this visit enabled the delegation to take stock of the situation in the region, and confirmed the urgent need to resolve the issue of Jammu and Kashmir based on the resolutions of international legitimacy.

Regarding the issue of Nagorno-Karabakh, the Secretary-General indicated that the General Secretariat, which has always affirmed its unwavering support for the Republic of Azerbaijan in the preservation of its sovereignty and territorial integrity, and for resolving the conflict in accordance with the decisions and resolutions of the Islamic Summit, the Council of Foreign Ministers, and the UN Security Council, will continue to follow this issue with great interest.

The Secretary-General added: "The General Secretariat has closely followed developments in Syria, Yemen, Sudan and Libya, and continues to support dialogue and regional and international efforts designed to reach political solutions to these issues in a way that responds to the aspirations of their peoples and of the region for security, stability, development and prosperity. It has always called on Member States and international partners to help the Somali government in its efforts to overcome humanitarian and economic challenges and to

combat terrorism. In the coming days, we will send a high-level delegation to Somalia and harness all our capabilities in support of this country".

With regard to Iraq, the Secretary-General commended all valuable efforts to support its unity, territorial integrity, security, stability and reconstruction. He reaffirmed this position during the participation of the General Secretariat in the second Baghdad Conference for Cooperation and Partnership, hosted by Jordan on December 23, 2022.

The Secretary-General indicated that the political and security developments in the countries of the Sahel, the Lake Chad Basin, the Central African Republic, Mozambique, Guinea and Burkina Faso are of special interest to the OIC, recalling his visit to a number of these countries. He pointed out that the transitional authorities in Mali welcomed the good offices made by the OIC with the heads of some ECOWAS countries, which has significantly helped find a way out of the crisis. This is in addition to the implementation of the peace and reconciliation agreement in Mali, where encouraging progress has been made.

The Secretary-General reaffirmed his commitment to working in accordance with the official position of the OIC regarding the issues of Cyprus, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Western Thrace and Kosovo, pursuant to the resolutions issued in this regard. He also reaffirmed the OIC's support and solidarity with Muslim communities and minorities in non-member states, calling on the governments of the concerned countries to act against the discourse of hatred and hostility towards their Muslim citizens, and to take concrete measures to protect their basic rights, guarantee respect for their religious and cultural specificities, and preserve their dignity. He indicated, in the same context, the OIC's determination to pursue efforts and constructive dialogue with the countries that have significant Muslim communities, including China, the United States, some European countries, the Philippines and Thailand.

The OIC Achieves Many Goals in the Economic, Cultural and Social Fields



The OIC General Secretariat held, on January 24, 2023, the 45th session of the Islamic Committee for Economic, Cultural and Social Affairs, at its headquarters in Jeddah.

Addressing the meeting, the OIC Secretary-General, H.E. Mr. Hissein Brahim Taha, noted that the relevant reports show that the OIC has managed, thanks to the support of its Member States, to achieve several goals that serve the interests and causes of the Islamic Ummah, and looks forward to making more achievements as it fulfills the tasks entrusted to it during this session.

In terms of economic cooperation, the Trade Preferential System among the OIC Member States (TPS-OIC) came into force on July 1, 2022, which will help promote intra-OIC trade and contribute to achieving the goal of reaching a 25% share in this sector by 2025.

In the field of tourism, the 11th session of the Islamic Conference of Tourism Ministers was held in Baku, Azerbaijan, in June 2022. This session provided a new impetus for cooperation in this sector. The Secretary-General called for the effective implementation of the resolutions adopted by this conference.

On the other hand, the IsDB Group launched, in June 2022, the Comprehensive Food Security Response Program, with a value of \$10.54 billion, to support member States' efforts to address food insecurity challenges. The aim of this initiative is to stimulate collective action to help countries meet development challenges, including achieving sustainable and resilient recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Secretary-General noted that efforts will

be focused, in the period to come, on convening the 5th Islamic Conference of Labor Ministers, the 2nd Islamic Conference of Transport Ministers, the Africa Investment Forum, the Second Stakeholders Meeting on the OIC Dakar-Port Sudan Railway Project, the 9th Ministerial Conference on Food Security and Agricultural Development, and the Private Sector Forum.

In the context of following up the implementation of the OIC-2025 Programme of Action, the Secretary-General indicated that the General Secretariat hosted, on November 22, 2022, the 2nd meeting of the Intergovernmental Expert Group to examine the Programme of Action mid-term review document. The meeting recommended launching preparations for a new draft ten-year programme for the period 2026 - 2035, to be later submitted to the Member States.

In terms of cultural cooperation, the General Secretariat organized in Kampala, Uganda, on June 11-12, 2022, in cooperation with the Islamic University in Uganda, a two-day cultural and scientific event under the title: "Culture, Education and Development: Experiences from the Islamic World". This event was an opportunity to highlight the diverse, rich and inspiring cultural heritage in the African OIC countries. The next edition of this event is scheduled to be held in Indonesia.

The General Secretariat has also finalized the draft Concept Paper for the establishment of the OIC platform for the preservation and protection of cultural heritage in Member States.

With regard to the Cause of Palestine and Al-Quds Al-Sharif, the Secretary-General

stated that the OIC is following with great concern the difficult social, economic and educational conditions experienced by Palestinians in the Palestinian territories, including in the occupied City of Al-Quds, as a result of the Israeli attacks and the systematic Judaization policies in the city. The General Secretariat continues to work for strengthening partnerships, mobilizing support for the City of Al-Quds, supporting the steadfastness of the Palestinian people in Al-Quds, and building the capacities of its national institutions, in addition to holding several cultural and media events to expose Israeli violations and enlighten public opinion about the historical, legal, religious and political status of the Holy City.

In addition to its political efforts, the General Secretariat organizes cultural and media events about Palestine and Al-Quds in the Capitals of Islamic Culture that are chosen every year, which offers opportunities to keep the status, history and heritage of the City of Al-Quds present in the conscience of the Islamic Ummah. The Secretary-General stressed, in this regard, the need for concerted efforts to increase support for all vital sectors in Al-Quds in order to strengthen the steadfastness of its inhabitants.

With regard to social development, women's empowerment, gender equality, youth capacity development, and sports promotion in the Islamic world, the Secretary-General commended the efforts of the government of Saudi Arabia in hosting the 5th session of the Islamic Conference of Youth and Sports Ministers in September 2022 in Jeddah.

49th CFM: OIC Secretary-General Consults with Foreign Ministers of Member States



The OIC Secretary-General, H.E. Mr. Hissein Brahim Taha, held phone conversations with a number of foreign ministers of the OIC Member States, as part of consultations ahead of the 49th session of the Council of Foreign Ministers in March 2023.

On February 1, 2023, the Secretary-General consulted with H.H. Prince Faisal bin Farhan Bin Abdullah, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, Chair of the 14th Islamic Summit. Both sides addressed relations between the OIC and Saudi Arabia, as well as the ongoing preparations for the 49th CFM in Nouakchott and the key items of the meeting agenda. The Secretary-General took this opportunity to commend the Kingdom's continuous and generous support for the Organization so that it can pursue its mandate in the service of joint Islamic action.

On February 5, 2023, the Secretary-General held a phone conversation with the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Arab Republic of Egypt, Mr. Sameh Shoukry. Both sides addressed cooperation between the OIC and Egypt, and exchanged views on key issues on the agenda of the 49th CFM session. The Secretary-General briefed the Egyptian Minister on the results of his recent visit to Mauritania ahead of the ministerial meeting, and the ongoing preparations for this event. He took this opportunity to express

his thanks for Egypt's continuous support to the Organization.

On January 31, 2023, the OIC Secretary-General held a phone conversation with the Foreign Minister of the People's Republic of Bangladesh, H.E. Dr. Abul Kalam Abdul

They also addressed preparations for the 49th CFM session, and the key items on the meeting agenda, including Afghanistan, Islamophobia, the Sahel region and Lake Chad, and other issues.

Momen. Both sides discussed cooperation between the OIC and Bangladesh, and exchanged views on key issues on the agenda of the 49th CFM session.

On January 30, 2023, the Secretary-General held a phone conversation with the Foreign Minister of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, H.E. Mr. Geoffrey Onyeama. Both sides ad-

ressed cooperation between the OIC and Nigeria and exchanged views on key items on the agenda of the 49th CFM session.

On January 26, 2023, the Secretary-General held a phone conversation with the Foreign Minister of the People's Democratic Republic of Algeria, H.E. Mr. Ramtane Lamamra. Both sides discussed cooperation between the OIC and Algeria and exchanged views on key items on the 49th CFM session.

On January 26, 2023, the Secretary-General held two phone conversations with H.H. Sheikh Abdullah bin Zayed Al Nahyan, Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of the United Arab Emirates, and with H.E. Mr. Hassoumi Massoudou, Foreign Minister of the Republic of Niger. The conversations addressed cooperation between OIC and the UAE, and between the OIC and Niger, and the key items on the agenda of the 49th CFM session.

On January 31, 2023, the OIC Secretary-General held a phone conversation with H.E. Mr. Nasser Bourita, Minister of Foreign Affairs, African Cooperation and Moroccan Expatriates of the Kingdom of Morocco. Both sides discussed relations between the OIC and Morocco. They also addressed preparations for the 49th CFM session, and the key items on the meeting agenda, including Afghanistan, Islamophobia, the Sahel region and Lake Chad, and other issues.

OIC Discusses Palestine and Rohingya Issues on the Sidelines of the 49th CFM



The OIC General Secretariat held a series of meetings on the sidelines of the 49th session of the OIC Council of Foreign Ministers, held on March 16-17, 2023.

The meeting of the “OIC Committee of Six on Palestine” discussed launching an international action to support the rights of the Palestinian people and end the occupation. Addressing the meeting, the Secretary-General, H.E. Mr. Hissein Brahim Taha, stressed the OIC’s unwavering position with regard to the Cause of Palestine and Al-Quds Al-Sharif. He called for joining efforts and building on the positions of countries adhering to the values of justice and the principles of international law. He highlighted the need for Member States to present written and oral statements and provide financial contributions in order to support the rights of the Palestinian people and end the Israeli colonial occupation, being illegal and illegitimate under international law and the resolutions of international legitimacy.

For his part, the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the State of Palestine, H.E. Dr. Riad Malki, delivered a statement in which he briefed the meeting on the grave situation in the occupied Palestinian territories as a result of the escalation of Israeli crimes, attacks and violations against the Palestinian people, their land, and their sanctities.

The Committee came out with significant recommendations. It welcomed the UNGA’s adoption, at its 77th session, of a resolution requesting an advisory opinion from the International Court of Justice on the nature of

the Israeli colonial occupation of the land of the State of Palestine, including the city of Al-Quds, and the legal implications of this situation for all countries and for the United Nations. The Committee also called on the High Contracting Parties to the Fourth Geneva Convention to exert all efforts to ensure that Israel, the occupying power, fully complies with the provisions of the Fourth Geneva Convention in the occupied

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Palestinian territories, including Al-Quds Al-Sharif. This is in addition to supporting Palestinian efforts on the international arena toward achieving justice, providing international protection for the Palestinian people and asserting their legitimate rights, holding the Israeli occupation accountable for its persistent crimes and violations, and

launching a political process, under multi-lateral international auspices, conducive to ending the Israeli occupation and realizing the establishment of the independent State of Palestine on the 1967 borders, with Al-Quds Al-Sharif as its capital.

On the other hand, the “OIC Ad Hoc Ministerial Committee on Accountability for Human Rights Violations against the Rohingya” held an open-ended meeting, chaired by H.E. Mr. Daouda Jallow, Attorney General and Minister of Justice of the Republic of The Gambia, on March 17, 2023. The Chairman of the Committee gave a briefing on the latest developments in the case filed against Myanmar at the International Court of Justice with regard to the Rohingya.

Addressing the meeting, the Secretary-General reaffirmed the OIC’s firm position in support of the Rohingya, and the OIC’s repeated calls to Myanmar to ensure their safety and security, to recognize their fundamental rights, including the right to citizenship, and to create adequate conditions conducive to the voluntary, safe, dignified, and sustainable return of Rohingya refugees and internally-displaced persons to their homeland.

The Secretary-General noted that the OIC will continue its efforts to mobilize international support in order to find a lasting solution to this complex crisis and defend the rights and interests of the Rohingya, and will work to promote dialogue and cooperation with key international actors to tackle the underlying causes of this crisis.



India Called on to Respect the Rights of the People of Jammu and Kashmir

In his remarks at the Ministerial brainstorming session on “Combating Violent Extremism,” held on March 17, 2023 on the sidelines of the 49th session of the OIC Council of Foreign Ministers, H.E. Mr. Hissein Brahimi, OIC Secretary-General, underlined the need to thoroughly address violent extremism and examine its root causes, noting that poverty, underdevelopment, economic marginalization, and religious misconceptions are key factors conducive to the exacerbation of violent extremism.

The Secretary-General indicated that a more effective approach to countering violent extremism involves taking a series of preventive measures for promoting education, good governance, development, equality and justice, and that hatred and intolerance can be countered by promoting dialogue and mutual understanding and by highlighting the values of peace, tolerance and coexistence.

In this context, the Secretary-General commended the interesting experience of Mauritania, the land of tolerance and moderation, in dealing with violent extremism, by pursuing a comprehensive and integrated approach. He highlighted the importance of investing heavily in youth development, and placing youth issues at the heart of development agendas and action plans; thereby

ensuring that young people are actively engaged in promoting society’s development and rooting out violent extremism. He also stressed the need for scholars to assume their role in combating violent extremism and promoting tolerance and the true understanding of religious texts, as well as the need to enhance partnership among Governments, civil society and scholars in the face of violent extremism.

The brainstorming session was chaired by H.E. Mr. Mohamed Salem Ould Marzouk, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Cooperation and Mauritanians Abroad, Chair of the 49th Session of the Council of Foreign Ministers.

The Foreign Ministers and representatives of the OIC Member States offered remarks to enrich the brainstorming session, and put forward constructive ideas and approaches to tackle violent extremism and ward off its repercussions in societies.

On the other hand, in his address to the Ministerial Meeting of the OIC Contact Group on Jammu and Kashmir, held on March 16, 2023 on the sidelines of the 49th CFM session, the Secretary-General reaffirmed the OIC’s continued support to the people of Jammu and Kashmir in realizing their right to self-determination. He also stressed the need for the international community to redouble its efforts to settle the issue of Jam-

mu and Kashmir, in complementarity with the OIC’s efforts.

The Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, Mr. Bilawal Bhutto Zardari, briefed the meeting on the situation on the ground since the latest meeting of the Contact Group, held in New York in September 2022, on the sidelines of the 77th session of the United Nations General Assembly, expressing his appreciation to the Secretary-General and members of the Contact Group for their continued support to the cause of the people of Jammu and Kashmir.

In their statements to the meeting, the members of the Contact Group expressed their continued support for the people of Jammu and Kashmir, called for the peaceful settlement of the dispute in accordance with the relevant Security Council resolutions, and renewed their call on India to respect the fundamental human rights of the people of Jammu and Kashmir and to refrain from making any change in the demographic composition of the disputed region. They also expressed their appreciation of the tireless efforts of the OIC Independent Permanent Human Rights Commission (IPHRC) in monitoring human rights violations in Jammu and Kashmir and reporting to international human rights bodies.



OIC Observes First International Day to Combat Islamophobia

As part of celebrating the first International Day to Combat Islamophobia, the OIC General Secretariat held, on March 16, 2023, a special event on the sidelines of the 49th session of the OIC Council of Foreign Ministers (CFM), convened in Nouakchott, Mauritania, on March 16-17, 2023.

It is worth recalling that the UN General Assembly adopted, in March 2022, a resolution designating March 15th as International Day to Combat Islamophobia. The resolution was highly commended by the OIC and its Member States.

The event was attended by Foreign Ministers of OIC Member States, the High Representative for the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations, H.E. Mr. Migel Angel Moratinos, Ambassadors, and Representatives of Observer States, international organizations, as well as OIC organs and institutions.

The event offered an opportunity to raise awareness of the current situation in relation to the issue of Islamophobia, and to call for concrete global actions to combat incitement to religion-based hatred, discrimination and violence.

In his message on this occasion, the OIC Secretary-General, H.E. Mr. Hissein Brahim Taha, noted that the International Day to Combat Islamophobia should not be regarded as an event that is of concern to Muslims only, but rather as a universal day to counter any

forms of religious hatred and intolerance. He called on all countries as well as international and regional organizations to commemorate the International Day to Combat Islamophobia, and therefore reaffirm their commitment to fighting xenophobia and to promoting the values of tolerance, mutual understanding, harmony, dialogue, and peaceful coexistence among all religions.

On the other hand, the OIC Secretary-General, H.E. Mr. Hissein Brahim Taha, took part in the opening session of the OIC-Mauritania Investment Forum, held on March 15th in Nouakchott, Mauritania, on the sidelines of the 49th session of the OIC Council of Foreign Ministers.

In his address to the Forum, the Secretary-General indicated that this event is a practical implementation of the OIC's vision for promoting solidarity and cooperation between Mauritania and other OIC Member States. He called on all participants to leverage the enormous opportunities offered by the Forum to enhance trade relations with Mauritania, the land of great opportunities in agriculture, livestock, fisheries and related industries.

The two-day Forum was attended by the Prime Minister of Mauritania, H.E. Mr. Mohamed Ould Bilal, who, in his statement, reviewed the various development projects under way in Mauritania.

the OIC Secretary-General, H.E. Mr. Hissein Brahim Taha, took part in the opening session of the OIC-Mauritania Investment Forum, held on March 15th in Nouakchott, Mauritania

Election of OIC Assistant Secretaries-General at 49th CFM in Mauritania



The Assistant Secretaries-General to the Secretary-General of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) were elected during the 49th session of the Council of Foreign Ministers, held on March 16-17, 2023 in Nouakchott, Mauritania.

Amb. Samir Bakr Diab, from the State of Palestine, was elected to the position of As-

sistant Secretary-General for Palestine and Al-Quds Affairs; Amb. Yousef Al-Dobeay, from Saudi Arabia, to the position of Assistant Secretary-General for Political Affairs; Amb. Tarig Ali Bakheet, from The Sudan, to the position of Assistant Secretary-General for Humanitarian, Cultural and Social Affairs; Dr. Ahmad Kawesa Sengendo, from

Uganda, to the position of Assistant Secretary-General for Economic Affairs; Amb. Aftab Ahmed Khokher, from Pakistan, to the position of Assistant Secretary-General for Science and Technology; and Amb. Musa Kulaklikaya, from Turkiye, to the position of Assistant Secretary-General for Administration and Finance.

Gratitude to Member States for Supporting OIC Reforms

The General Secretariat of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation held, at its headquarters in Jeddah, the opening ceremony of the fifty-first session of the Permanent Finance Committee on 29/1/2023.

His Excellency the Secretary-General, Mr. Hissein Brahim Taha, delivered a statement, in which he affirmed that since assuming his post, and based on the confidence placed in

him by Member States, he accorded great attention to the administrative and financial dossier.

He added that the organization launched many committees and initiatives to modernize the administrative and financial systems and enhance good governance and other procedures in accordance with regulations. He wished that Member States would con-

tinue their support to complete the process of comprehensive reforms of the General Secretariat.

He extended his sincere thanks to the Islamic Republic of Pakistan for its successful steering of the fiftieth session of the PFC. He also expressed his sincere wishes of success to the Islamic Republic of Mauritania, the new PFC Chair.

Meeting with US Undersecretary of State for Civil Security Affairs

The OIC Secretary-General, H.E. Mr. Hissein Brahim Taha, received, on March 15, 2023 in Nouakchott, Mauritania, H.E. Ms. Uzra Zeya, US Under-Secretary for Civil Security, Democracy and Human Rights, on the sidelines of the 49th CFM session.

Both sides discussed ways of boosting cooperation between the OIC and the United States of America. They exchanged views on issues of common concern, including the Palestinian Cause, the situation in Afghanistan and the Sahel countries, the rights of Muslim communities and minorities in non-member countries, and the issue of Islamophobia.





Nouakchott: Capital of Islamic Culture for 2023

Nouakchott's Convention Center hosted, on January 6, 2023, the launch of the celebration of "Nouakchott as Culture Capital in the Islamic World for 2023". The event was held under the auspices and chairmanship of H.E. Mr. Mohamed Ould El Ghazouani, President of the Islamic Republic of Mauritania. This celebration is part of the ICESCO Programme for Culture Capitals in the Islamic World.

The launching ceremony witnessed the high-level participation of the Mauritanian Prime Minister, members of the government, heads of constitutional and national institutions, ministers of culture, delegations from some ICESCO Member States, and a host of academics, thinkers, authors and media professionals.

The ceremony began with a recitation of verses from the Holy Quran, followed by artistic performances highlighting the Mauritanian heritage, and creative shows by schoolchildren.

At the outset of his address, Dr. Salim M. Al-Malik, ICESCO Director-General, noted that Nouakchott is deserving of the title of Culture Capital in the Islamic World for 2023, given the valuable contributions of the city, and of Mauritania in general, to the fields of poetry, literature, Fiqh, grammar and morphology. ICESCO, he added, will provide full cultural support to the yearlong celebration through various activities. He reviewed

the main cultural activities to be supervised by the Organization throughout the year, most notably those geared towards preserving and valorizing the heritage sites and cultural elements inscribed on ICESCO's Islamic World Heritage List, contributing to the restoration of several heritage sites, and launching the ICESCO Young Poets Forum. He concluded his address with a poem



entitled "The Flower of Cultural Capitals" which he composed on this occasion. The Director-General then handed over the flag of "Nouakchott, Culture Capital in the Islamic World for 2023" to the President of the Nouakchott region, Mrs. Fatimetou Mint Abdel Malick.

During the ceremony, Mr. Mohamed Ould Sidi Abdallah, Secretary-General of the Mauritanian National Commission for Education, Culture and Science, Secretary-General of the Higher Committee supervising the celebration, reviewed the key components of the celebration's programme, which features cultural, scientific and educational activities to be implemented in cooperation with ICESCO, designed to highlight the Capital's cultural wealth and diversity.

Mrs. Fatimetou Mint Abdel Malick, President of the Nouakchott Region, expressed her delight at the launch of this celebration, and stressed that the Region has established a specialized committee in charge of promoting Nouakchott's tangible and intangible heritage in cooperation with all relevant authorities.

Dr. Mohamed Ould Amar, Director-General of ALECSO, indicated that thanks to ICESCO's outstanding Programme for Culture Capitals in the Islamic World, the celebrated cities will become major cultural destinations.

In a video-recorded address, Dr. Nevine Al-Kilani, Egyptian Minister of Culture, stated that the selection of Nouakchott as Culture Capital in the Islamic World for 2023 is an opportunity to internationally promote the city as a major cultural hub. casing aspects of the Mauritanian heritage.

Possibility of Dispatching High-level Delegation to Help Solve the Crisis in Sudan



The Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) held, on May 3, 2023, at the headquarters of the General Secretariat in Jeddah, an Extraordinary Open-ended Meeting of the Executive Committee to discuss the situation in Sudan. The meeting was convened at the invitation of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, Chair of the Islamic Summit and the Executive Committee.

In his address to the meeting, the Secretary-General, H.E. Mr. Hissein Brahim Taha, indicated that the OIC will work to implement the recommendations of the Member States, including the possibility of dispatching a high-level delegation to Sudan at the appropriate time, in coordination with the Chair of the Islamic Summit and the Executive Committee.

“Unfortunately, these clashes have occurred at a time when we all expected that the talks, already underway between the Sudanese parties to the Political Framework Agreement, will lead to an agreement on a new date for the signing of the final agreement and the formation of a transitional civilian government,” said the OIC Secretary-General. He regretted that the humanitarian truces for the evacuation of the wounded, stranded people, nationals and members of diplomatic missions have not been fully respected, and that clashes are continuing, especially in some parts of the city of Khartoum. He further noted that Sudan is facing serious developments that require prompt action, especially the military clashes that have erupted between the Sudanese army and the Rapid Support Forces, causing nu-

merous civilian casualties and further worsening the humanitarian situation throughout the country.

The Secretary-General paid tribute to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, Chair of the Islamic Summit and the Executive Committee, for its initiative to convene this extraordinary meeting, which is a continuation of its good offices and commendable efforts with the concerned parties in Sudan and with key regional and international actors, with the aim of reaching peaceful solutions to this serious crisis. He also commended the Kingdom’s effective evacuation efforts, based on the directions of the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques, His Majesty King Salman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud, and HRH Mohammed bin Salman bin Abdulaziz, Crown Prince and Prime Minister.

The Secretary-General also commended the valuable initiatives undertaken by some OIC Member States to evacuate those stranded in Sudan, as well as their efforts to enhance stability in the country. He called for increased efforts to achieve an immediate and lasting ceasefire, and to urge the warring parties to come to the negotiating table, so that the country would not fall into chaos, especially with the repercussions of the influx of border-crossers into Egypt and Ethiopia and the growing number of refugees in Chad.

The Final Communiqué issued by the meeting stressed the importance of maintaining Sudan’s security and stability and respecting its unity, sovereignty and territorial integrity, thereby guarding it against external inter-

ference. It expressed its deep regret at the eruption of armed clashes in the Republic of Sudan, and offered sincere condolences to the Sudanese families of the victims, and prayers for the speedy recovery of the injured.

The Communiqué called for commitment to the humanitarian truce agreed upon to ensure delivery of humanitarian aid and support for the injured and the stranded, and for the evacuation of citizens and diplomatic missions, while creating safe humanitarian corridors for that purpose. It called for the immediate cessation of military escalation and for the prioritization of the national interest to preserve the capabilities and gains of the Sudanese people, in view of the huge losses of lives and the destruction of installations and infrastructure.

The Communiqué requested all Sudanese brothers to allow dialogue to prevail, to embrace self-restraint and wisdom, and to return to the negotiation table, as soon as possible, in order to continue peace efforts aimed at resolving the Sudanese crisis in order to preserve the unity of Sudan and the State’s institutions and meet the aspirations of the Sudanese people for political and economic stability. It hailed the efforts of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, as Chair of the Islamic Summit, and its good offices and engagement with Sudanese brothers and regional parties to reach immediate and lasting ceasefire, and ensure return to the path of peace in order to preserve Sudan’s unity.

Intensive Consultations on the Situation in Sudan

The Final Communiqué issued by the Extraordinary Open-Ended Meeting of the OIC Executive Committee on the Situation in Sudan emphasized the importance for the OIC to deploy all efforts to support Sudan and the Sudanese people in order to end this crisis and achieve the desired solution that will bring about security, stability and prosperity for Sudan and its people. It also stressed the need for the OIC to strengthen its mediation capacities to that end.

The Communiqué stressed that continued violence in Sudan will have negative implications on regional security and peace, being an integral part of global security and peace. It also underlined the need to bear in mind that the conflict in Sudan is a purely internal matter, and warned against any external interference in Sudan, whatever its nature or source, while insisting on the imperative of preserving Sudan's state institutions.

The Communiqué emphasized the imperative of returning to political dialogue in Sudan, while ensuring that Sudan's future political process be inclusive and cross-cutting. It appealed to all States and international institutions and organizations to provide humanitarian and health assistance to those affected by the difficult conditions in Sudan, including refugees in neighboring countries and those stranded in border areas. It expressed its support to the African initiative produced by the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) Summit to dispatch a presidential mediation delegation and the activation of the initiative within a joint African-Arab framework.

The Communiqué called on the OIC Secretary-General to follow up and assess developments in Sudan, to participate in the efforts for dialogue and reconciliation in this country, and to take the necessary measures to implement this Communiqué in coordination with the Executive Committee.

The Communiqué commended the significant efforts made by Saudi Arabia in the evacuation of international citizens and diplomatic missions from Sudan and providing for all their needs. It also commended the role of other countries that made efforts in this regard. It hailed the endeavors of Türkiye at the highest level to urge the relevant parties in Sudan to exercise restraint, declare

an immediate ceasefire and return to dialogue, and commended Türkiye's safe and rapid evacuation of its citizens as well as third country nationals from 22 countries, including citizens of 13 OIC Member States. The Communiqué extended gratitude to the Sudanese authorities for coordinating and securing favorable conditions for the safe and free evacuation of the staff of diplomatic institutions and foreign nationals amid complex security conditions. It commended the efforts made by Egypt, Jordan, the United Arab Emirates, Algeria, Morocco, and Djibouti in the evacuation of their nationals, citizens of other countries, as well as several civilians and diplomats, particularly the humanitarian and diplomatic efforts made by the neighboring and border States. In the same context, the OIC Secretary-General has appealed to the conflicting parties in Sudan to abide by the humanitarian truce on the days of Eid al-Fitr, the holy ritual for Muslims, in order to ensure the safe passage

Hissein Taha holds consultations with Foreign Ministers of Member States on the situation in Sudan.

of civilians and diplomatic missions and allow for the evacuation of the wounded and the stranded.

The Secretary-General urged the conflicting parties to stop the military escalation and resort to dialogue to resolve all contentious issues. He affirmed the OIC's readiness to harness all its capacities to support humanitarian efforts and help resume dialogue between the Sudanese parties.

In the context of the escalating events in Sudan, the Secretary-General held a phone conversation with the Secretary-General of the United Nations, H.E. Mr. António Guterres, to discuss developments in Sudan. Both sides underlined the importance of co-

ordination as part of regional and international efforts to defuse the crisis. They also emphasized the imperative of maintaining the truce in order to ensure delivery of humanitarian aid, and underlined the need to achieve immediate and permanent ceasefire and resume the peace process through dialogue and negotiation.

The Secretary-General received a phone call from Mr. Volker Perthes, Head of the United Nations Integrated Transition Assistance Mission in Sudan. Both sides discussed the current developments in Sudan and the need for more consultation and coordination as part of regional and international efforts to defuse the crisis in this country.

The Secretary-General held a phone conversation with the Secretary-General of the League of Arab States, H.E. Mr. Ahmed Aboul Gheit, to discuss developments in Sudan. Both sides underlined the importance of coordination as part of regional and international efforts to defuse the crisis.

The Secretary-General held a phone conversation with the Foreign Minister of Mauritania, H.E. Mr. Mohamed Salem Ould Marzouk, to discuss developments in Sudan.

In the same context, the Secretary-General held a telephone conversation with H.E. Mr. Sameh Shoukry, Foreign Minister of Egypt, to discuss developments in Sudan. He commended the good offices efforts of the OIC Member States, including the significant role played by Egypt to find a solution to the Sudanese crisis.

On the other hand, the Secretary-General, received at the headquarters of the General Secretariat H.E. Ambassador Dafallah El Haj Ali, Special Envoy of the President of the Transitional Sovereign Council in the Republic of Sudan to neighboring countries and the African Union, who presented an extensive explanation of the Sudanese Government's position on the current situation in Sudan.

The Secretary-General expressed his hope that the humanitarian truce be maintained, that a permanent ceasefire be reached, and that security and stability return to Sudan as soon as possible; thereby safeguarding the security and stability of the Sudanese people and the capabilities of the Sudanese State.



Secretary-General: “Al-Aqsa is Exclusive Place of Worship for Muslims Only”

During the past months, the OIC General Secretariat held a series of emergency meetings, in view of the deteriorating conditions in the Palestinian territory.

On April 8, 2023, at the request of the State of Palestine and the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, the General Secretariat convened an extraordinary open-ended meeting of the OIC Executive Committee to discuss the continuous attacks by Israel, the illegal colonial occupation authority, on the blessed Al-Aqsa Mosque.

Addressing the meeting, the OIC Secretary-General, H.E. Mr. Houssein Ibrahim Taha, renewed the OIC’s strong rejection and condemnation of all the Israeli occupation’s policies and measures seeking to obliterate the identity of Al-Quds Al-Sharif. He affirmed that the City is an integral part of the occupied Palestinian territory and the capital of the State of Palestine, and that the entire Al-Aqsa Mosque is the exclusive place of worship for Muslims only.

The Secretary-General also renewed the OIC’s position with regard to the events taking place in Al-Aqsa Mosque. He noted that the meeting was being held at a time when conditions in the city of Al-Quds and in its Islamic holy sites were deteriorating. This, he said, resulted from the escalation of the

blatant Israeli violations and attacks through the storming of Al-Aqsa Mosque by occupation forces and extremist settlers, and their barbaric aggressions against worshippers in the Mosque’s compound, injuring and arresting hundreds of them. He described this as a flagrant violation of the sanctity of holy sites and of freedom of worship, and a contravention of the Geneva Convention and relevant United Nations resolutions.

The Secretary-General warned against any attempt to alter the historical and legal status of the Islamic and Christian holy sites in the City of Al-Quds, especially the blessed Al-Aqsa Mosque. He held the Israeli occupation fully responsible for the implications of these serious crimes and violations that can only stoke violence, tension, instability and insecurity in the region.

The Secretary-General reaffirmed that all Israeli decisions and policies seeking to alter the geographical and demographical status of the City and to undermine the historical and legal status of its holy sites are of no legal effect, and are null and void under international law and relevant UN resolutions. The Final Communiqué issued by the meeting condemned in the strongest terms the dangerous escalation by the Israeli occupation forces and terrorist settlers who repeat-

edly stormed the blessed Al-Aqsa Mosque during the blessed month of Ramadan. These incursions culminated in the atrocious brutal attack on the night of Ramadan 14 against worshippers and those stationed in the Mosque’s courtyards while performing their prayers and rituals, including women and children, wounding and arresting hundreds of them, and damaging Al-Qibli Mosque. These attacks constitute a flagrant provocation to the feelings of Muslims all over the world, a violation of the current legal and historical status, and a severe contravention of international law and relevant UN resolutions.

The Communiqué warned of the consequences of the continued infringement by the Israeli occupation authorities and their officials, and by the terrorist settlers, on the sanctity of the blessed Al-Aqsa Mosque, including the continuous provocations and abuses and the daily severe assaults and incursions. These acts constitute a gross violation of international law and an unprecedented tampering with the existing historical and legal status, and seek to perpetuate the temporal and spatial division of Al-Aqsa Mosque.



OIC Calls on the International Community to Include Settlers on Terrorist Lists

The OIC General-Secretariat held, on February 27, 2023, an extraordinary open-ended meeting of the OIC Executive Committee at its headquarters in Jeddah.

H.E. Mr. Hissein Brahim Taha, OIC Secretary-General, stressed that Israel's impunity has encouraged it to persist in its policies, which in their entirety amount to war crimes and crimes against humanity that require investigation and accountability.

This was part of his statement to the meeting, delivered on his behalf by Amb. Samir Bakr Diab, Assistant Secretary-General for Palestine and Al-Quds Al-Sharif.

The meeting addressed the escalation of the Israeli aggression against the city of Nablus and the entire land of the State of Palestine, which claimed the lives of 11 martyrs and wounded dozens of Palestinians.

The Secretary-General underlined that while international law is indivisible, Israel, the occupying power, is escalating its crimes and violations and is seeking to perpetuate its colonial settlement regime in the Palestinian land within full view of the international community. He pointed out that Israel has been violating international law, the Geneva Conventions, and the relevant UN resolutions, due to the absence of any political,

legal, or humanitarian deterrent.

The Secretary-General offered his heartfelt condolences to all the families of the martyrs who died during Israel's criminal attack on the city of Nablus, paying a great tribute to the steadfast Palestinian people. He condemned the heinous crimes that took place in Nablus and before that in the cities of Jericho and Jenin, which are only part of the endless series of the occupation's crimes against the Palestinian people.

The Secretary-General called on the OIC Member States to contribute written statements and oral arguments to the International Court of Justice which was called on by the UNGA to give an advisory opinion on the legal status of the Israeli occupation and the effects arising from Israel's long-term occupation of the Palestinian land, including the city of Al-Quds, and its persistent violations of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people.

The Final Communiqué issued by the meeting strongly condemned the persistent violations by Israel, the illegal colonial occupation authority, in the occupied Palestinian territory, including the recent heinous crimes in Nablus. It also strongly condemned the continuing crimes perpetrated by gangs of

Israeli colonists, supported and protected by the Israeli occupation army, against unarmed Palestinian citizens and their properties.

The Communiqué affirmed that these escalating crimes have reached dangerous levels that cannot be tolerated and must be confronted at all levels, including by having the colonists, their groups and leaders included on international terrorist lists. It held the Israeli colonial occupation government fully responsible for the colonists' crimes perpetrated in Hawara, Zaatarra, Burin, and other parts of the State of Palestine, including Al-Quds Al-Sharif. It called on the international community to assume its responsibility in restraining the armed colonists and the Israeli army from committing those atrocities and crimes against the unarmed Palestinian people, and holding their perpetrators accountable.

The Communiqué held Israel, the illegal colonial occupation authority, fully responsible for the repercussions of such barbaric acts and heinous crimes perpetrated by the occupation army against the Palestinian people.



“Israel’s attacks on Al-Aqsa Mosque Hurts to the Feelings of Muslims”

The OIC General Secretariat has been following, with concern, the policies of the Israeli occupation in the occupied city of Al-Quds. On January 10, 2023, it held an Extraordinary Open-ended Meeting of the OIC Executive Committee at its headquarters in Jeddah, to discuss the persistent Israeli attacks on Al-Aqsa Mosque.

In his statement to the meeting, the OIC Secretary-General, H.E. Mr. Hissein Brahim Taha, affirmed that the Israeli attacks against the blessed Al-Aqsa Mosque constitute an offense to the religious feelings of Muslims around the world, as well as a flagrant violation of international law and UN resolutions. The Secretary-General stressed that these attacks can only fuel violence and tension and undermine security and stability in the region. He called for a responsible international action that compels Israel to stop its serious violations and preserve the existing historical and legal status of Al-Aqsa Mosque, being the exclusive place of worship for Muslims. The Secretary-General noted that the Israeli occupation is taking measures aimed at changing the geographical and demographic status in occupied Al-Quds, obliterating its Arab-Islamic identity, and violating its Islamic sanctities, especially the blessed Al-Aqsa Mosque. These measures include closing the Mosque’s gates, attacking worshippers and preventing their access to the Mosque, and storming it by extremist settlers and senior Israeli officials, under the protection of the occupation forces, including the provocative storming of the Mosque by the extremist Israeli National Security Minister Itamar Ben-Gvir.

The Secretary-General indicated that he had

made contacts with key international actors, including the United Nations and the European Union, to convey the OIC’s position in this regard and to urge them to exert pressure on Israel to stop its serious violations against Al-Aqsa Mosque.

The Secretary-General called for mobilizing, intensifying the OIC’s political, economic, and media efforts in order to protect the occupied city of Al-Quds, support the steadfastness of its people in the face of the Israeli Judaization schemes, and defend the inalienable Palestinian rights.

The Final Communiqué issued by the meeting condemned in the strongest terms the storming of the blessed Al-Aqsa Mosque on January 3, 2023 by a minister in the Israeli colonial occupation Cabinet who is known for his extremism. It considered this act a serious provocation that offends the feelings of Muslims all over the world, and a blatant violation of international law, the relevant UN resolutions, the existing historical and legal status of Al-Quds and its sanctities, and all relevant international norms;

The Communiqué warned of the consequences of the continued assault on Al-Aqsa Mosque, including the persistent provocations and abuses, as well as the daily serious attacks by the Israeli colonial occupation authorities, government officials, military occupation forces, and colonists. This constitutes a gross violation of international law and an unprecedented tampering with the existing historical and legal status of the city of Al-Quds. The Communiqué warned especially against the dangerous attempts by extremist Jewish colonists to fuel the flames of religious conflict by imposing a temporal and spatial

division of Al-Aqsa Mosque, which poses a threat to international peace and security.

The Communiqué insisted that the primary responsibility for the events taking place in Al-Aqsa Mosque and in the city of Al-Quds rests with the Israeli colonial occupation authorities which provide protection to the colonists and their leaders, including government officials, and which seek to change the status quo in the city. It held the Israeli colonial occupation authorities responsible for the consequences of their persistent illegal policies and measures.

The Communiqué exhorted the United Nations Security Council, as the guarantor of international peace and security, to assume its responsibilities and act urgently by taking the needed measures, without selectivity or double standards, to deter the dangerous Israeli escalation and put an end to all illegal and provocative measures and policies that affect the occupied city of Al-Quds and the sanctity of Al-Aqsa Mosque.

The Communiqué commended the positions of the States that rejected and condemned the provocative and aggressive Israeli incursions into Al-Aqsa Mosque. It called on the international community, particularly the permanent members of the Security Council, to condemn these irresponsible and dangerous acts, and to take urgent actions and practical steps to stop them and put an end to the accelerating deterioration of the situation in Palestine in general, as a result of the Israeli colonial occupation authorities’ continued violation of international law and encroachments on the human rights of the Palestinians.



OIC: Developments in Al-Quds Call for Stronger Cooperation with the Arab League to Provide Support to the Holy City

H.E. Mr. Hissein Brahim Taha, OIC Secretary-General, addressed the high-level conference to support the City of Al-Quds, held on February 12, 2023 at the headquarters of the General Secretariat of the League of Arab States in Cairo, Egypt.

The conference was attended by H.E. President Abdel-Fattah el-Sisi of Egypt, H.M. King Abdullah II of Jordan, H.E. President Mahmoud Abbas of Palestine, and H.E. Ahmed About Gheit, Secretary-General of the League of Arab States.

The Secretary-General thanked the League of Arab States (LAS) for the invitation and for the excellent preparation and organization of the conference. He highly commended the leading role of the LAS in supporting the Palestinian people and defending their legitimate rights. He also expressed appreciation to the Egyptian leadership and people for hosting this important event and for their support to the Palestinian people and their just Cause.

The Secretary-General took this opportunity to pay heartfelt tribute to the Palestinian people and to their commitment to their land. He reaffirmed the OIC's unwavering support for their just struggle to recover their legitimate rights. He reiterated his absolute rejection and condemnation of all illegal measures aimed at changing the existing geographical and demographic status and obliterating the Arab identity of the occupied city of Al-Quds. These measures, he added, are null and void under international law and the resolutions of international legitimacy. He reaffirmed the OIC's continued support for the State of Palestine in exer-

cising its right to full sovereignty over the Palestinian territory occupied since 1967, including East Al-Quds, capital of the State of Palestine.

The Secretary-General warned, once again, against the gravity of the persistent Israeli occupation measures targeting the Islamic and Christian holy sites in the occupied city of Al-Quds, underlining, in this regard, the

the violations committed by Israel, the occupying power, an attack on the inalienable religious rights and heritage of the Islamic Ummah, a provocation to the feelings of Muslims around the world

responsibility of the international community to preserve the historical and legal status of Al-Quds, especially the blessed Al-Aqsa Mosque, being the exclusive place of worship for Muslims.

The Secretary-General considered the violations committed by Israel, the occupying power, an attack on the inalienable religious rights and heritage of the Islamic Ummah, a provocation to the feelings of Muslims around the world, a violation of freedom

of worship and the sanctity of holy places, and a flagrant violation of international law and the Geneva Conventions. He warned, once again, that persistence in these violations threatens regional and global peace and stability.

The Secretary-General insisted that the systematic Israeli attacks and violations in the city of Al-Quds call for stronger OIC-LAS cooperation so as to provide political support for the Holy City in international forums.

In this regard, the Secretary-General called for concerted efforts to support appropriate legal actions before the relevant international judicial bodies, including the International Court of Justice and the International Criminal Court, in order to hold the Israeli occupation accountable for its continuous violations against the Palestinian people and against their land and sanctities. He added that the steadfastness and determination of the Maqdisites, and their keenness to enable their institutions to continue providing people with essential services, reflect their strong belief in their Cause and their commitment to defending the Holy City and its identity, history, and sanctities on behalf of all.

The Secretary-General stressed the need to strengthen cooperation and share responsibility with all partners, to mobilize the needed resources in coordination between the OIC and League of Arab States, to enhance cooperation between their affiliated bodies, development agencies, civil society institutions, and the private sector in Member States.

Secretary-General Meets with Palestinian Assistant Foreign Minister



H.E. Mr. Hissein Brahim Taha, Secretary-General of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, received, on February 6, 2023, Amb. Ammar Hijazi, Palestinian Assistant Minister of Foreign Affairs for Multilateral Relations. The meeting discussed the dangerous esca-

lation of crimes, massacres and violations committed by the Israeli occupation forces against the Palestinian people and their land and sanctities. It reviewed the persistent Israeli attacks on the sanctity of the blessed Al-Aqsa Mosque and the city of Al-Quds,

through which the Israeli colonial occupation authority seeks to expand its colonial regime on the land of the State of Palestine, using the tools of oppression, killing and racial discrimination.

The meeting also discussed the efforts made by the OIC and Member States to confront the Israeli aggressions.

The OIC Secretary-General stressed the centrality of the Cause of Palestine and Al-Quds, ranking high among the priorities of the OIC agenda. He reiterated the OIC's commitment to providing all forms of support to the Palestinian people and their legitimate rights, including the establishment of the independent State of Palestine on the borders of June 4, 1967, with Al-Quds Al-Sharif as its capital.

OIC Expresses Displeasure over EU President's Recent Statements on Nakba

The General Secretariat of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) has expressed strong displeasure over the statements made by the European Union President, Ursula von der Leyen, which contained disappointing political and historical references that are at variance with the European Union's positions based on human rights, international law and United Nations resolutions.

The OIC stressed that these statements disregard historical, political and legal facts dating back to thousands of years, and coincide with the commemoration of the Nakba (catastrophe) for the territory and people of Palestine. The Nakba continues to be a dark spot on Humanity's memory and conscience

and a denigration of the values of freedom and justice, following the declaration establishing Israel, the colonial occupying power, and the ensuing policies of racial cleansing, forced expulsion, oppression, confiscation of Palestinians' properties, and deprivation of their legitimate rights.

The OIC called on the European Union to fulfill its political, legal and humanitarian responsibilities for ending the Israeli colonial occupation, correcting the historical injustice suffered by the Palestinian people, supporting their legitimate rights, including the right to return, and realizing the establishment of their independent state on the borders of June 4, 1967, with East Al-Quds

as its capital.

On the occasion of the Palestinian Land Day, celebrated on March 30th of each year, which constitutes a renewed opportunity to reaffirm solidarity with the Palestinian people in defending their land, history, sanctities and national identity, the OIC General Secretariat has affirmed its absolute support for the Palestinian people and for their just struggle to restore their legitimate national rights, including their right to realize the establishment of the independent State of Palestine on the borders of June 4, 1967, with East Al-Quds as its capital.

OIC Denounces Smotrich's Racist Statements Against Palestine and Jordan

The General Secretariat of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) has expressed its strong condemnation and rejection of the Israeli Finance Minister Smotrich's use of an alleged map of Israel that includes the borders of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan and the occupied Palestinian territory, and his racist statements denying the existence of the Palestinian people, their history and their legitimate rights. It considers this

as a disregard for established historical facts, a blatant violation of the rules of international law and international resolutions, as well as a form of political incitement.

The OIC affirmed its absolute support for Jordan's sovereignty, unity and territorial integrity, and reiterated its unwavering position alongside the Palestinian people and their just struggle to restore all their legitimate rights, including their right to indepen-

dence and self-determination and the realization of their sovereign and independent state on the borders of June 4, 1967, with Al-Quds as its capital. It called on the international community to reject and condemn these dangerous Israeli racist allegations that threaten security and stability and lead to escalation.

The Word in a Conditional Space

One of the main differences between Social Media and traditional media is that in the latter, the content is controlled before it is printed or broadcast, while in the former, anyone can say whatever they want, document whatever they wish, and write as they please. The space in which they publish their media content will not, however, be "malleable" because of conditions related to the durability of the news story on the screen.

Social Media platforms can actually be called alternative media or news websites like any other traditional media. As I mentioned earlier, the difference lies in the "texture" of the new Social Media, which has to do with maintaining the news story posted, or accelerating its disappearance.

Originally, the word "Qiwem" ("foundation") in Arabic came from the root word Qawwama, which means "to fix and straighten what is bent". In Al-Mu'jam al-Waseet, "Al-Qiwem" is the "pillar and structure of something." The meaning of "structure" does not substantially differ from "nature". Thus, in scientific and chemical terminology, the word "Qiwem" or "Texture" means the density and nature of the liquid: viscous or fluid, alkaline, basic or acidic, etc. This description suggests that "texture" is something delimited and framed, rather than a widely open space.

In the media, the news story was linked, to a large extent, to the "freedom of the word" and not to its limited scope. The poetry of the pre-Islamic period, for instance, was very much like "embellished information" that people used to pass on in an open space.

In paper media, a piece of news is inserted in a newspaper, which is then printed and distributed to anyone who wants to buy it. Its scope is thus confined to those who can read and can afford to buy the newspaper, which has always been affordable and available to everyone. The scope of newspaper journalism was limited to a well-educated elite, including civil servants, students and others; and then with the decrease of illiteracy, it reached out to the general public, and the newspapers gained a much wider readership.

In all previous stages, the scope was somehow restricted, but allowing most people to read the news story, in one way or another, even if someone's reading was poor, or even if it was possible for someone else to get their hands on a relatively old newspaper.

Then came the more widespread satellite channels, with the purchase of a satellite dish having become possible for most viewers. The matter remained within a specific scope with the news satellite channels that invaded the Arab world between the mid-nineties and halfway through the first decade of the third millennium.

Today, what is remarkable is that the spread of the easy-to-use Social Media platforms, such as Facebook, WhatsApp, Twitter, Instagram, TikTok, Snapchat, and other applications, is largely associated with the proliferation of smartphones, available at varying prices. These applications have even replaced traditional sources of news, being unique in their ability to post a video or a comment for the man in the street or any ordinary follower.

We can thus say that the media has now entered a different phase, indeed very different from all previous media outlets that publish the news story and expect the recipient to pick it up within the means available, without interfering with the nature, time, or manner of reading the news story.

For example, the number of comments, posts, likes, and emojis (angry, happy, sad, laughing...) plays a major role in the news story's wide circulation and durability on the timeline, or its removal, being considered as news not worth any attention. Facebook has, in this regard, developed a technique to measure the amount of time it takes a recipient to read a news story, used a criterion for maintaining it or deleting it from the list of postings.

This equation, however, does not seem to reveal all the little secrets of this world, because the final outcome that reaches the recipient can be reduced to specific websites or news that serve the purposes of specific parties who impose the rules of the game. The scales are thus tipped in favor of those who have "power", particularly financial power. In fact, one of the key factors influencing the circulation of a given news story is the money paid directly to any of these applications which themselves post the news story to the largest possible number of followers, depending on the extent to which the news is liked or followed. Despite all that has been said about absolute or unlimited freedom of expression in the "texture" of Social Media platforms, the keywords have become tools for banning or preventing a specific post in accordance with "double standards" when considering what is necessary and what is not, what is appropriate and what is not, depending on the rule set by those who control this new type of media.

This leads us to the conclusion that all these platforms are now controlled by "judges" who determine what we should say; otherwise the content is bound to be banned and blocked. This brings us back to the debate about the potential scope of the news circulated on these websites.



Aiman Abboushi

Editor of the OIC Journal

All these platforms are now controlled by "judges" who determine what we should say; otherwise the content is bound to be banned and blocked



President of Guinea Bissau Receives OIC Secretary-General

The President of the Republic of Guinea Bissau, H.E. Umaro Sissoko EMBALÓ, received, on April 12, 2023 in Makkah Al-Mukarramah, the Secretary-General of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), H.E. Mr. Hissein Brahim Taha. The meeting discussed relations between the OIC and the Republic of Guinea Bissau and the ways and means of strengthening mutual cooperation, particularly on issues of common interest, notably peace and development in Africa and around the world.

Secretary-General Holds Talks with Somali Prime Minister

The Prime Minister of Somalia, H.E. Mr. Hamza Abdi Barre, received, on April 18, 2023 in Makkah Al-Mukarramah, the Secretary-General of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), H.E. Mr. Hissein Brahim Taha.

During the meeting, the Secretary-General renewed the OIC's commitment to supporting Somalia's efforts to achieve security, stability and development and to overcome the climate and humanitarian challenges facing the country.

For his part, the Somali Prime Minister commended the OIC's role and its support for Somalia.



Both sides discussed several issues of mutual interest, particularly the recent developments in Sudan.

President of the Union of Comoros Receives OIC Secretary-General



H.E. Mr. Azali Assoumani, President of the Union of the Comoros, current Chairperson of the African Union, received, on April 19, 2023 in Makkah Al-Mukarramah, the Secretary-General of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, H.E. Mr. Hissein Brahim Taha.

The Secretary-General praised the positive role played by the Comoros within the OIC to promote joint Islamic action, and expressed his congratulations to President Azali Assoumani for taking over the presidency of the African Union.

For his part, President Azali Assoumani commended the OIC's significant role and efforts to enhance cooperation and solidarity among its member states.

Secretary-General Receives Special Representative of Uzbek President

The Secretary-General of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, H.E. Mr. Hissein Brahim Taha, received, on March 12, 2023, at the headquarters of the General Secretariat in Jeddah, H.E. Mr. Abdulaziz Kamilov, Special Representative of H.E. the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan for Foreign Policy.

During the meeting, the Secretary-General commended the commitment of Uzbekistan to the OIC's principles and its endeavor to strengthen Joint Islamic Action and to promote peace, stability and cooperation in the Central Asian region.





The Secretary-General of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), H.E. Mr. Hissein Brahim Taha, met, on March 22, 2023 in Makkah Al-Mukarramah, with H.E. Mr. Anwar Ibrahim, Prime Minister of Malaysia.

The meeting discussed the situation in the Muslim world and the issues on the OIC agenda, notably the Cause of Palestine, the situ-

Meeting with President of Tatarstan

The Secretary-General of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), H.E. Mr. Hissein Brahim Taha, met, on March 12, 2023, at the headquarters of the General Secretariat in Jeddah, with H.E. Mr. Rustam Minnikhanov, President of the Republic of Tatarstan, Head of Russia-Islamic World Strategic Vision Group, and his accompanying delegation.

During the meeting, the Secretary-General commended the role of the Strategic Vision Group in connecting Russian and the Islamic World in the economic, scientific, technological, social and cultural fields.

For his part, the President of Tatarstan expressed appreciation for the support extended by the OIC to the Strategic Vision Group, which strengthens partnership between Tatarstan and the Muslim World.



Meeting with Foreign Minister of Guinea

The Secretary-General of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), H.E. Mr. Hissein Brahim Taha, met, on January 31, 2023, at the OIC headquarters in Jeddah, with H.E. Dr. Morissanda Kouyaté, Minister of Foreign Affairs, International Cooperation, African Integration and Guineans Abroad of the Republic of Guinea.

During the meeting, the Guinean Minister stressed the high importance that his country attaches to the OIC, and its support for the efforts deployed by the Secretary-General to achieve the OIC goals. He also commended the OIC's support for the political transition process in the Republic of Guinea.

For his part, the Secretary-General hailed the dialogue efforts in the Republic of Guinea, reiterating the OIC's support for Guinea's efforts to enhance its stability and development.

OIC and Malaysia Discuss Issues of Muslim World

ation in Afghanistan and the Sahel region, the plight of Rohingya Muslims, and combating Islamophobia.

The meeting also discussed the prospects of cooperation between the OIC and Malaysia in various areas.

The Secretary-General commended, on this occasion, the excellent relations between the OIC and Malaysia, and expressed his appreciation for Malaysia's active role within the OIC and its significant contributions to joint Islamic action.

On February 19, 2023, the OIC Secretary-General met with H.E. Dr. Zambry Abdul Kadir, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Malaysia. The meeting discussed cooperation between the OIC and Malaysia.

The Secretary-General commended Malaysia's role in promoting Islamic solidarity and joint Islamic action.

For his part, the Malaysian Minister stressed the high importance that Malaysia attaches to the role of the OIC in various political, economic, social, cultural, science and technology fields.



OIC and Chad Hold Talks

The Secretary-General of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), H.E. Mr. Hissein Brahim Taha, met, on January 24, 2023, at the OIC Headquarters in Jeddah, with H.E. Ambassador Mahamat Saleh Annadif, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Chadians Abroad and International Cooperation of the Republic of Chad. During this meeting, the Chadian Foreign Minister underlined the importance that his country attaches to the role of the OIC, and its support for the efforts deployed by the Secretary-General to achieve the OIC goals.

For his part, the Secretary-General reaffirmed the OIC's support for the efforts invested by the Republic of Chad to strengthen its stability and promote its development.





Secretary-General Commends Efforts of MUSIAD

ness incubators in OIC Member States to enable entrepreneurs and SMEs to start up their businesses. This call was made during his meeting with the President of the Independent Industrialists and Businessmen's Association of Türkiye (MUSIAD), Mr. Mahmut Asmali, at the OIC headquarters in Jeddah, on March 21, 2023. The Secretary-General expressed appreciation of the significant level of cooperation between OIC and MUSIAD, and commended the role of MUSIAD in facilitating trade and investment among OIC countries, through the active engagement of the private sector. The meeting explored opportunities for closer cooperation towards enhancing intra-OIC trade and foreign direct investments.

The OIC Secretary-General, H.E. Mr. Hissein Brahim Taha, called for creating a networking mechanism among business people and busi-

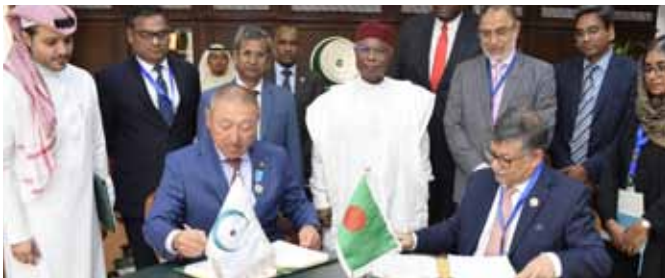
Secretary-General Receives Mufti of Azerbaijan

The Secretary-General of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, H.E. Mr. Hissein Brahim Taha, received, on March 21, 2023 at the OIC headquarters in Jeddah, His Eminence Allahshukur Pashazadeh, Mufti of Azerbaijan and the Caucasus, and his accompanying delegation.

The Mufti hailed the long-standing cooperation between the OIC and the Republic of Azerbaijan, and expressed appreciation and gratitude for the OIC's positions in support of the just causes of Azerbaijan, particularly in relation to the Armenian occupation of the Nagorno Karabakh region in the past. His Eminence conveyed to the Secretary-General the compliments and appreciation of the President of Azerbaijan, H.E. President Ilham Aliyev.



Both sides agreed to pursue efforts to increase cooperation between Azerbaijan and the OIC General Secretariat in all fields.



Meeting with Foreign Secretary of Bangladesh

During the meeting, the Secretary-General underlined the status of Bangladesh within the OIC community, and reaffirmed the OIC's strong support to the policy and continuous initiatives taken by the Government of Bangladesh to strengthen Islamic solidarity and unity.

Following the meeting, the Secretary-General attended the signing of the Headquarters Agreement between the OIC General Secretariat, represented by the Islamic University of Technology, and the Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh. The Agreement was signed by Ambassador Askar Mussinov, OIC Assistant Secretary-General for Science and Technology, and Ambassador Masud Bin Momen, Foreign Secretary of Bangladesh.

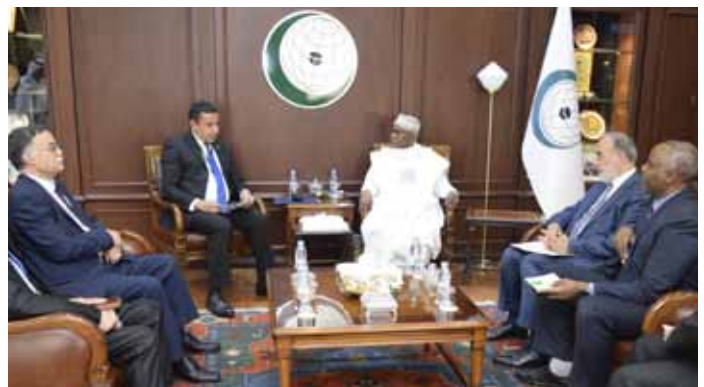
The Secretary-General of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), H.E. Mr. Hissein Brahim Taha, received, on February 6, 2023, Ambassador Masud Bin Momen, Foreign Secretary of the People's Republic of Bangladesh.

Meeting with Director at Libyan Foreign Ministry

The Secretary-General of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), H.E. Mr. Hissein Brahim Taha, received, on February 5, 2023, Mr. Saif Ahmed, Director of Islamic Affairs Department at the Libyan Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

During the meeting, the Secretary-General reaffirmed the OIC's principled position in support of Libya, the unity of its people, and its territorial integrity.

Based on the OIC Charter and principles, and on the resolutions of the Islamic Summit and the Council of Foreign Ministers, the Secretary-General reaffirmed the OIC's support for all initiatives and efforts that contribute to resolving the Libyan crisis politically,



Snapshots



H.E. Mr. Hissein Brahim Taha, receives, on April 9, 2023, H.E. Mr. Omar Jibril Salah, Permanent Representative of The Gambia to the OIC.



Mr. Hissein Brahim Taha, receives, on April 10, 2023, H.E. Ambassador Syed Mohammad Fawad Sher, Permanent Representative of Pakistan to the OIC.



H.E. Mr. Hissein Brahim Taha, received, on February 14, 2023 at H.E. Mr. Datuk Wan Zaidi Wan Abdullah, the Permanent Representative of Malaysia to the OIC.



H.E. Mr. Hissein Brahim Taha, receives, on February 16, 2023, H.E. Ambassador Mohammed Ali Boughazi, Permanent Representative of Algeria to the OIC.



H.E. Mr. Hissein Brahim Taha, received, on February 7, 2023 in his office, Ambassador Shaea Mohsen Al-Zindani, Permanent Representative of Yemen to the OIC.



H.E. Mr. Hissein Brahim Taha, received, on February 7, 2023 Ambassador Orazmuhamed Chariyev, Permanent Representative of Turkmenistan to the OIC.

Snapshots



H.E. Mr. Hissein Brahim Taha, received, on January 24, 2023, H.E. Ambassador Hassan Saleh Algadam Aldjinedi, the new Permanent Representative of Chad to the OIC.



H.E. Mr. Hissein Brahim Taha, received, on February 6, 2023 H.E. Mr. Dino Seidi, the Permanent Representative of Guinea Bissau to the OIC.



H.E. Mr. Hissein Brahim Taha, receives, on February 8, 2023 in his office, H.E. Pascal Gregoire, Ambassador of the Kingdom of Belgium to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.



H.E. Mr. Hissein Brahim Taha, receives, on February 6, 2023 Amb. Ali Al-Mansouri, Director at the Qatari Ministry of Foreign Affairs.



H.E. Mr. Hissein Brahim Taha, receives, on February 16, 2023 Mrs. Catherine Corm-Kammoun, Consul General of France, and Special Envoy of France to the OIC.



H.E. Mr. Hissein Brahim Taha, receives H.E. Ms. Yasmine Chatila Zwahlen, Ambassador of Switzerland to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

Abstraction between Islamic Decorative Art and Al-Qatt Al-Asiri



A Saudi study indicates that decorative motifs in both Islamic art and Al-Qatt Al-Asiri (in the Asir region, Saudi Arabia) bear similarities in the use of ornamental elements, and that their artistic and aesthetic values share common traits, including abstraction, repetition, unity, diversity and rhythm. It also shows that the Islamic faith has had an influence on folk decorative art in Saudi Arabia. The study, carried out by Dr. Masouda Alem Jan Qurban and Dr. Yousra Saeed Al-Qahatani, researchers at King Saud University, and entitled "Abstraction between Islamic Decorative Art and Al-Qatt Al-Asiri in the Asir Region: A Comparative Study," sought to highlight similarities and differences in terms of abstraction between Islamic ornamental motifs and Al-Qatt Al-Asiri decorative patterns, with focus on the impact of Islamic art on Saudi popular arts.

The study points out that Islamic art is characterized by its rich and diverse aesthetic decorative elements, and by its uniqueness in terms of providing creative solutions to handle formal spaces in all areas of Islamic arts, such as architecture, textiles, glass, metals, and others. It notes that Muslim artists have excelled in their artistic productions, deriving their thought from the spirit

of the Islamic faith, and subjecting all their decorative forms to Islamic thought; thereby providing a rich resource and a significant contribution to civilization that brings with it a different visual and formal language suffused with artistic and aesthetic values that distinguish it from other arts.

Abstraction is one of the key features of Islamic art and the foundation upon which Islamic pictorial art is based. Islamic pictorial art, however, came to be subjected to restrictions due to the prohibition of figural representation in Islam, so much so that it tended towards abstraction. Instead of imitating nature, Muslims artist sought to create a world of abstract relationships, and were therefore able to untangle the common patterns among elements and details. The study, in fact, highlights the Islamic arts' emphasis on abstraction, given the spiritual character it confers to artistic and architectural works that include decorative designs composed of various elements.

The authors of the study note that Islamic architecture was one of the major areas in Islamic art that was rich in abstract ornaments, be they geometric or floral. With the evolution of mosques, Islamic architecture in general, and Islamic decorative art in partic-

ular, have significantly flourished. Places of worship have thus become a space for sophistication and creativity. The authors also consider that religious decoration in Islam expresses an authentic spirituality embodied in the Muslim artist's creativity. It associates stillness with the infinite, and serves as a link between the material world and the absolute world, through harmonious decorative patterns and bright sparkling colors, which demonstrates an advanced level of technical skill to express perfection and a means to reach the sublime beauty.

The study points out that Muslims have excelled in building and decorating their religious and secular buildings, such as palaces, during the early settlement periods under the Umayyads and the following Islamic eras. Islamic buildings began to appear here and there, taking on a distinctive personality of their own that differed in style from those that Muslims found in the countries they conquered. Calligraphic inscriptions and geometric and floral patterns were used to form ornaments and architectural engravings, which became a distinctive feature of Islamic architecture.



OIC Delegation to Kabul Calls on Authorities to Reconsider Decisions on Women's Work and Girls' Education

At the beginning of March 2023, the Special Envoy of the OIC Secretary-General to Afghanistan, Amb. Tarig Ali Bakheet, Assistant Secretary-General for Humanitarian, Cultural and Social Affairs, paid a visit to Afghanistan to call on authorities to reconsider the recent decisions regarding women's work and girls' education.

The Special Envoy met with Mawlawi Abdul Salam Hanafi, Deputy Prime Minister of the de facto authority in Afghanistan. The meeting discussed the follow-up on the implementation of the Final Communiqué of the extraordinary meeting of the Executive Committee on humanitarian developments and the situation in Afghanistan, held in January 2023 at the OIC headquarters in Jeddah.

The Special Envoy met, in the city of Kandahar, with the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the de facto authority in Afghanistan, Mawlawi Amir Mutaki, in the presence of the Deputy Governor of Kandahar, Mawlawi Hayatullah Mubarak, and senior officials from the State and the Foreign Ministry.

The meeting discussed the follow-up on the implementation of the resolutions of the OIC Council of Foreign Ministers on Afghanistan and the recent meeting of the

Executive Committee held in January 2023, and a message was conveyed in this regard. The Special Envoy met with Mawlawi Habiballah Agha, Minister of Education of the de facto authority in Afghanistan. His meeting with the Education Minister addressed the issue of women's work and girls' education in Afghanistan. For his part, the Minister affirmed the Ministry's commitment and endeavor to provide a safe environment for girls' education and revise the educational curricula, noting the importance of OIC Member States' support for the education infrastructure in Afghanistan. The Special Envoy met with the Head of the Afghan Red Crescent Society (ARCS), Mawlawi Matiul Haq Khalis, at the ARCS headquarters in Kabul. The meeting discussed cooperation between the OIC and the ARCS, especially the preparations to launch the second phase of the food basket distribution project in a number of Afghan provinces, in coordination between the OIC Office in Kabul, the ARCS and King Salman Relief Center.

The Special Envoy met with a delegation from the UN Mission in Afghanistan, headed by Mr. Markus Butzel, Deputy Head of Mission, at the headquarters of the OIC

Office in Kabul. The meeting discussed cooperation between the OIC and the United Nations to support the Afghan people.

The OIC General-Secretariat expressed its grave concern over another alarming violation of Afghan women's fundamental rights, following the announcement by the de facto authorities in Kabul, on April 4, following the Special Envoy's official visit, of an order banning Afghan women from working for the United Nations in Afghanistan.

The new edict imposes more restrictive measures on women and girls, including banning them from education and government jobs, and also from working for non-governmental organizations.

The General Secretariat indicated that the ban is a counter-productive decision with potentially consequential ramifications not just for Afghan women, but also and more significantly for UN humanitarian operations across the country.

The General Secretariat called on the de facto authorities to reconsider this unacceptable decision and allow Afghans, both men and women, to engage in the reconstruction of their country after decades of violent conflict and socio-economic vulnerability.



OIC Delegation Visits

Mogadishu and Holds talks on Political and Humanitarian Affairs

The Prime Minister of Somalia, H.E. Mr. Hamza Abdi Barry, received a delegation of the OIC General Secretariat on an official visit to Somalia.

The Prime Minister received a written message from the OIC Secretary-General reaffirming the Organization's commitment to supporting Somalia's efforts to achieve security, stability and development.

During the meeting, Assistant Secretary-General for Political Affairs, Ambassador Yousef Aldobeay, conveyed the greetings of the OIC Secretary-General to H.E. the President of the Republic and H.E. the Prime Minister. He stressed the OIC's continued efforts to support Somalia in addressing the various challenges with which it is confronted.

For his part, the Prime Minister briefed the OIC Delegation on the efforts made by the Somali Government to fight terrorism and build the State's institutions, as well as on its programs and projects to achieve stability and development. He commended the OIC's commitment to supporting Somalia at this crucial stage of its history.

The Delegation met, on February 26, 2023, with the Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of Somalia, H.E. Mr. Abshir Omar Jama, in his office at the headquarters of the Somali Foreign Minis-

try in Mogadishu. Amb. Aldobeay stressed the utmost importance that Somalia enjoys in the political and humanitarian agenda of the OIC, and reaffirmed respect for the sovereignty, independence, unity and territorial integrity of Somalia. He indicated the OIC's commitment to stand by the Somali people and to continue providing support to the Somali government so that it can face the challenges ahead. He commended, in this regard, Somalia's efforts to combat terrorism and achieve stability and development.

On the other hand, the OIC Assistant Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs, Ambassador Tarig Ali Bakheet, reaffirmed the OIC's commitment to pursue efforts for strengthening cooperation with Somalia, including the implementation of humanitarian and development projects through the OIC Office in Mogadishu, in coordination with King Salman Humanitarian Aid and Relief Center.

For his part, the Minister thanked the Delegation, commending the OIC's decades-long efforts in support of Somalia, especially on the political and humanitarian level, with the aim of achieving stability, combating terrorism, and providing humanitarian and development support.

The OIC Delegation met with Somalia's Interior and Federal Affairs Minister, Mr. Ahmad Muhammad Faqi, and his senior assistants. The Minister briefed the Delegation on the humanitarian and security situation in the country, and the enormous efforts being made by the Somali Government to combat terrorism, to build peace and restore stability to the liberated regions, and to improve the humanitarian situation, especially in view of the drought disaster that affected several regions of Somalia.

For his part, Amb. Bakheet commended the significant efforts made by the Somali Government to provide services in the liberated areas and to those affected by the drought. He reaffirmed the OIC's commitment to pursue its humanitarian and developmental efforts in the country, in coordination with international partners, especially the King Salman Humanitarian Aid and Relief Centre. Amb. Bakheet met with Dr. Ali Haji Aden, Somali Minister of Health, and Dr. Maryam Mohamed Hussein, State Minister for Health. The meeting stressed the importance of the OIC continuing its efforts to increase cooperation with the Health Ministry and to mobilize more support for the health sector in Somalia.

Muslim Communities and Islamophobia

Top the OIC Agenda at 52nd Session of UN Human Rights Council



H.E. Mr. Hissein Brahim Taha, Secretary-General of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), who led the OIC delegation to the 52nd session of the UN Human Rights Council, attended, on February 27th, 2023, the opening ceremony of the session at the Palais des Nations in Geneva.

On the sidelines of the session, the Secretary-General held a meeting, at the OIC Permanent Mission, with the Group of Permanent Representatives of the OIC Member States. He expressed appreciation for the role played by the Group in defending the OIC's positions and implementing the decisions and resolutions of the Islamic Summit and Council of Foreign Ministers. He reviewed the key issues on the OIC agenda and the efforts made by the Organization in the areas of peace and security, human rights and humanitarian affairs, and Muslim minorities and communities.

The Permanent Representatives of OIC Member States welcomed the consultations held with the Secretary-General and expressed appreciation of the OIC's role and achievements.

Participants exchanged views on the issues included on the agenda of the 52nd session of the Human Rights Council, and stressed the need for closer coordination to defend the positions of the OIC.

Speaking at the High-Level Segment of the 52nd Session of the United Nations Human Rights Council in Geneva, the OIC Secretary-General reaffirmed the OIC's commitment to the promotion and protection of human

rights and the respect for human dignity. He insisted that the desecration of the Holy Quran is a reprehensible act that must be condemned by all, and that it is the duty of States to combat Islamophobia.

In the face of the Israeli military campaign against the Palestinian people, the Secretary-General called on the international community to assume its responsibilities and take all necessary measures to ensure the protection of the Palestinian people and put an end to the violations they are suffering.

The Secretary-General also addressed, in his statement, the latest developments in Afghanistan, the issue of Jammu and Kashmir, the situation of the Rohingya Muslim community, and the damage inflicted to the cultural and religious heritage in the liberated territories of Azerbaijan.

On the sidelines of the 52nd session of the Human Rights Council, the OIC Secretary-General, H.E. Mr. Hissein Brahim Taha, met, on March 1, 2023, with Mr. Volker Türk, UN High Commissioner for Human Rights.

The Secretary-General welcomed Mr. Türk's comprehensive approach to human rights, indicating that the OIC is highly dedicated to the promotion and protection of human rights, and that its relevant charters and mechanisms are aligned with international standards. For his part, the High Commissioner for Human Rights expressed his appreciation of the role played by the OIC in the field of human rights. He underlined the importance for the international commu-

nity to celebrate, during the year 2023, the 75th of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

Both parties discussed various issues of common interest, including the situation in Palestine and in Afghanistan, as well as the situation of Muslim communities and minorities in non-OIC Member States. They agreed on the need for the international community to firmly tackle the issue of Islamophobia, and emphasized the importance of marking the International Day to Combat Islamophobia, on March 15th, in accordance with the UNGA Resolution 76/254. They reaffirmed their shared willingness to further strengthen cooperation in the field of human rights.

The OIC Secretary-General met with Mr. Nikhil Seth, Executive Director of the United Nations Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR). Both parties explored the ways and means to enhance cooperation between the OIC and UNITAR.

The Secretary-General met with Ms. Mirjana Spoljaric Egger, President of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), at the ICRC headquarters in Geneva. Both sides exchanged views on the ways and means to address humanitarian crises currently unfolding in OIC Member States. They particularly discussed the latest developments in Palestine as well as the situation in Afghanistan and in the Sahel and Lake Chad Basin. They stressed the need to scale up bilateral cooperation to promote international humanitarian law and principles.

The OIC and the United Nations Consider Holding a Joint Conference to Raise the Level of Education for Rohingya Refugees



The Special Envoy of the United Nations Secretary-General on Myanmar, Noeleen Heyzer, visited the OIC Headquarters in Saudi Arabia in Jeddah. She was received by H.E. Mr. Yousef Al-Dobeay, Assistant Secretary-General (ASG) for Political Affairs.

The meeting discussed the Special Envoy's proposal of holding a joint international conference in partnership between the OIC and the UN aimed at establishing and enhancing practical and long-term pathways to raise the level of education for both Rohingya refugees and host communities, and to back up appeals for urgent international support.

The ASG appreciated the UN Special Envoy's practical approach at a time when concrete solutions are urgently needed, and assured her of full cooperation and support from the OIC General Secretariat. He reaffirmed the OIC's firm support for the Rohingya, and called on the international community to take more responsibility to ensure the protection of fundamental rights, including the right to full citizenship, and to provide conditions conducive for their voluntary, safe and dignified return. He expressed deep

concern over the deteriorating security, human rights and humanitarian situation in Myanmar, and its adverse consequences for the Rohingya.

The ASG stressed that the Rohingya issue is a permanent item on the OIC agenda, with full support from Member States. He briefed the Special Envoy on the status of the case filed at the International Court of Justice by The Gambia, on behalf of OIC, against Myanmar.

For her part, the UN Special Envoy noted that while it has been more than five years since the forced mass exodus from Rakhine State, the Rohingya continue to suffer severe hardships, including the recent announcement of food rationing for Rohingya refugees resulting from a severe funding shortfall amid accumulating world crises.

The Special Envoy insisted that continued violence and the fear from an uncertain future because of failure to tackle the root causes of marginalization have led Rohingya refugees to undertake dangerous sea journeys, with the past year being one of the deadliest. She added that the interviews conducted with mothers, young women

and youth from rescued boats all carried a single message: they want a future and education. In this context, she stressed that education is a powerful tool to transform lives, avoid a "lost generation", and enable the Rohingya to become leaders and actively contribute to their community upon their return to Myanmar.

The Special Envoy pointed out that the current situation is unbearable and unsustainable. She called for greater urgency and responsibility-sharing, and recognized Bangladesh's immense generosity in assuming a disproportionate responsibility. She added that while conflict and instability make it difficult to provide adequate conditions for safe and voluntary return, there are areas where significant progress can still be made. The ASG expressed appreciation for the Special Envoy's ideas and initiatives aimed at improving the conditions of Rohingya refugees, indicating that consultations will be held with OIC Member States on this matter.

Both sides renewed their commitment to pursue constructive cooperation on the Rohingya issue.

OIC Delegation Attends 7th Ramadan Iftar Reception in Cambodia

A delegation from the OIC General Secretariat attended the annual Ramadan Iftar reception hosted by H.E. Hun Sen, Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Cambodia, on March 27, 2023, in the Cambodian capital city, Phnom Penh.

This major event was attended by high-ranking personalities from the countries of the region, including the Prime Minister of Malaysia, former Vice-President of Indonesia, and members of the diplomatic corps. In a statement delivered on his behalf by Mr. El Habib Bourane, Director of Muslim Communities and Minorities at the Department of Political Affairs, the OIC Secretary-General, H.E. Mr. Hissein Brahim Taha, indicated that this event testifies to Cambodia's longstanding respect for diversity, peaceful

coexistence and tolerance among all communities, and to the high regard that the Government of Cambodia accords to the Muslim Community. He further noted that the Cambodian Government's promotion of peaceful integration, coexistence and harmony among all communities is a model to follow and a source of inspiration for other countries.

The Secretary-General expressed his appreciation of the constructive and close relations between the OIC and Cambodia, and his commitment to strengthen bilateral cooperation in all areas of mutual interest. Speaking before an audience of over 6000 persons coming from different regions of Cambodia and from neighboring countries, Prime Minister Hun Sen indicated that his

Government has always promoted freedom of religion and religious harmony in Cambodia, by facilitating all religious practices and firmly standing against racism. He insisted that religious harmony is indispensable for building and ensuring peace and development. He called on the Cambodian Islamic Supreme Council to strengthen and expand national and international cooperation in order to mobilize technical and financial assistance to contribute to improving the livelihood of the Muslim community through the development of human capital.

The OIC Delegation held meetings with a number of Cambodian officials, Mufti of Cambodia, and representatives of the Muslim community.

OIC Denounces Acts of Violence Against Muslims in Several States in India

The General Secretariat of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) has followed with deep concern the acts of violence and vandalism targeting the Muslim community in several states in India during the Ram Navami processions, including the burning of a religious school and its library by an extremist Hindu mob in Bihar Sharif on March 31, 2023.

The OIC General Secretariat denounced such provocative acts of violence and van-

dalism, which are a vivid manifestation of mounting Islamophobia and the systemic targeting of the Muslim community in India. The OIC General Secretariat called on the Indian authorities to take firm actions against the instigators and perpetrators of such acts, and to ensure the safety, security, rights, and dignity of the Muslim community in the country.

On March 5, 2023, the OIC Secretary-General, H.E. Mr. Hissein Brahim Taha, expressed

his deep compassion and solidarity with the Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh after a massive fire broke out in some camps in Cox's Bazar, leaving many refugees without shelter.

The Secretary-General called on Member States, relevant institutions, and the world humanitarian community to rescue the Rohingya victims of the blaze and provide them with the needed support.



Earthquake Saps the Joy out of Turks During Ramadan



Adiyaman - Ergen Hava – (DPA)

The Kaplan family, a Turkish name meaning tiger, gathers around a table, set on the floor of the tent in which they are staying, for the first iftar meal of this year's Ramadan in Adiyaman, Turkiye, while the call to prayer is heard from afar. The head of the family, Akram, distributes loaves of bread, while the mother, Asli, pours water into glasses and serves it to her two children. Silence falls over the tent, except for faint voices praying for mercy for those whom they lost in the devastating earthquake that struck Turkiye last month.

The earthquake claimed tens of thousands of human lives Adiyaman alone, located in southeastern Turkiye, while many became homeless.

Six weeks after the disaster, Adiyaman, with a population of 310,000, is still overwhelmed with grief. Many have left the city, while those who have remained are still suffering further hardships, living as they are in temporary shelters, while preparing for the holy month of Ramadan.

Far from the joy that usually accompanied the Iftar in familiar gatherings, the first meal

in Ramadan this year was marked by an atmosphere of grimness, as many were concerned about their new living conditions. Akram commented on this situation, saying, "I never imagined we would receive Ramadan while we are in that situation with profound grief and heavy hearts. I would have liked my sister and her children to have joined us in breaking the fast on the first day of the holy month." Akram could not hold back his tears as he thought of his lost friends and customers in his hair salon, which is now closed.

Akram's sister and her four children died in the earthquake. Every day he visits their graves, watering the flowers and cleaning the tombstones, after placing his sister's scarf and her children's toys on them. Elsewhere, some families, including Akram's family, watch the slaughter of a number of sheep and cattle, to supply the poor with meat, as a tribute to the memory of their dead.

Under normal circumstances, Adiyaman, which is located in the Anatolian region, would prepare for the month of Ramadan early in a festive atmosphere.

Asli, Akram's wife, comments in sorrow on this painful situation, saying, "We will definitely miss the religious and cultural celebrations this year."

Asli recalls the joy that the residents used to feel, when the Mesaharatiya, dressed in Ottoman costumes, would walk down the streets while beating drums, to wake the residents to take Suhoor (a pre-dawn meal taken before starting the day's fast). And when the Maghrib Adhan (call to sunset prayer) is heard and the traditional Iftar cannon sounds, it was customary for families to gather in different neighborhoods to take the Iftar meal collectively. This year, however, the region is still hit by aftershocks, the last of which was of magnitude 5.3 on the Richter scale. Diyanet, the Turkish Religious Affairs Authority, urged residents to donate to help 11 earthquake-hit cities.

Volunteers from all over Turkiye flocked to the region to support relief efforts, including "Aye Dernei" charity organization from Eskişehir Province, which is 990 km from the affected area to the west.



Secretary-General Visits the Affected Areas in Türkiye after the Earthquake

The OIC Secretary-General, H.E. Mr. Hissein Brahim Taha, met, in Ankara on February 23, 2023, with the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Türkiye, H.E. Mr. Mevlüt Çavuşoğlu.

The Secretary-General commended the great efforts of the Turkish Government to contain the crisis, and expressed his condolences over the victims of the devastating earthquake that struck the country. He reviewed the outcomes of his visit to the devastated areas, indicating that he had led the OIC delegation to Gaziantep and saw first-hand the enormity of the disaster. He hailed the tremendous work undertaken by the Turkish Government to handle the disaster, and reiterated the expression of his solidarity with Türkiye in this trying time. He thanked the Member States for the support they have provided to Türkiye, and appealed to them to continue their support to help contain the crisis.

For his part, the Turkish Minister expressed his gratitude and appreciation to the Secretary-General for his initiative to visit Türkiye and for his solidarity with the earthquake-stricken areas. He extended his thanks, through the OIC, to the Member States that

have contributed to the rescue campaigns and helped provide havens for those who have become homeless. He expressed confidence in the OIC, stating that cooperation and coordination with the Organization would continue as part of efforts to overcome the crisis.

The meeting also touched on issues of common interest, including the Cause of Palestine, Islamophobia, and Muslim communities in non-OIC Member States.

On February 8, 2023, the OIC Secretary-General had a phone conversation with the Foreign Minister of Türkiye, H.E. Mr. Mevlüt Çavuşoğlu, following the devastating earthquake that left behind a heavy toll of deaths and injuries, along with a great damage to residential buildings, public facilities, and key infrastructures.

The Secretary-General offered his sincere condolences, on behalf of the OIC General Secretariat and the Member States, to the people and government of Türkiye, expressing his sympathy with the victims of this painful disaster, and wishing a speedy recovery for the injured and speedy relief for those trapped under the rubble of buildings destroyed by the severe earthquake.

The Secretary-General informed the Turkish Foreign Minister that the General Secretariat had made an urgent appeal to the Member States and the OIC humanitarian institutions, as well as to international partners, so that they promptly provide the needed humanitarian support to the victims of the devastating earthquake. In the same context, the Secretary-General requested the Islamic Solidarity Fund to do what is necessary to provide relief to those afflicted by this disaster.

The Secretary-General commended the efforts of the Turkish authorities and rescue teams, which responded quickly and effectively to confront the devastating effects of the earthquake, provide support for those affected, and rescue the injured trapped under the demolished buildings.

For his part, the Turkish Foreign Minister thanked the Secretary-General for the solidarity he showed with the Turkish people. He also appreciated the urgent appeal made by the Secretary-General, and thanked all countries and institutions that have provided, and continue to provide, moral and material support.



Secretary-General Sees First-hand Earthquake Damage in Türkiye

Following the devastating earthquake that hit Türkiye and Syria on February 6, 2023, the OIC Secretary-General, H.E. Mr. Hissein Brahim Taha, made an urgent appeal to Member States and to the OIC humanitarian institutions and international partners to extend urgent humanitarian assistance for the victims of the severe earthquake that left a high death toll in Türkiye and Syria.

The Secretary-General expressed hope that the sense of solidarity that has always characterized the OIC Member States and relevant organs, and the international community at large, will help Türkiye and Syria face the humanitarian emergency situation and ensure the reconstruction of the destroyed buildings and infrastructures.

On February 22, 2023, the OIC Secretary-General, H.E. Mr. Hissein Brahim Taha, began a visit to Türkiye to see first-hand the enormous damage caused by the devastating earthquake that struck eleven cities in different regions of the country.

The Secretary-General started his visit with a tour of the province of Gaziantep. At the headquarters of the Turkish Disaster and Emergency Management Authority, (AFAD), he met with the Undersecretary of the Turkish Ministry of Interior, Mr. Mazmat Ersoy,

the Governor of Gaziantep, Mr. Dawood Gul, and the Mayoress of the City, H.E. Mrs. Fatima Shaheen, in addition to the President of the Gaziantep Chamber of Industry and Trade, H.E. Mr. Adnan Infaïrd, and a number of Chamber officials.

The Secretary General was extensively briefed on the catastrophic consequences of the earthquake, the most severe in Türkiye's recent history. The stricken area was subjected to three strong and successive earthquakes over a period of fifteen days, affecting about 13 million people, and causing billions of dollars in losses, with changes in the geographical shape of the country.

The Turkish side expressed thanks and gratitude to the OIC Member States for their prompt response, stressing the dire need for hundreds of thousands of tents and containers to fill the gap in basic humanitarian needs in the disaster areas, especially with the holy month of Ramadan fast approaching amid these difficult circumstances experienced by a huge number of families without shelter or support.

The Secretary-General indicated that his visit aimed at obtaining first-hand information about the disaster, to report thereon to Member States and OIC Institutions.

The Secretary-General visited the camps of those displaced by the earthquake in the city of Nurda ı, where he saw first-hand the tireless efforts exerted to support and shelter the large numbers of affected people.

During his visit, the Secretary-General met with high-level Turkish economic officials to obtain first-hand information about the severe losses caused by the earthquake and the aftershocks, and the devastation that affected eleven cities in southern and central Türkiye. He was received by the Minister of Finance and Treasury, H.E. Nureddin Nebat, in his office in Ankara. The Minister expressed his appreciation and thanks to the Secretary-General for this visit and for the OIC's solidarity with the earthquake-stricken areas. He briefed the Secretary-General on the huge material losses caused by the disaster.

The Secretary-General also met with the Head of the Turkish Strategy and Budget Presidency, H.E. Ibrahim Chanel. Both sides discussed common issues, especially co-operation between the OIC and Ankara in response to the earthquake and the urgent needs and requirements to contain its devastating effects.



OIC Participates in Riyadh Humanitarian Forum

The General Secretariat of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) participated in the 3rd Riyadh International Humanitarian Forum with a high-level delegation headed by the OIC Secretary-General, H.E. Mr. Hissein Brahim Taha. The delegation also included Amb. Tarig Ali Bakheet, Assistant Secretary-General for Humanitarian, Cultural and Social Affairs.

On the sidelines of the Forum, the Secretary-General met, on February 20, 2023, with Mr. Filippo Grandi, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. Both sides stressed the longstanding relations between the OIC and the Office of the High Commissioner. They exchanged views on the situation of refugees and displaced persons in the Islamic world, especially those living in catastrophic humanitarian situations as a result of droughts, earthquakes, floods, and armed conflicts.

The Secretary-General stressed the importance of prompt action to prevent the spread of humanitarian crises, mitigate the effects of natural disasters, and strengthen peace-building measures in order to ensure the voluntary and safe return of displaced people, especially children, women and the elderly, to their home-countries. He pointed out that the OIC shares the concern of the UNHCR and other humanitarian partners about the magnitude of the humanitarian response that needs more support as hu-

manitarian crises are increasing.

For his part, the High Commissioner stressed the pivotal role of the OIC in assisting refugees in Member States, considering that some of the OIC Member States are among the largest donors in the world, while other OIC countries host large numbers of refugees and displaced persons.

Both sides agreed to proceed with the implementation of the activities agreed upon in the Action Plan for the period 2022-2025 recently signed between them, especially on issues of common interest in the Sahel and Lake Chad region, Afghanistan, Somalia, and the Rohingya Muslim minority.

For his part, the OIC Assistant Secretary-General for Humanitarian, Social and Cultural Affairs, Amb. Tarig Ali Bakheet, met, on February 21, 2023 on the sidelines of the 3rd Riyadh International Humanitarian Forum, with Mr. Osman Al-Bilbeisi, Regional Director of the International Organization for Migration (IOM).

Both sides stressed the excellent OIC-IOM relations within the framework of the MoU signed in 2003, and which the two parties will soon renew.

Amb. Bakheet praised the efforts jointly made by the OIC General Secretariat and the IOM to sign an action plan between the OIC Humanitarian Department and the IOM Regional Office with the aim of developing mutual cooperation in pursuit of shared

goals.

Amb. Bakheet met, on February 21, 2023, with H.E Ms. Pamela Barton, Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict. Both sides discussed cooperation between the OIC and the Office of the Special Representative. Amb. Bakheet highlighted the special attention that the OIC attaches to women's issues, especially the need to protect women against all types of violence, in line with the OIC's resolutions at Summit or CFM level, which culminated in the establishment of the Women's Development Organization (WDO). He stressed, in this regard, the importance of promoting coordination between the Office of the Special Representative and the Women's Development Organization to explore areas of mutual cooperation.

Amb. Bakheet met, on February 20, 2023, with Mr. Michael Koehler, Deputy Director General for Humanitarian Aid and Civil Protection at the European Commission.

The meeting discussed relations between the Department of Humanitarian Affairs at the OIC General Secretariat and its counterpart in the European Commission, in addition to various humanitarian issues, especially the ways to support humanitarian and development work in Member States affected by conflicts and natural disasters.



OIC Holds Meetings with International Humanitarian Partners

The OIC General Secretariat held a series of meetings on the sidelines of the Riyadh International Humanitarian Forum, convened on February 20-21, 2023.

Amb. Tarig Ali Bakheet, Assistant Secretary-General for Humanitarian, Cultural and Social Affairs, and the OIC delegation met with H. E Mr. Andrew Mitchell, UK Minister of State in the Foreign Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) in charge of Development and Africa.

Both parties exchanged views on key humanitarian issues as well as on ways and means to enhance relations between the OIC and the United Kingdom based on the MoU signed in 2012. This MoU covers cooperation in several areas, including peace promotion, interfaith and intercultural dialogue, humanitarian assistance, and human rights.

The meeting emphasized the need for increased coordination to address the humanitarian needs especially in OIC Member States, including Afghanistan, the Sahel region, Horn of Africa, and Lake Chad region. Ambassador Bakheet met, on February 21, 2023, with the Deputy Assistant Administrator of the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), Mr. Larry Sacks.

Both sides exchanged views on ways to boost partnership within the framework of the MoU signed between them, which in-

volves mutual consultations, strategic dialogue, information-sharing, participation in disaster response, as well as training and operational support. They renewed their commitment to strengthening cooperation on humanitarian assistance and to uphold humanitarian principles.

Under the MoU signed in 2015, the OIC General Secretariat and the European Commission agreed to exchange views on a regular basis, lay the foundations for dialogue and cooperation in areas of common interest, and promote mutual understanding.

The OIC Department of Humanitarian Affairs and the General Directorate of Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations of the European Commission stressed their determination to scale up cooperation in terms of humanitarian and relief action, in accordance with their respective mandates and the existing legal frameworks.

Under the MoU, the two institutions shall explore the ways and means to deepen dialogue between them and enhance their cooperation in terms of humanitarian policies and operations in Afghanistan, the Sahel region, the Horn of Africa, the Rohingya crisis, and the Middle East.

The General Directorate will work to provide a space for regular consultations with the aim of sharing expertise and knowledge on humanitarian assistance in areas of common interest, in addition to building capacities to

enable better preparedness and response to disasters and risk management.

The MoU also provides for exploring opportunities for bilateral cooperation to enhance respect for international humanitarian law, increase coordination, and implement joint activities in areas of strategic priority with a view to increasing the efficiency and effectiveness of humanitarian aid delivery operations. It also involves implementing joint advocacy activities on common humanitarian issues, as well as supporting effective humanitarian action through joint initiatives aimed at strengthening the international system for the coordination of humanitarian affairs and the development of humanitarian policies.

Amb. Bakheet met with H.E. Philippe Lazarini, Under-Secretary-General of the United Nations and Commissioner-General of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA).

Amb. Bakheet expressed the OIC's deep appreciation and support for UNRWA for its continuous work to provide protection and basic services to Palestinian refugees. He referred, in this regard, to the resolutions adopted by Islamic Summits and the CFM meetings, urging the OIC Member States to support the UNRWA budget.

Condolences to the Victims of Humanitarian Crises in Yemen and Pakistan



The past year witnessed a record increase in the number of people around the world who were forced to flee their homes, according to the British newspaper "The Guardian". According to figures published by the Internal Displacement Monitoring Center of the Norwegian Refugee Council (IDMC), the number of internally displaced people (IDPs) around the world reached 71.1 million as of the end of 2022, compared to 59.1 million in 2021. A number of OIC Member States have experienced humanitarian crises that claimed

many human lives, caused massive destruction of infrastructure, and displaced a large number of people, leaving them homeless, including in Pakistan and Yemen. On January 29, 2023, the OIC Secretary-General, H.E. Mr. Hissein Brahim Taha, expressed heartfelt condolences to the Government and people of Pakistan after many lost their lives or were injured in the explosion of a passenger bus that crashed into a pillar and fell off a bridge in Baluchistan, Pakistan. The Secretary-General expressed sympathy

with the families of the victims, praying Allah to bestow His mercy upon them, and to grant quick recovery for the injured. The OIC Secretary-General also offered his deep condolences to the leadership and people of Yemen over the scores of victims who lost their lives or were injured in the stampede that occurred in Sana'a on April, 20 2023. The Secretary-General expressed sympathy with the families of the victims, praying Allah to bestow His mercy upon them, and to grant quick recovery for the injured.

Arab Meeting to Advance the Situation of People with Special Needs

The OIC General Secretariat affirmed its commitment to strengthening cooperation and coordination with the League of Arab States (LAS) in the field of social development, as part of the cooperation agreement signed between the two sides. This was part of a statement delivered by Amb. Tarig Ali Bakheet, OIC Assistant Secretary-General for Humanitarian, Cultural and

Social Affairs, at the high-level meeting of the Council of Arab Ministers of Social Affairs, held in Doha, Qatar, on January 25, 2023. Ambassador Bakheet indicated that the Second Arab Decade for Persons with Disabilities represents an opportunity to support those efforts in following up the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and beyond, by exploring ways

and means to improve the conditions of this social group; thereby achieving equality and social justice among all members of society. Ambassador Bakheet also commended the second edition of the Arab Multidimensional Poverty Report, noting that it falls in line with the objectives of the OIC Ten-Year Program and the relevant resolutions.

A Mysterious Islamic Artifact Ended up in New Zealand



Upon his arrival at the Mori village in the lush North Island forests of Aotearoa, New Zealand, in the late 1830s, the missionary William Colenso noticed something curious. Colenso was the first European to visit the community but he was distracted by a pot. According to his account, Mori women were cooking “potatoes” (possibly kumara, a sweet potato-like tuber) in a bronze pot over a hearth, rather than the more traditional method of placing heated stones in a wooden vessel. It was particularly odd because the village had not established trade with foreigners and therefore, thought Colenso, had no access to bronze, which was not manufactured on the island at the time. Colenso looked closer. It was a strange pot indeed. Roughly 6.5 inches high and 6 inches across, it had prominent ridges and an uneven lip, as if part of the pot had broken off. Embossed on the bronze were loops and swirls of a language that wasn’t English. This was no pot, Colenso realized. It was the top of a ship’s bell.

The Mori women told Colenso that it had been with them for generations. Their ancestors had found it in the roots of a tree that had toppled in a storm. Colenso traded the bell for a cast iron pot. When he died in 1899, the object was bequeathed to the Colonial Museum, which would later become the Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa, located in Wellington.

For more than a century, scholars puzzled over the object, known as the Tamil Bell for its embossed writing, which is in Tamil, a language spoken today in southeastern India, Sri Lanka, and Singapore.

the bell came to New Zealand from a Muslim area. There are no historical records or archaeological evidence that Muslim Tamil seafarers ever sailed to or traded with New Zealand. Simply put, the bell defies explanation. “It’s like a UFO,”

Almost everything else about the bell, including how it ended up in New Zealand, remained a mystery until Nalina Gopal, a museum curator from Singapore’s Indian Heritage Centre, arrived in Wellington in

2019. Her tenacious detective work would reveal surprising details about the bell—and also raise new questions.

When Gopal returned to Singapore, she took the bell with her, on a loan to the Indian Heritage Centre. For the seven months it was on display before returning to Te Papa, Gopal says it drew Tamil Muslims excited to see this fragment of their past. Gopal was struck; she rejoiced when she knew that the bell came to New Zealand from a Muslim area. There are no historical records or archaeological evidence that Muslim Tamil seafarers ever sailed to or traded with New Zealand. Simply put, the bell defies explanation. “It’s like a UFO,” Gopal says.

The bell’s original swell is gone, and only the crown, not much larger than her cupped hands, remains. Its size raises questions about Colenso’s original story: Would it have been big enough for cooking potatoes?

Gopal dug into previous theories about the bell. As early as 1882, New Zealand scientist William Maskell believed the bell might have been in the possession of some sailors travelling from a Muslim Tamil port, who left it as a souvenir but somehow lost it on the North Island. Their vessel sank and the crew died or abandoned it. Maskell believed the vessel might have drifted for thousands of miles before wrecking on New Zealand shores.

Secretary-General Calls on Islamic World Universities to Develop Digital Education

The OIC Secretary-General, H.E. Mr. Hissein Brahim Taha, called on OIC universities to consider developing their digital infrastructure post COVID-19 towards an improved learning experience, similar to other institutions around the world.

The Secretary-General launched this call in a statement delivered on his behalf by H.E. Amb. Askar Mussinov, Assistant Secretary-General for Science and Technology, at the 35th Meeting of the Governing Council of the Islamic University in Niger (IUN), which kicked off on February 26, 2023 in Niamey, Niger.

The Secretary-General commended the role of the Council and the IUN administration in keeping the university operational despite the enormous challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic. He advised the IUN administration to open up to other universities in the OIC Member States and explore opportunities for collaboration with those universities.

The meeting was chaired by H.E. Amb. Nasser bin Abdullah Al-Zaabi, President of the Permanent Council of the Islamic Solidarity Fund and Chairman of the University Governing Council. It was attended, among others, by the Minister of Higher Education, Research and Innovation in the Republic of



Niger, H.E. Dr. Mamoudou Djibo, and the Assistant Secretary-General of the World Muslim League, Dr. Abdul Rahman Al-Zaid. The meeting considered reports by the Rector, External Auditors and the Academic Committee, and adopted a number of resolutions aimed at improving the administrative and academic performance of the University.

The Islamic University in Niger (IUN), which started off with a small number of students

in 1986, now has over 4000 students with nine faculties, compared to only two at its inception. The university was further boosted by the launching of King Abdallah bin Abdulaziz Al-Saud Girls' Campus in Niamey on March 29, 2021. The new campus has enabled the IUN to increase its student admission capacity and to provide adequate learning facilities, including a library and laboratories for different specialties.

University of Jordan Organizes Workshop on Modern Spectroscopic Techniques



The OIC Assistant Secretary-General for Science and Technology, Amb. Askar Mussinov, attended, on March 12, 2023, the international workshop on "Modern Spectroscopic Techniques and their Applications in Research", organized in Amman, Jordan, jointly by the University of Jordan and COMSTECH.

On behalf of the OIC General Secretariat, Amb. Mussinov offered remarks in which he welcomed all participants in the workshop, which brought together prominent scholars from OIC Member States, and others from some non-OIC countries. The partnership of COMSTECH and the University of Jordan in the organization of this high-profile scientific event coincided with the University's newly acquired status as member of COMSTECH Consortium of Excellence (CCoE). This membership was officially announced on March 12, 2023 at the workshop inaugural session.

Water Resources Development and Management in the Islamic World



Under the patronage of HRH Prince El Hasan Bin Talal, the Jordanian Capital, Amman, hosted, on March 13, 2023, the 13th High-level Policy Symposium of the Inter-Islamic Network on Water Resources Development and Management (INWRDAM).

The theme of the symposium, organized by INWRDAM jointly with COMSTECH, is “WEFE Nexus as a Catalyst for Policy Making and Regional Cooperation in the Levant, the Gulf, and Africa”. Representatives from Member States, regional and international organizations, and international partners took part in this event.

Amb. Askar Mussinov, Assistant Secretary General for Science and Technology, participated in this event and delivered a statement on behalf of H.E. the OIC Secretary-General. He highlighted the OIC’s efforts to tackle water-related issues in the OIC Member States. Stressing, in this regard, the importance of the implementation of the OIC Water Vision - “Working Together for a Water-Secure Future”. He recalled that the establishment of the OIC Water Council in 2016 was a significant step toward promot-

ing the activities recommended by the OIC Water Vision, which involve capacity-building, technology transfer, and the sharing of experience and expertise. He indicated that the First and Second OIC Summits on Science and Technology, held in Astana in 2017 and in Abu Dhabi in 2021 respectively, accorded high priority to strengthening Member States’ capacity to optimize the use of water resources.

On the occasion of the World Water Day, celebrated on March 22 of each year, the OIC Secretary-General, H.E. Mr. Hissein Brahim Taha, stressed that the World Water Day 2023 campaign, called “Be the change”, is a call for everyone to promote societal awareness of the importance of water conservation and storage, to develop alternative water sources, and to establish regulations for a water-secure future. He noted that water crises, like any other global crisis, require a cohesive international community that enables all stakeholders to work together to achieve common goals, by joining efforts and facilitating knowledge sharing and capacity building.

The Secretary-General emphasized that water security is an issue of strategic importance for the OIC Member States. He added that the challenges of ensuring access to water and the management of water-related risks and emergencies are becoming more pronounced. The enormity of the challenge requires a collective response within a framework of global, regional and sub-regional cooperation.

The Secretary-General reiterated that the OIC General Secretariat and the relevant OIC institutions remain committed to working with Member States and all stakeholders to ensure the realization of the common objectives spelled out in the OIC Water Vision Implementation Plan, approved in 2018 in Egypt. The Plan provides a framework for promoting cooperation toward a water-secure future in the Muslim world, through increased collaboration, the sharing of best practices, the transfer of technology, as well as the building of capacity and expertise in water-related fields.

OIC Holds Extraordinary Meeting in Response to Vile Act of Holy Quran Desecration in Some European Countries



At the invitation of the Republic of Türkiye, the OIC Executive Committee convened, on January 31, 2023, an extraordinary meeting, at the headquarters of the OIC General Secretariat in Jeddah, to discuss the vile act of desecration of the Holy Quran in Sweden, the Netherlands, and Denmark.

The Final Communiqué issued by the meeting strongly condemned the recent despicable aggressions against the Holy Quran, and called upon the respective governments to take effective actions to prevent the recurrence of these vile acts. It deplored the global rise of incidents of racial and religious intolerance and violence, including Islamophobia, and urged all the UN Member States to implement Paragraph 150 of the Durban Declaration and Program of Action.

The Communiqué condemned all attempts to denigrate the sanctity of the Holy Quran as well as other sacred values and symbols of Islam, including the Holy Prophet (PBUH), under the garb of freedom of expression, which runs counter to

the spirit of Articles 10 and 20 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), and called on the international community to stand against these attempts.

The Communiqué called on the Ambassadors of the OIC Member States in the countries where such vile acts against the Holy Quran and other Islamic holy symbols take place, to make collective efforts at the level of national parliaments, media, civil society organizations as well as governmental institutions, in order to convey the OIC's stance in this regard, and to prompt the relevant authorities to take the necessary legislative actions in order to criminalize such attacks, taking into consideration the fact that the exercise of freedom of expression involves certain duties and responsibilities.

The Communiqué called on all the OIC Overseas Missions (New York, Geneva and Brussels) to take the initiative, in the international organizations to which they are accredited, to address these acts of hatred against Islam and its sacred symbols in

the interpretation of the relevant conventions, as well as to work for the formulation of new international legal instruments to that end.

The Communiqué urged Muslims who hold the citizenship of those countries where Islamophobic attacks against the Holy Quran and other sacred values take place, to resort to local courts and seek legal remedies, with the guidance of a specialized legal advisor, before filing cases to the international judicial bodies, if need be. The Communiqué called on all Governments to fully implement the existing domestic legal and administrative frameworks and/or adopt new legislation if need be, consistent with their obligations under international law, norms and standards, in order to protect all individuals and communities against religion-based hatred and violence, and to ensure the protection of places of worship. The implementation of this Plan of Action.

UNGA Celebrates First Anniversary of International Day to Combat Islamophobia

A high-level event was convened at the United Nations General Assembly in New York to commemorate the International Day to Combat Islamophobia, in line with the relevant UNGA resolution adopted on 15 March 2022.

The event was chaired by H. E. Bilawal Bhutto Zardari, Foreign Minister of Pakistan and Chair of the 48th CFM session. It was attended by H.E. Mr. Csaba Korosi, President of the UN General Assembly, and H.E. Mr.

Antonio Guterres, Secretary General of the United Nations.

The opening session was addressed by H.E. Mr. Hissein Brahim Taha, OIC Secretary-General, H.E. Mr. Antonio Guterres, UN Secretary-General, and H.E. Mr. Csaba Korosi, President of the UN General Assembly. In his video address to this event, the OIC Secretary-General drew the attention of the United Nations and the international community to the negative repercussions

of religion-based violence. He underscored the fact that religious hatred and intolerance must have no place in our societies. He called on all countries as well as international and regional organizations to commemorate March 15th as International Day to Combat Islamophobia, as part of their collective efforts to combat incitement to religion-based hatred and intolerance and to promote dialogue and mutual understanding.

A German Village has More Ukrainian Refugees than Inhabitants



Seeth – Birgitta von Gildenfelt (DPA)

For every inhabitant of the Schleswig-Holstein village of Seeth, which has almost 700 inhabitants, there is more than one refugee. Around 790 refugees and asylum seekers are housed in the state accommodation for refugees (Luk) there, as of March 21. In addition, there are 17 refugees assigned to the municipality. Most of the people in the Luk (719) come from Ukraine. The remaining residents are asylum seekers.

The honorary mayor of Seeth, Ernst-Wilhelm Schulz, is incredibly proud of his citizens, he says over coffee and cake in his living room; proud of the acceptance of the situation, even if the ratio between refugees and residents does not fit numerically.

When the Luk about a year ago after the beginning of the Russian war of aggression against the Ukraine was reopened, there was an incredibly great willingness to help, as Schulz describes. Sometimes the Seether are also invited to events in the state accommodation. "I go there every time. That goes without saying. They are citizens, just like everyone else."

Seeth is a village in rural North Friesland. It is about six kilometers from the small town

of Friedrichstadt, and the bus ride to Husum takes around 40 minutes. There is a baker, a fire brigade, a sports club, a rifle club, ring riders, a theater group. No doctor, no school, no kindergarten. The nearest grocery store is in the village of Stapel, which is about three kilometers from the state shelter. Few people are out on the streets on this rainy day.

The coexistence of locals and refugees does not, however, work so quietly everywhere. In Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania, for example, plans to build accommodation in the 500-inhabitant town of Upahl have been causing protests for weeks. Container accommodation with 400 spaces was initially planned here. Most recently, the district council decided to demand a limit of 200.

According to the State Office for Immigration and Refugees, the number of refugees and asylum seekers who come to Schleswig-Holstein alone has multiplied as a result of the war in Ukraine. In 2021, 4209 people came, in 2022 there were 37,434. According to the Federal Ministry of the Interior, a good 1.055 million people (as of March 21, 2023) came to Germany in connection with the Ukraine war alone.

After the beginning of the war, state accommodation was reactivated in the northernmost federal state. One of them is in the former Stapelholm barracks in Seeth. "We were under a lot of pressure at the time because a lot of people came to Schleswig-Holstein from the Ukraine," said Wolfgang Kossert, spokesman for the State Office for Immigration and Refugees. "We needed additional accommodation. The vacant barracks, which used to be state accommodation, were ideal for this."

At first, only Ukrainians were housed here, but asylum seekers have been coming again for some time. So far, the shelter should be closed again at the end of 2023 – but there are indications that the contract will be extended until 2024.

Originally, the people who arrived at the state shelters were supposed to be assigned to a commune after about ten days. But, the cities and municipalities do not have enough living space for the many people; and in November the state government increased the length of stay in the state accommodation to several weeks.

Secretary-General Addresses a Conference on “Women in Islam”



The OIC Secretary General, H.E. Mr. Hissein Brahim Taha, delivered, on March 8, 2023, a video-recorded speech at the High-level Segment of the Conference on “Women in Islam: Understanding the Rights and Identity of Women in the Islamic World”, organized by the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, on the sidelines of the 67th session of the Committee on the Status of Women in New York. The Conference addressed the persistent misperceptions about the rights guaranteed by Islam to women, by exposing the related fallacies and highlighting the true authentic values of Islam.

The High-Level Segment of the Conference started with opening remarks by H.E. Mr. Bilawal Bhutto Zardari, Foreign Minister of Pakistan, Chair of the 48th CFM session, followed by remarks by high-level dignitaries and representatives from the UN and from OIC Member States. The session was moderated by Ms. Hina Rabbani Khar, Minister of State for the Foreign Minister of Pakistan. In his address to the Conference, the OIC Secretary-General commended Pakistan for its valuable efforts to promote women’s status and empowerment in all fields, for its active role in supporting the OIC goals, and for

its efforts to preserve the rights of Muslim women and enhancing their role in development across the OIC Member States.

On the occasion of the International Women’s Day, the Secretary-General sent a message of reassurance to all women in OIC Member States and around the globe, encouraging them to have a strong belief and trust in their capacities to assume leadership roles and to participate effectively in the development of their countries. He affirmed that Islam has always recognized the role of women in promoting development in societies, and upheld the dignity and the right of women to be engaged in all spheres of life, including their full rights to education, work and social participation.

On the other hand, the OIC General Secretariat signed, on March 23, 2023, an agreement with the Government of Burkina Faso to implement a project for women’s empowerment and childcare in places of refuge and displacement. The signing ceremony was held at the end of the field visit paid by the joint delegation of the OIC General Secretariat, Islamic Solidarity Fund, and the OIC Mission in Niger, on March 19-24, 2023, to refugees and displaced people in Burkina

Faso. The visit was part of the follow-up to the implementation of the relevant project approved by the 8th Ministerial Conference on Women, held in Cairo July 2021.

The agreement was signed, on behalf of the OIC General Secretariat, by Dr. Amina Al-Hajri, Director General of Cultural, Social and Family Affairs, and, on behalf of the Government of Burkina Faso, by Mr. Karamoko Jean-Marie Traoré, Minister Delegate for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Regional Cooperation and Burkinabe Abroad, in charge of Regional Cooperation.

The joint delegation met with H.E. Mrs. Olivia Rumba, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Regional Cooperation and Burkinabe Abroad, and with senior officials at the Ministry, as well as with H.E. Mrs. Nandi Soumie Diallo, Minister of National Solidarity, Humanitarian Action, National Reconciliation, Women and the Family. Both Ministers welcomed the initiative of the General Secretariat to implement this project and affirmed the readiness of their ministries and the competent authorities in Burkina Faso to cooperate with the General Secretariat and smooth out all difficulties to ensure the success of the project.

On International Women's Day: Secretary-General Stresses the Need to Support Women's Achievements in Technology and Innovation

On the occasion of the International Women's Day, celebrated on March 8 of each year, the OIC Secretary-General, H.E. Mr. Houssein Ibrahim Taha, stressed the great importance the OIC attaches to strengthening the role of women in the development of societies, highlighting their contributions to various fields, and empowering them to face difficulties and challenges and exercise their rights. He indicated that the OIC believes in the significant role that women play in the comprehensive and sustainable development process, and recognizes their achievements at various levels and in all fields, especially in the areas of digitization, technology and innovation.

On this important global occasion, held this year under the theme "DigitALL: Innovation and Technology for Gender Equality", the Secretary-General congratulated women in the Islamic countries and all over the world for their achievements in all fields, particularly in terms of digital technology and innovation, despite all the difficulties facing them.

In view of the widening gender gap in

terms of participation in development, the Secretary-General called on Member States to exert more efforts and smooth out all obstacles in order to ensure women's full participation in all fields; thereby promoting a safer, more inclusive and more equitable digital world. This, he added, will help face many global crises and create a better future, not only for women and girls, but for all humanity.

On the "International Day of Women and Girls in Science", celebrated on February 11th, the OIC Secretary-General, H.E. Houssein Ibrahim Taha, called on Member States and relevant OIC institutions to intensify efforts to guarantee the rights of all women and girls in science and technology, to strengthen international cooperation, and to increase awareness in this regard.

It is worth recalling that the 7th OIC Ministerial Conference on Women, held in December 2018 in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso, had adopted a resolution for the promotion of Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) Education for women and girls.

On February 14, 2023, the Women's Consultative Council (WCC) of the OIC Ministerial Conference on Women held its 8th meeting virtually, chaired by Amb. Naela Jabr, Chair of the WCC.

In her address to the meeting, delivered on her behalf by Amb. Nada Diraz, Deputy Assistant Minister of Foreign Affairs for Cultural Affairs and member of the WCC from Egypt, H.E. Dr. Maya Morsi, President of the National Council for Women in Egypt and Chair of the current session of the OIC Ministerial Conference on Women, offered condolences, on behalf of the WCC, to the peoples of Syria and Turkiye, following the severe earthquake that struck parts of the two countries early February, which resulted in a heavy death toll. She also wished a speedy recovery to the injured. She pointed out that the issue of women's empowerment is of great interest to the political leadership in Egypt, indicating that Egypt, as Chair of the Conference, stands ready to exert more efforts to promote, protect, and advance women's rights in the Islamic world.



OIC Celebrates Arabic Language Upon Saudi Initiative



Under the auspices of H.H. Prince Badr bin Abdullah bin Farhan, Culture Minister of Saudi Arabia and Chairman of the Board of Trustees of “King Salman Global Academy for the Arabic Language”, the OIC organized, jointly with the Academy, the “Forum Celebrating Arabic Language for Islamic Peoples”.

This event was held on February 2, 2023, at the headquarters of the OIC General Secretariat in Jeddah.

Addressing the Forum, the OIC Secretary-General, H.E. Mr. Hissein Brahim Taha, highlighted the contributions of the Arabic language to enriching human civilization, having served as a catalyst for knowledge production and dissemination, helped to transfer scientific and philosophical knowledge to Europe in the Renaissance era, and made it possible to establish inter-cultural dialogue across times and places.

Arabic, he added, is the language of the Qur’an, and is an integral part of the performance of worship and prayer in the sublime Islamic religion. It is also one of the oldest and most widespread Semitic languages in the world, used by over 467 million people. It is among the four languages most widely used on the Internet, and also among the most widespread and developing language-

es.

The Secretary-General noted that what has so far been achieved in terms of Arabic language promotion does not fully match the current digital revolution and the accompanying challenges. This calls for greater efforts to enhance the presence of this rich and creative language in international forums, so that it can keep pace, thanks to its richness and diversity, with present-day developments and challenges.

The Secretary-General indicated that the OIC, keen on giving the Arabic language the attention and care it deserves, and with the cooperation and initiative of Saudi Arabia, submitted a draft resolution to the CFM meeting in Mauritania, providing for the celebration of the Arabic language and the enhancement of its presence and utilization in regional and international forums. He pointed out that the initiative to celebrate the World Arabic Language Day, in partnership with King Salman Global Academy for the Arabic Language, clearly reflects the OIC General Secretariat’s openness to all relevant actors in Member States, who are keen on giving the Arabic language the status it deserves, and on engaging in joint action to support and strengthen the Islamic identity of the Ummah.

The Secretary-General commended the Saudi Council of Ministers’ approval to designate 2023 the “Year of Arabic Poetry”. This initiative reflects the pivotal value of poetry in Arab culture throughout the history of the Arabs, with the Arabian Peninsula having been, throughout history, a fertile place for poetry and poets and an inexhaustible resource for literary masterpieces. This, he added, will strengthen and enhance the position of the Arabic language as an ever-renewed and sustainable fount of Arab culture and civilization.

For his part, Dr. Abdullah bin Saleh Al-Washmi, Acting Secretary-General of King Salman Global Academy for the Arabic Language, addressed the Forum, and indicated that the Academy is pleased to celebrate this occasion in cooperation with the OIC which has 57 Member States, including 22 Arab countries. This, he said, reflects a long-standing global awareness that the Arabic language is a key pillar of Islamic culture. It is described as one of the richest languages in terms of vocabulary, images and metaphors, and semantic depth. Besides, many terms in some Western and Asian languages in various fields, especially sciences, are of Arabic origin.

OIC: Promoting the Use of Arabic for Islamic and Universal Civilizational Construction



Dr. Abdullah bin Saleh Al-Washmi, Acting Secretary-General of King Salman Global Academy for the Arabic Language, indicated that the OIC, to its credit, has always supported the Arabic language since its inception in 1969. Arabic is one of the three official languages of the OIC and its affiliated organs and institutions. This, he added, is part of a broad strategy to utilize the language of the Holy Qur'an for the building of the Islamic and universal civilization, for consolidating the Islamic identity and spreading the values of moderation, and for strengthening the mechanisms of rapprochement among peoples, civilizations and religions.

Dr. Al-Washmi noted that one of the key elements for the advancement of the Islamic Ummah is the preservation of its identity. This is why the world system was early to recognize the importance of the Arabic language, when the UN General Assembly decided, in its 28th session in 1973, to in-

clude Arabic as an official language of the General Assembly and its Main Committees, and to grant it the same privileges enjoyed by other official and working languages in the Security Council and the Economic and Social Council.

Dr. Al-Washmi stressed that the celebration of the Arabic language, at the OIC headquarters, is an opportunity to call for more institutional efforts to enhance the presence of Arabic. Along this line, the King Salman Global Academy for the Arabic Language is seeking to link language with culture and to understand the Arabic language in its broader aesthetic context, being a language associated with literature, music, calligraphy, engravings, as well as wall and other inscriptions.

The Forum was also addressed by Dr. Saleh Al-Suhaibani, Permanent Representative of Saudi Arabia to the OIC, and by Ambassador Daa Al-Din Bamakhrama, Djibouti's Ambassador to Saudi Arabia, Dean of

the Diplomatic Corps accredited to the Kingdom, and Permanent Representative of Djibouti to the OIC.

The Forum featured a visual presentation on the promotion of the Arabic language in international organizations, and the relevant efforts made by the OIC and relevant institutions, including ICESCO, IRCICA, and King Salman International Academy for the Arabic Language.

The Islamic World Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (ICESCO) participated in the "Forum Celebrating Arabic Language for Islamic Peoples". Dr. Majdi Haj Ibrahim, Head of ICESCO Center of Arabic for Non-Arabic Speakers, represented ICESCO via videoconference, delivering a presentation on "ICESCO's efforts to strengthen the international presence of the Arabic language." Dr. Haj Ibrahim reviewed ICESCO's key contributions to advancing Arabic in various fields and strengthening its presence at all local and international levels. He noted that ICESCO, proceeding from its new vision and its awareness of the importance of the Arabic language, is keen to continue working along this line, by adopting modern technologies, software and mechanisms, and providing material and human resources in order to disseminate the Arabic language all over the world.

On the sidelines of the Forum, the OIC Secretary-General received Dr. Abdullah Al-Washmi and his accompanying delegation, and Dr. Saleh Al-Suhaibani. The meeting discussed ways to enhance cooperation between the OIC and the Academy, and to intensify joint work with relevant actors and partners in order to advance the Arabic language, reinforce its presence in all international forums, and accordingly promote identity and solidarity of the Islamic Ummah; Arabic being the language of the Qur'an and a key component of the Arab-Islamic culture.

The meeting agreed to continue efforts toward developing a vision for the implementation of relevant programs and activities in pursuit of shared goals.



OIC Delegation Attends Dakar Financing Summit for Africa's Infrastructure

At the invitation of the African Union Development Agency – NEPAD (AUDA-NEPAD), the Delegation of the OIC General Secretariat, led by H.E. Dr. Ahmad Kawesa Sengendo, Assistant Secretary-General for Economic Affairs, participated in the Second Dakar Financing Summit for Africa's Infrastructure, held under the theme of : "Maintaining the momentum towards world-class infrastructure in Africa", and co-organized by the AUDA-NEPAD and the Government of Senegal in Dakar, Senegal, on February 2-3, 2022.

The Summit highlighted the need to scale up mobilization of funds in Africa from both the private and public sectors towards priority regional infrastructure projects. It provided an adequate platform to engage African leaders, business representatives and policymakers in discussing challenges and opportunities of infrastructure projects across the African continent.

As part of its participation in this event, the OIC Delegation held constructive discussions with high officials of the African Union Commission and AUDA-NEPAD on potential areas of cooperation between the OIC and AU towards developing adequate infrastructure in OIC-AU common Member

States, especially in the transport sector. The OIC Delegation was particularly interested in the infrastructure projects that encompass or strengthen the OIC Dakar-Port Sudan Railway Project. The Delegation also affirmed the OIC's commitment to supporting efforts to develop the infrastructure of its Member States.

The African Development Bank has provided over 50% of financing secured by infrastructure projects under the Programme for Infrastructure Development in Africa (PIDA), making it the lead financier of this strategic pan-African initiative.

Over 17 flagship infrastructure projects were showcased at the 2nd Dakar Financing Summit. Under PIDA, the Bank is primarily supporting energy and transport projects.

Both sectors align closely with the High-5 operational targets: Light Up and Power Africa; Feed Africa; Industrialize Africa; Integrate Africa; and Improve the quality of life for the people of Africa. Energy and power also advance targets set under the AU's Agenda 2063 and the African Continental Free Trade Agreement, which came into force on 1 January 2021.

PIDA is a blueprint for infrastructure development to increase Africa's competitive-

ness and economic integration. Its Priority Action Plan 2, adopted in 2021 by the AU Assembly of Heads of State and Government, comprises 69 ICT, water, energy and transport projects that are to be fast-tracked to roll-out.

The Abidjan-Lagos Corridor Highway Development project will construct a 1,081-kilometer roadway linking Abidjan to Lagos via Accra, Lomé, and Cotonou when completed. This coastal stretch of West Africa accounts for almost 75% of regional commercial activity. Valued at \$15.6 billion, this public-private partnership project was the largest investment opportunity showcased at the Africa Investment Forum virtual boardrooms held in March 2022.

The Bank has also been supporting the creation of the West African Power Pool (WAPP) West African regional electricity market. It will drive integration of the region's electricity sector into a unified market, offering residences and businesses in ECOWAS countries access to regular, reliable and affordable electricity. Under this umbrella, the Bank is financing several component projects.



Bangladesh: Second Largest Textile Producer in the World

Dhaka - Anne Sophie Galli and Nasr al-Islam (DPA)

Bangladesh, the world's second largest textile producer after China, still retains the memory of the Rana Plaza disaster, the collapse of the eight-story textile factory located on the outskirts of Dhaka, on April 24, 2013, killing over 1,100 and injuring nearly 2,500. Terrible images of the disaster spread across the entire world.

In the wake of the Rana Plaza collapse, nearly 200 fashion companies signed agreements to protect workers from fires and building collapses, in what is known as the "Bangladesh Accord".

Based on this Accord, inspectors visited hundreds of factories and introduced improvements. This has enhanced worker safety, in case of fire for instance, as noted by Gisela Burckhardt, President of FEMNET, a women's rights organization. The Accord thus helped reduce human losses in workplace accidents, according to Tamim Ahmed, researcher at the Center for Policy Dialogue

in Dhaka. Improved labor standards added higher costs to textile and clothing companies, with an increase of 5-10% for each product.

Amirul Haque Amin, President of the National Garment Workers Federation (NGWF), stated that since 2018, the minimum monthly wage in Bangladesh has been 8,000 taka (\$75), noting that this amount is what garment workers, who number more than four million, mostly women, actually earn. Amin and other trade unionists are demanding an increase in the minimum wage to 23,000 taka (\$216), given the rising inflation rate resulting from the Russian invasion of Ukraine.

At the same time, Bangladesh is seeking to increase its textile exports, being a significant source of income. Since the Rana Plaza collapse, the volume of textile export has already doubled, reaching over \$42 billion a year, according to recent data.

"Since the day the building collapsed, I considered myself dead," says Shila Begum, one

of the surviving workers. "I couldn't work anymore, and my life has become quite difficult." Things are no longer the same as before for Nilufa Begum, another survivor who, on that fateful day, was trapped beneath the rubble for over nine hours before she was saved. Today, she still endures enormous suffering.

Most of the 2500 female workers injured in the Rana Plaza Collapse were unable to return to work or even to normal life, and are still struggling to obtain compensation. Survivors demanded lifelong support for the injured female workers, including medical treatment, and compensation for their suffering caused by the disaster. Shila called on Western companies that buy ready-made garments to ensure appropriate compensation for the victims, in addition to the support provided by Western brands in the aftermath of the tragedy. Demands were also made for adequate life-long compensation for those who lost their ability to work.

Uzbekistan

Guarantees Developing a Sustainable Education System

The Republic of Uzbekistan places great importance on investing in human capital. "It is an undeniable fact that in the 21st century the success in development can only be achieved by those countries that have chosen to prioritize investment in human capital, since the accumulated knowledge and information have now become strategic resources", writes Ranokhon Tursunova, Associate Professor at Department of Political Science, University of World Economy and Diplomacy (UWED).

A state system of sustainable education, at all levels, is well-developed in Uzbekistan. However, it is necessary to point out the peculiarity of the model proposed by this country, which implies a permanent learning process, in which a person has the opportunity to gain knowledge for a long time and further improve it.

As for pre-school education, Tursunova added, the system has not been regulated from a constitutional-legal point of view so far. It is quite relevant and timely to introduce a new edition of the Constitution with regulations that the state creates conditions for the development of pre-school education and upbringing, as well as general secondary education are supervised by the state.

This project was formed in the process of studying the international experience, constitutions of foreign countries, as well as on the basis of proposals and initiatives of Uzbek citizens.

Tursunova indicated that since 2017, the Uzbek government has been working intensively to develop preschool education. In this regard, a specialized Ministry of Preschool Education has been created, and the Concept for the Development of Preschool Education of the Republic of Uzbekistan until 2030 has been adopted, which serves as a legal basis for implementing reforms in this sphere. Meanwhile, the government is expected to pay a particular attention to stimulating the involvement of private capital by means of public-private partnership in the sphere, toward increasing the percentage of children in preschool education to 80.8% by the end of 2024-2025, and to 100% by 2030.



It should be noted that the work on radical transformation in the school sector of Uzbekistan is being carried out intensively. Over the past six years, the legal framework for improving public education system has been updated, a revised edition of the "Law on Education" has been adopted, along with the Concept of Development of Public Education in the Republic of Uzbekistan until 2030.

In the "Year of Human Care and Quality Education", a number of important measures have already been taken, including the introduction of complimentary meals for elementary school children at all schools.

Tursunova asserted that in accordance with a state program-2023, there will be a gradual introduction of teaching students two foreign languages and one profession in one of the schools of each district or city, within educational programs aimed at bringing up students in the spirit of human and national values and patriotism since the academic year 2023-2024.

Consequently, consolidating the state's role as a guarantor of free general secondary education and elementary vocational education for the younger generation, as well as a compulsory general secondary education, will serve as the constitutional basis for a radical reform of school education.

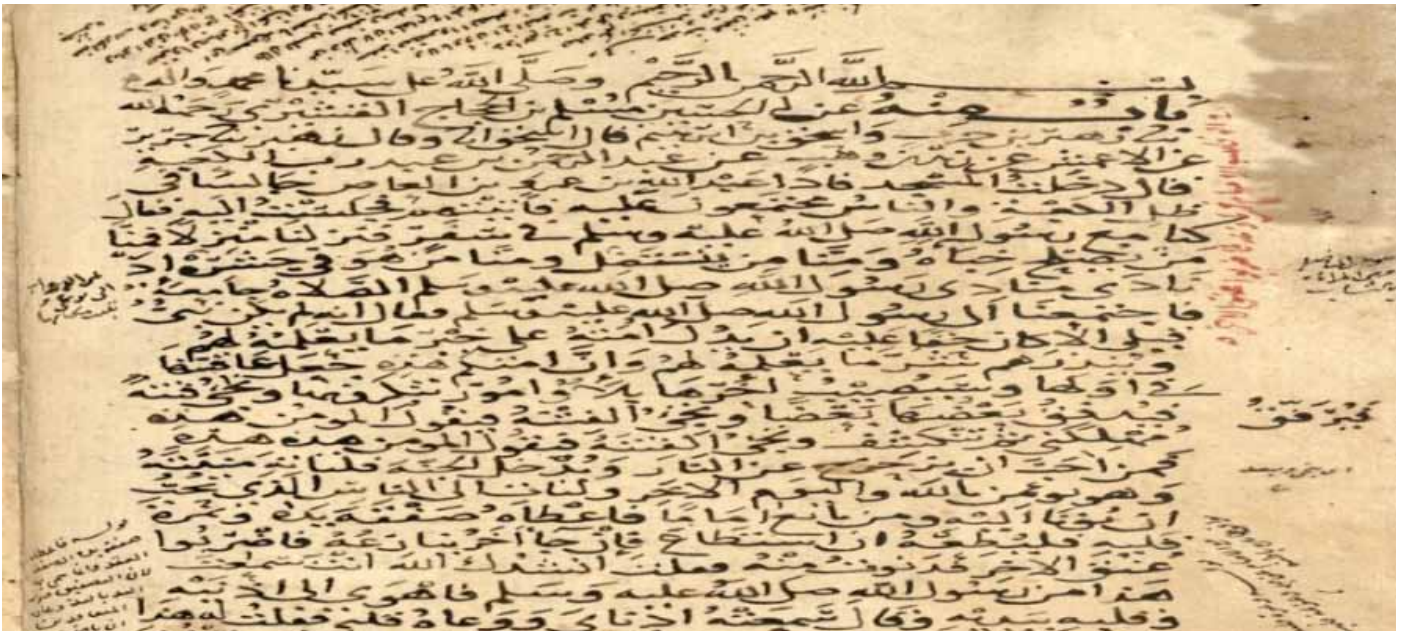
The amendment, according to Tursunova, establishes the right of citizens to receive higher education in the state educational institutions on a competitive basis at the state's expense. In turn, the higher educational institutions have the right to academic freedom, self-government, freedom of research and teaching within the limits established by law. The proposed formulation in the new edition of the Constitution clearly and distinctly defines the role of the state as regards obtaining higher education on a competitive basis.

Over the past six years, considerable changes have taken place in the sphere of higher education in Uzbekistan. For instance, the enrollment quotas have been increased, bringing the total coverage to 28% (compared to only 9% five years before). The number of state grants has also increased.

Tursunova indicated that for the second year in a row, girls from families in need are being given two thousand places at universities. Furthermore, university entrants now have the opportunity to choose five state universities for enrollment, and the scores are announced immediately. Besides, it is now possible to submit documents to a university online, as well as to take an admission test at Tashkent universities, while staying in the region.

At the same time, Tursunova noted that the switch to a hybrid form of education (full-time, part-time, evening and distance studying) and the increase in the number of universities operating in the country, including private and branches of foreign universities, can be considered a significant innovation as well.

In the sphere of education, the innovations that are taking place in the Uzbek society must, according to Tursunova, have a particular place. There are many young people in the country with certain disabilities who, despite everything, want to learn, work and be useful for the state and society. An amendment in the new edition of the Constitution proposes that "inclusive education and upbringing should be provided for children with special learning needs at educational institutions".



Writings in Ajami: Arabic-Script Manuscripts in Africa

The Islamic World Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (ISESCO) plays a significant role in highlighting the importance of African dialects and languages written in Arabic character. It works in tandem with the Institute of Arabic Manuscripts, a subsidiary institution of the Arab League Educational, Cultural and Scientific Organization (ALECSO), the Library of Alexandria, the Arab and African Research Center, the Islamic Manuscript Association, the Africa-Arab Cultural Institute in Bamako (Mali), and Al-Furqan Islamic Heritage Foundation in Britain.

African manuscripts written in Arabic script constitute a significant heritage that represents Africa by the European colonialism, and portrays the social and cultural conditions overlapping with their Arab dimension after Islam came into those countries, bringing with it the Arabic language. Those manuscripts, in which African languages are written in clear Arabic script (called Ajami script), received great attention in recent periods, especially by scholars in neighboring Arab countries.

Research has confirmed the importance of preserving Arabic-script manuscripts, in order to strengthen the historical-cultural ties between Arabs and Africans, revive the heritage written in Arabic script, and record

this heritage that was passed on through launching a periodical for African languages written in Arabic script.

One of the main references dealing with manuscripts is the book authored by Helmi Sharawy, President of the Arab and African Research Center, entitled: "The Heritage of African Language Manuscripts Written in Arabic Characters (Ajami)". The book came out following the finding of various African literary, poetic, Fiqh, prosaic, and even agricultural, historical, and biographical manuscripts, all written in Arabic, which were documented over a twelve-year period.

Published in two volumes, the book highlights African treasures written in Arabic character. The first volume includes manuscripts in Malagasy, Swahili, Hausa, Fulani, Wolof, Mandingo, Songhay and Tamashek. The second contains manuscripts in Berber, Soninke, Serer, Kanuri, Yoruba, Nobiin, Afar and Afrikaans.

The book highlights the Malagasy manuscripts that spread in Madagascar, formerly known as "Malagas", until the French came and imposed the name "Madagascar" in 1819. According to the author, Malagasy is a mixture of Asian, African and Arabic languages, and uses an Arabic alphabet. There are 7,000 pages of Malagasy manuscripts in

Arabic characters in the Library of Norway, including a historical manuscript that tells about a period in the history of Malagas dating back to the 19th century.

The book also highlights the "Swahili" language (spoken on the Eastern coast of Africa), which is widespread in Tanzania, Kenya, Uganda, Somalia, Comoros, and other countries. One of the main manuscripts written in Swahili Arabic script is the poem "Al-Inkishef". The poem includes 79 verses composed in the famous Arabic quatrain format, and uses the "Crying Over the Ruins" poetic genre, following the destruction, by shepherds, of the African-Arab Sultanate of "Bati" on the coast of the Indian Ocean, East Africa.

"Hausa" is also one of the major African languages written in Arabic character, spreading in that form between the 12th and 16th centuries AD. Hausa manuscript sites are quite numerous, which is hardly the case for any other language. The use of the Arabic character is key to the survival of these manuscripts.

The book features paragraphs in Hausa, documented at the beginning of the 20th century from native speakers of this language, and considered by experts and researchers as being of great historical and social values.

OSBU Inaugurates Media Training Academy at its Headquarters in Jeddah



The OIC General Secretariat participated, on February 15, 2023, in the opening ceremony of the OSBU Media Training Academy, held by the OIC States Broadcasting Union (OSBU) at its headquarters in Jeddah.

The ceremony was attended by H.E. Dr. Khaled Abdel-Qader Al-Ghamdi, Undersecretary of the Ministry of Information for International Media Relations, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, Dr. Amr Al-Laithi, OSBU President, and Mr. Wajdi Ali Sindi, Director of the OIC Information Department.

Speaking on behalf of the General Secretariat, Mr. Sindi expressed his thanks and gratitude to the Leadership, government and people of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia for hosting the OSBU headquarters and for supporting OSBU and other institutions working within the framework of the OIC. He pointed out that OSBU, as a media institution, has become more active and effective, especially after changing its name and expanding its activities. He expressed confidence in OSBU's ability to contribute to strengthening Islamic solidarity in all fields of radio and TV broadcasting, through the work of the newly established academy. He wished all success to the OSBU management and staff in their endeavor to develop the Union's work, so that it can keep pace with media developments taking place locally and internationally.

Mr. Sindi considered the Academy's inauguration to be an essential step on the road to

developing the work of OSBU. He thanked the Union's presidency for this initiative, given the effective role of this Academy in developing the knowledge and technical

Mr. Sindi highly appreciated the strategic partnerships concluded between the Union, TV institutions, media colleges, and other institutions, with the aim of exchanging expertise and training and promoting joint media work in pursuit of the OIC goals.

skills of media (radio and TV) professionals and enhancing their performance in the OIC Member States. He stressed that the OIC appreciates this step, which falls within the strategic plan for the development of

the Union, previously approved during the meetings of the OSBU Executive Board and General Assembly, with the aim of providing a stimulating work environment for media creativity.

Mr. Sindi added that the OIC, in line with its partnership with OSBU, hopes the Union will contribute, through the Training Academy that features training rooms and TV and radio studios, and well as through the specialized services provided by these media facilities, to intensifying cooperation and partnership with member countries and their media institutions, especially the less developed countries. It is also hoped that the Academy will contribute to developing and upgrading the radio, TV and journalistic skills of media professionals, increasing the Union's artistic and program production, and diversifying radio and TV broadcasting activities in partnership with radio and TV institutions in Member States.

Mr. Sindi commended the OSBU's endeavor to develop its institutional visual identity and its permanent presence in the programs and activities of the OIC and its member countries. This calls for more emphasis on raising the level of media coverage of Member States and their achievements and major projects, in addition to the various activities conducted inside or outside the OSBU headquarters country.

Mr. Sindi highly appreciated the strategic partnerships concluded between the Union, TV institutions, media colleges, and other institutions, with the aim of exchanging expertise and training and promoting joint media work in pursuit of the OIC goals. He noted that the significant achievements made over the past period place greater responsibility on the Union to redouble its efforts and undertake useful and carefully-thought priority initiatives that would enhance the media visibility of the activities and programs of the OIC and its institutions and Member States.

On the opening day of the Training Academy, OSBU organized a two-day training course on the new electronic media and its strengths and weaknesses, with the participation of media professionals from OIC Member States.

Wajdi Sindi: We are Working to Link the OIC with its International Partners

The OIC General Secretariat participated, on May 18, 2023, in the international media conference entitled: "Russia and the Islamic World: Media Cooperation for Sustainable Development and Economic Prosperity", held in Kazan on the sidelines of the 14th International Economic Forum: "Russia – Islamic World: Kazan Forum 2023".

The Director of the OIC Information Department, Mr. Wajdi Ali Sindi, took part remotely in this event. Addressing the Conference, he emphasized that media work in the OIC seeks to help enhance cooperation among Member States, through a professional content designed for large segments of populations in OIC countries and around the

world. The OIC Information Department, he added, is actively working to link the OIC with its international partners, as well as to highlight common denominators with other active organizations and countries in order to create conditions conducive to more cooperation in pursuit of global development goals.

Mr. Sindi thanked Tat Media, UNA-OIC, and the "Russia - Islamic World" Strategic Vision Group, for organizing the conference, which featured a working session, entitled: "Media as a driving force for sustainable development and economic partnership among states", and another entitled: "Russia and the Islamic World from Information Partner-

ship Perspective: From History to Practical Steps in the Present and the Future."

For his part, the Acting General Director of UNA-OIC, Mr. Mohammed Abd Rabbo Al-Yami, stated that the forum offers an opportunity to address current media issues and challenges from a global perspective, to build connections and share information among news agencies, as well as to strengthen cooperation for promoting the values of peace and tolerance in the media industry. He pointed out that the Union's organization of the conference reflects its endeavor to play an effective role in developing media institutions in Islamic countries.

UNA Holds Workshop on Media Terminology of the Palestinian Cause

The Union of OIC News Agencies (UNA) held, on March 22, 2023, a virtual workshop themed: "Media Circulation of Terminology of the Palestinian Cause," with the participation of the OIC General Secretariat, ICESCO, Bayt Mal Al Quds Agency, UNA member agencies, and a number of diplomats and media professionals.

In a statement delivered on his behalf by Assistant Secretary-General for Palestine and Al-Quds Affairs, Ambassador Samir Bakr Diab, the OIC Secretary-General, H.E. Mr. Hissein Brahim Taha, highlighted the crucial role played by news agencies and media institutions in OIC Member States in keeping the issue of Palestine and Al-Quds Al-Sharif always at the forefront of the political and media scene, and in building collective awareness of the Palestinian Cause and the aggressions on the territory and sanctities of the Palestinian people. He indicated that the OIC is following up with deep concern the escalation of the media war being waged by the Israeli occupation, whether through systematic attacks against media institutions and professionals, or through the propagation of false and fake Israeli terms and narratives denying the existence of the Palestinian people and their legitimate rights.

The Secretary-General noted that the current conflict is essentially political, consisting in the illegal Israeli colonial occupation of the Palestinian territory. He called on the



media covering Palestinian news to emphasize such terms as occupation, racism, ethnic cleansing, the Nakba, and colonial settlement. He also called for considering the development of a reference guide or a set of general media policies to regulate media handling of the Cause of Palestine and Al-Quds Al-Sharif. This would help unify the terminology and media discourse of member States, and consolidate efforts to promote the true narrative of the Palestinian Cause.

For his part, the Permanent Representative of the State of Palestine to the OIC, Amb. Maher Al-Karaki, underlined the key role of the media in enabling the Palestinian people to obtain their legitimate rights. He called for enhancing the role of the media in countering the Israeli narrative and in facing the misinformation and manipulation of terminology, by utilizing the accurate terminology and adopting a specific strategy to increase the use of the correct terminology in the media.



OIC Hosts Joint Seminar on Microfinance

The Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) organized, jointly with the Islamic Development Bank (IsDB) and Akhuwat Foundation, a Seminar on “Akhuwat Business Model for Microfinance Intervention and Economic Empowerment in the OIC Member States”. The Seminar was held on March 9, 2023 at the OIC General Secretariat in Jeddah.

Addressing the opening Session, H.E. Dr. Ahmad Kawesa Sengendo, OIC Assistant Secretary-General for Economic Affairs, pointed out that the Seminar is designed to offer participants the opportunity to share their experiences and views on the current sector challenges and opportunities, as well as on the future trends in microfinance and economic empowerment.

Dr. Sengendo indicated that poverty remains one of the biggest challenges to socio-economic development for the majority of OIC Member States, especially in Sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia. He added that unemployment, especially among youth, is as high as 38% in some OIC Member States where millions of people still live in extreme poverty and lack basic human needs. He stressed that overcoming poverty, for many poor people in OIC countries, depends mainly on self-employment through microbusinesses. He noted, in this regard, that the OIC and its relevant institutions have launched several microfinance and economic empowerment development programmes.

Dr. Sengendo indicated that microfinance institutions have been established in several

OIC Member States in order to meet the demand of poor people for financial services. He cited, in this regard, the example of the Akhuwat Islamic Microfinance (AIM), which has been operating in Pakistan since 2001

overcoming poverty, for many poor people in OIC countries, depends mainly on self-employment through microbusinesses. In this regard, the OIC and its relevant institutions have launched several microfinance and economic empowerment development programmes

with the objective of providing interest-free microfinance to marginalized members of society to enhance their living standards and enable them to improve their livelihoods.

Dr. Sengendo expressed his appreciation to AIM, which offered to share its experience with OIC Member States. He also commended the IsDB for its valuable contributions to the organization of the Seminar,

convened in implementation of the relevant resolution of the 48th session of the OIC Council of Foreign Ministers, held in Islamabad, Pakistan, in March 2022.

For his part, Mr. Amir Bukvic, IsDB Acting Director-General of Global Practices and Partnerships, noted, in his opening remarks, that the traditional approach is exposed to over-indebtedness, especially in these times of multiple crisis, if no adequate non-financial services are provided. It is necessary, he added, for financial services to be accompanied with profitable project opportunities, affordable supporting infrastructure, proper capacity-building, access to attractive relevant markets, and appropriate technological solutions. It is, therefore, very timely to adopt the IsDB Economic Empowerment Approach, and to further accelerate the mainstream microfinance business in the OIC Member States.

A number of IsDB experts, including Dr. Nabil Ghaleb, Dr. Mohamed Yusri Yusuf, Dr. Mohammad Dodin, Dr. Lagassane Ouattara and Dr. Mohamed Mazen Dakhli, took part in the Seminar, and shared valuable experiences based on their approach to economic empowerment for various population groups in OIC Member States.

The Seminar was chaired by H.E. Amb. Fawad Sher, Permanent Representative of Pakistan to the OIC, in his capacity as Chair of the 48th CFM, and was attended by participants from OIC Member States and relevant institutions.

Think-tanks in International Policy Decision-making

The events of political history, both ancient and contemporary, proved the importance of ideas in guiding international policy decision-making. This fact was clear during the Cold War, then in the aftermath of the September 11, 2001 events, more recently during the COVID-19 pandemic crisis, and currently with the Russian-Ukrainian war. It manifested itself in the manner used by think-tanks, especially in the West, to describe, or justify, these events, and the proposals they put forward to deal with them at the political, security, health and economic levels. During these crises, think-tanks undertook to guide the international community and global public opinion by providing their research and expertise, by identifying the strategic interests of their countries, as well as by offering advice and suggesting policies and solutions.

No wonder, the world has witnessed, since the early 20th century, a qualitative shift in terms of decision-making, policy formulation, and response to crises and disasters, with a pivotal role assigned to think-tanks. The status now enjoyed by these institutions is attributed to their ability to conduct in-depth studies on the problems posed to politicians and statesmen, and their capacity for analysis in accordance with rigorous benchmarks.

Think-tanks now play a leading role in terms of strategic planning, through political, economic and military mapping as well as by setting programs and priorities with regard to various issues, thereby providing decision-makers with realistic solutions. With policy decision-making being a very complex process, the nature of the global system has assigned major roles for think-tanks, given their influential initiatives in drawing up the foreign policies of countries with huge budgets. This raises the question about the nature of these institutions.

“Think-tanks” are now a remarkable cultural and knowledge “achievement”, an informed practice, and a compass for progress that embodies the aspiration of nations to preserve their heritage and upgrade their knowledge. Various definitions were given to “think-tanks”, with most of these institutions presenting themselves as non-profit organizations, such as the Horn of Africa Foundation, the Enterprise Institute, or the Carnegie Endowment. The Penguin Dictionary of International Relations defines ‘think-tank’ as “an independently funded research institute concerned with the study of foreign policy issues”. Strobe Talbott defines it as “an institution that conducts research on public policies and presents its findings to decision-makers and citizens in various disciplines. It shares basic principles such as high quality of intellectual output, autonomy, contribution to good governance, and production of world-class leaders.”

Think-tanks now constitute a modern trend in international relations, concerned with the study of various issues and topics such as democracy, environment, and globalization. They interact with policy issues, serving as a bridge between knowledge and power.

Historically, the term ‘think-tank’ was employed originally in the United States of America during World War I to refer to a secure room where military leaders met to discuss strategic matters. Its meaning has evolved with time, so that it now applies to over 11,000 research centers in the world.

This etymological and semiotic analysis of the term reveals that think-tanks are neutral, non-profit, non-partisan institutions that do not openly support any political party. They focus on research and analysis, provide government institutions with competencies, and decision-makers with studies. They influence public opinion by formulating policies and proposing solutions to address emerging issues.

The link between policy-makers and decision-makers is what makes the idea of “revolving door” an American method for developing ideas by think-tanks. Researchers seek to contribute to the political process by working in government positions and then returning, after the end of their term of service, to think-tanks as advisors. Think-tanks interact with decision-makers and exercise their influence through several strategies, such as encouraging their researchers to give lectures at universities, intensifying their presence in international media, writing articles in international newspapers, publishing research on websites, and inviting decision-makers to participate in conferences and providing them with studies on foreign policy.

Think-tanks have developed across four waves, starting with policy research institutions or universities without students such as the Carnegie Institute (1910), the Hoover Institution established by US President Herbert Hoover, then the Council on Foreign Relations (1921), in addition to government contractors. Following World War II, with independent studies having become necessary for American decision-makers to face security challenges and fill gaps in foreign policy research, the RAND Corporation was established in 1948, and contracts were made with government-funded institutions, such as the Hudson Institute (1961) and the Brain Research Institute (1968). The third wave involved the emergence of “general issues institutions” that combined policy research with advanced marketing techniques, such as the Center for Strategic and International Studies (1962), the Heritage Foundation (1973), and the Cato Institute (1977).



Mohammed El Khamlichi

Department of Humanitarian Affairs – OIC

Think-tanks now play a leading role in terms of strategic planning, through political, economic and military mapping as well as by setting programs and priorities with regard to various issues, thereby providing decision-makers with realistic solutions

Secretary-General Calls on OIC Countries to Continue Support for ISF



The OIC Secretary-General, H.E. Mr. Hissein Brahim Taha, addressed the 66th session of the Permanent Council of the Islamic Solidarity Fund (ISF), held on January 4, 2023 at the headquarters of the OIC General Secretariat in Jeddah, and chaired by the Chairman of the ISF Permanent Council, H.E. Amb. Nasser bin Abdullah bin Hamdan Al Zaabi.

The Secretary-General noted that the Council is meeting at a time when the OIC has made progress in serving the issues of Islam and Muslims. He highlighted the significant role played by the ISF in achieving this progress, through the implementation of humanitarian projects in Member States, especially in the least developed countries and in countries with Muslim communities and minorities. These projects covered various educational, cultural, health, social, religious, and other sectors.

The Secretary-General pointed out that during the past year, the Islamic world went through major humanitarian crises as a result of natural disasters and armed conflicts, and that the ISF has made appreciable ef-

forts, within the available financial resources, to help alleviate these crises. He noted that these crises are not likely to end this year, but are rather expected to increase due to climate change problems, in addition to the situation in Palestine, the Sahel region, the Lake Chad basin countries, Somalia, and other regions. This, he added, requires expanding and diversifying the ISF sources of income and providing more resources, especially those related to emergencies, so that the Fund can provide support to those afflicted in Member States, alleviate their suffering, and meet the needs of Muslims everywhere.

The Secretary-General appealed to all Member States to provide financial support to the Fund, in line with the principle of Islamic solidarity. This, he said, is the duty of all without exception especially that the Fund is one of the key charitable institutions of the OIC, and has many noble humanitarian missions ahead of it.

The Secretary-General expressed hope that the Fund will continue its valuable work in Palestine, especially in Al-Quds, and will

implement more projects in the health and education fields, which will strengthen the steadfastness of the Palestinian people to face the brutal aggressions of the occupation forces. He also hoped the Fund will continue its support for Islamic universities within the framework of the OIC, especially in Niger and Uganda, thereby enabling them to fulfill their academic obligations toward students and serve the communities in which they are located.

The Secretary-General expressed his thanks and appreciation to the countries that donated to the ISF, hoping they would continue their support to help the Fund diversify its sources of income and fulfill its responsibilities. He also expressed his deep gratitude to the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques King Salman bin Abdulaziz and HRH Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, as well as to the Saudi Government, for the continued support for the OIC and its institutions, including the Jeddah-based ISF, and for providing all facilities so that the Fund can best implement its mandated tasks.

OIC Participates in 36th Session of ICIC in Baghdad

The OIC General Secretariat expressed its deep gratitude to the Islamic Committee of the International Crescent (ICIC), a specialized institution of the OIC, for its active role in supporting those affected by disasters and conflicts in the Muslim world, and

commended the launch of the Social Peacebuilding Center in Iraq. That was part of the remarks offered by the representative of the OIC General Secretariat, Dr. Yasmi Adriansyah, at the opening of the 36th session of ICIC and First Promotional Forum of the So-

cial Peacebuilding Center, held in Baghdad, Iraq, on February 28, 2023.

Dr. Adriansyah highlighted the need to mobilize more financial support for the humanitarian efforts of the ICIC.

Closing of Celebration of Cairo and Yaoundé as Islamic World's Culture Capitals



The Islamic World Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (ICESCO) and the Ministry of Culture of the Arab Republic of Egypt officially concluded the celebration of "Cairo: Culture Capital in the Islamic World", at the Hanager Arts Center of the Egyptian Opera House. The closing event involved the award ceremony of the first category of Turathy Photography Contest, along with an exhibition of the works participating in the contest.

The ceremony, attended by high-level officials, ambassadors, public figures, writers, thinkers and artists, kicked off on March 10, 2023, with the national anthem of the Arab Republic of Egypt, followed by a documentary film, entitled "Cairo, Culture Capital in the Islamic World," documenting the activities held in celebration of this event throughout the year 2022.

Addressing the ceremony, Dr. Nevine Al-Kilani thanked ICESCO for its great support for the celebration's activities, pointing out that these activities were unique and covered various artistic areas. The celebration, she added, was an opportunity for Cairo to showcase its status among Capitals of Culture, as well as its rich history and its respect for all cultures and civilizations. She stressed

that the choice of Cairo as Culture Capital in the Islamic World reflects its unique position as a meeting place for cultures throughout successive eras, and as a key hub for culture and creativity as well as for cultural exchange between the East and the West.

For his part, Dr. Salim M. AlMalik, Director-General of ICESCO, began his address by thanking H.E. President Abdel Fattah Al-Sisi, President of the Arab Republic of Egypt, for his efforts to promote culture in its various forms, indicating that no less than 159 activities were implemented during this celebration.

Dr. AlMalik stressed that ICESCO has supported the dreams of Cairo in its aspiration to step into the future, and implemented several programs in this regard, including training sessions on the use of AI applications for the preservation of heritage treasures, scholarships in universities for the preservation of antiquities, and teacher-training program through the "international professional certification in teaching" project. He noted that through this celebration, Cairo has restored its influential historical role, boosted its cultural reputation, and promoted cultural renewal. He thanked all those who contributed to the success of

the celebration, and concluded by reciting a poem he had composed for this occasion, entitled "The Capital of Capitals".

On the other hand, an ICESCO delegation met, February 4, 2023, at the headquarters of the Cameroon National Commission in Yaoundé, with Mr. Abdoul-Aziz Yaouba, Secretary-General of the Cameroon National Commission, and Mrs. Stadjem Sawudi, Director of Festivals and Creative Industries at the Ministry of Culture and Arts, Chairperson of the Higher Committee for the celebration of "Yaoundé as Culture Capital in the Islamic World for 2022".

The meeting reviewed the main outcomes of the programs and activities implemented all along the year 2022 as part of the celebration of "Yaoundé: Culture Capital in the Islamic World", under the auspices of H.E. Paul Biya, President of the Republic of Cameroon.

Both sides stressed that the celebration has contributed to raising Yaoundé's standing as a tourist destination, publicizing its heritage and natural sites, enhancing its reputation on the regional and international, attracting investments in the culture sector, and promoting the values coexistence and tolerance.

Street Children Rehabilitation through Football in Malaysia



The Islamic World Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (ICESCO) concluded, on January 27, 2023, the first phase of its “Street Children Rehabilitation through Football” Program in Malaysia, in partnership with the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Youth and Sports, the Ministry of Women, Family and Community Development, the Selangor International Islamic University College (KUIS), and ICESCO’s Educational Center in Malaysia. The Program is aimed at using sports to enhance the protection of children and offer them educational opportunities, to promote

inclusion and social cohesion, as well as to combat violence and provide safe spaces for 7 to 17-year-old street children.

The closing ceremony of the Programme featured a football game between two teams of participating children, at the end of which the best player and best participant in the Programme were selected. ICESCO sought, through this initiative, to rehabilitate street children through sports, particularly Football, as a contribution towards offering them a better future. In her address to the opening ceremony, Ms.

Lim Hui Ying, Malaysian Deputy Minister of Education, thanked ICESCO and commended its efforts to support its Member States. Dr. Muhammad Farid Rafi bin Abdullah, KUIS President, then announced the official launch of the Programme with the participation of four teams of children.

The programme featured a range of sports activities for the participants who received training in ball control, dribbling techniques and Football rules. There was also a psychological counseling session aimed at enhancing self-confidence and self-esteem among the participating children and developing their leadership and communication skills, in addition to a discussion with Mr. Reuben Thayaparan Kathiripalay, the Malaysian national football team player, during which he shared with them his experience and talked about the challenges he had faced to become a professional player.

Participants visited the National Sports Council and the National Institute of Sports in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, where they had the opportunity to be trained by specialized coaches, to take part in friendly football matches, and to participate in talent selection tests.

Over Half Million Visitors to Prophet’s Seerah Exhibition at ICESCO

A report released on January 31, 2023 indicated that the number of visitors to the International Exhibition and Museum of the Prophet’s Seerah and Islamic Civilization, held at the headquarters of the Islamic World Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (ICESCO) in the Moroccan capital, Rabat, exceeded half a million in just two months since it opened to the public on November 28, 2022.

Under the high patronage of His Majesty King Mohammed VI, the exhibition witnessed a high visitor turnout. Visitors, both nationals and non-nationals, were from all age groups and came from different Moroccan cities. The exhibition caught the interest of those who were seeking to know more about the Seerah of the Prophet (PBUH), through various pavilions with cutting-edge display technologies, taking the visitor virtually back to the Prophet’s era, and appealing to his mind and conscience with copious documented and verified information about the Prophet (PBUH).

ICESCO’s hosting of this Exhibition is the fruit of the strategic partnership between ICESCO, the Muslim World League (MWL), and Morocco’s Mohammadia League of Scholars. It is the first of its kind outside the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, designed to highlight the civilizational aspects of the Prophet’s Seerah, the moderation of Islam, and the fight against extremist thinking, based on the Holy Quran and the Prophet’s

Sunnah, and through the use of the latest technologies and artificial intelligence.

Many visitors expressed their great admiration for the exhibition, which features a detailed simulation of the life of the Prophet (PBUH), using modern technologies and augmented reality. For them, the visit was a virtual spiritual journey through time to learn about the Prophet’s Seerah in a simplified way.



IOFS Launches Humanitarian Program in Afghanistan

H.E. Prof. Yerlan Baidaulat, Director General of the Islamic Organization for Food Security (IOFS), arrived, on April 15, 2023, in the Afghan capital city, Kabul, to commence the field implementation of the IOFS Humanitarian Food Assistance to Afghanistan, in partnership with the Afghan Red Crescent Society (ARCS).

In the context of implementing the Afghanistan Food Security Programme (AFSP), as mandated by the 17th Extraordinary Session of the OIC Council of Foreign Ministers on the Situation in Afghanistan, held on December 19, 2021 in Islamabad, Pakistan, and based on the generous support offered by Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, and Turkmenistan, the first IOFS Humanitarian Food Convoy to Afghanistan included 280 tons of wheat and infant supplies, provided to the neediest families in Herat and Kabul.

During the working visit to Kabul, the IOFS Delegation met with Mr. Mohammed Saeed Al-Ayyash, Director General of the OIC Mission in Kabul, to discuss cooperation for the successful implementation of the program.

A visit was also made to the headquarters of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) where talks were held with Mrs. Roza Isakovna Otunbayeva, Head of UNAMA and Special Representative of



the UN Secretary-General for Afghanistan. The meeting culminated in the signing of an Agreement with UNAMA, under which the IOFS will provide a humanitarian food convoy composed of 68 tons of wheat flour generously donated by IOFS Secretariat and private companies from Kazakhstan for women and children in selected drug addiction treatment centres in Kabul, in partnership with the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC).

During the meeting, UNAMA and IOFS agreed to explore further avenues of cooperation in the context of providing appropriate crops to replace drug crops in Afghanistan, and to set up a Joint Task Force to that end.

A statement issued by the IOFS indicated that the collective support by all relevant stakeholders in the OIC geography is crucial for the people of Afghanistan, given the current humanitarian crisis and the difficult political and economic situation in the country. The IOFS firmly believes that a secure and stable Afghanistan is imperative to achieving peace and prosperity in the world. The IOFS encourages the OIC Member States, international donors, UN Funds and Programmes, and other key international actors to contribute generously to the food security programme in Afghanistan. This support can make a real difference in the lives of those in need.

With the Participation of ICESCO, the Peace City World Congress Kicks off in Spain

The Islamic World Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (ICESCO) participated in the Peace City World Congress and Exhibition 2023, in Salamanca, Spain, organized by the Peace City World Foundation with the aim of promoting smart and resilient cities that contribute to achieving sustainable development in all fields.

Dr. Muhammad Sharif, Advisor at the Science and Technology Sector, represented ICESCO at the opening session of this event, held on January 23, 2023. He stressed the need for concerted efforts between international organizations and the private sector in developing smart cities in order to contribute to economic development and help find new solutions for environment protection.

Dr. Sharif reviewed the Organization's efforts to promote scientific research and modern technology.



OIC Secretary-General Addresses 17th PUIC Conference

The OIC Secretary-General, H.E. Mr. Hissein Brahim Taha, delivered a speech to the 17th Conference of the Parliamentary Union of the OIC Member States (PUIC), held in Algeria on January 29-30, 2023, in which he commended the support provided by Algeria and H.E. President Abdelmadjid Tebboune to joint Islamic action and to the issues of the Muslim world.

The Secretary-General also appreciated the hosting of the Algerian Parliament, with its two chambers, the Council of the Nation and the People's National Assembly, of this PUIC session, which takes place amid very delicate regional and international conditions that require the OIC Member States to strengthen relations and solidarity and intensify coordination.

The Secretary-General reaffirmed the OIC's position in support of the Palestinian Cause, the central issue of Muslims, which is going through serious developments that require unifying positions and stepping up efforts. The aim, he added, is to urge the international community to assume its responsibility towards putting an end to the Israeli violations, implementing international legitimacy resolutions, providing international protection for the Palestinian people, preserving the historical and legal status of Al-Quds, and sponsoring a multilateral political process to end the Israeli occupation and achieve the vision of the two-state solu-



tion, based on the relevant UN resolutions and the Arab Peace Initiative.

The Secretary-General also reaffirmed the OIC's support for the right of the people of Jammu and Kashmir to self-determination, and for the rights of Rohingya Muslims in Myanmar and all Muslim minorities and communities in non-Member States. He stressed the OIC's support for peace, security, stability and development in the Sahel region, the Lake Chad basin, Afghanistan, Libya, Somalia, Iraq, Yemen, Syria and Sudan, calling for resorting to wisdom and dialogue in addressing differences, conflicts and crises.

The Secretary-General expressed deep concern over the escalation of racism, hate speech and Islamophobia in many regions

of the world, reiterating the OIC's condemnation of what has recently been committed by elements of the extreme right in Europe in terms of desecration of the Holy Qur'an, describing it as extremist and provocative practices, and a manifestation of hatred and Islamophobia. He indicated that the OIC has requested the governments of the concerned countries to take the necessary measures to counter these practices. He stressed that the OIC has always worked to encourage dialogue, mutual understanding and cooperation among religions, cultures and civilizations, to consolidate the values of tolerance and peaceful coexistence, reject hatred and extremism, and combat terrorism to achieve peace and harmony in the world. The Secretary-General highlighted the challenges posed by food security and the adverse impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic and climate change, recalling the OIC's efforts to promote the sharing of knowledge and technology and to enhance investment and trade, in line with the goals spelled out in the OIC-2025 Programme of Action.

It should be noted that a high-level delegation from the OIC General Secretariat took part in the 17th PUIC Conference. This participation reflects continued commitment to promoting joint Islamic action and strengthening cooperation among the parliaments of the OIC Member States.

Islamic Development Bank Approves Financing of Projects worth \$403 Million

During its 350th meeting in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia, the IsDB Board of Executive Directors, chaired by H.E. Dr. Muhammad Al Jasser, President of IsDB Group, approved three projects worth approximately \$403 million. The projects are designed to promote socio-economic development and sustainability in member countries in key sectors, including energy, education, and transport.

During the meeting, Dr. Al Jasser emphasized the importance of the approved projects, highlighting their impact in terms of improving transportation, education, and energy as well as in strengthening regional economic integration and responding to emergency situation. "The IsDB Group re-

mains committed to supporting member countries in their pursuit of prosperity and resilience, especially during these challenging times," he said.

The Board approved the Electric Express Train Project in Egypt, with IsDB contributing \$344.5 million to Phase I of the project which aims at providing access to safe, affordable, accessible, and sustainable transport systems for all, through developing 660km sustainable, green, and climate-resilient electric express railway system. Once completed, the project is expected to benefit 25 million people annually and reduce GHG emissions by approximately 250,000 tons of CO2 annually.

The Board approved additional financing of \$13 million for the Central Asia South Asia Electricity Transmission and Trade Project in the Republic of Kyrgyzstan. The Bank had originally approved \$50 million towards this project, which aims to meet the increasing electricity demand in Afghanistan and Pakistan, by establishing cross-border energy exchange among four (4) IsDB member countries, as part of the Bank's regional economic integration strategy. The project will utilize efficient and environmentally-friendly indigenous hydropower resources of Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, creating conditions for sustainable electricity trade between Central and South Asia.

Islamic Arts Biennale in Jeddah Celebrates Historical Heritage of Islamic civilization



Dr. Salim AlMalik, Director-General of the Islamic World Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (ICESCO), took part in the opening ceremony of the first edition of the Islamic Arts Biennale, held under the theme of "Awwal Bait" ("First House").

Organized by the Diriyah Biennale Foundation in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia, from January 23 to May 23, 2023, the Islamic Arts Biennale is the first of its kind in the world to celebrate the historical heritage of Islamic civilization, through combining contemporary art, rare collectibles, manuscripts, and unique artifacts.

During the opening ceremony, also attended by Dr. Abdelilah Benarafa, ICESCO Deputy Director-General, Dr. AlMalik commended the efforts of the Saudi Ministry of Culture and the Diriyah Biennale Foundation in organizing this unique event which has succeeded in combining the cultural heritage of the Islamic civilization with contemporary arts, as well as in presenting a bright picture of the diverse Islamic arts to the world.

Dr. AlMalik indicated that ICESCO's participation in the Biennale opening is aligned with its vision and strategic orientations to safeguard and valorize the heritage of the Islamic world, through its inscription on ICESCO's Islamic World Heritage Lists, in addition to the various programs, projects and training sessions implemented by the Organization to enhance cultural economy and invest in modern technology applications to achieve these goals.

The opening ceremony of the Islamic Arts Biennale saw the participation of high-level

Saudi and Arab officials, and a large number of artists and intellectuals from Saudi Arabia and from around the world.

The Islamic Arts Biennale 2023 was held in the Western Pilgrims Hall at King Abdulaziz International Airport, on an area of 118,000

The Biennale's schedule included the organization of a wide range of activities, trips, workshops, meetings with artists, discussions, lectures, seminars, and artistic and cinematic works

square meters. It featured artworks by about 40 artists from around the world, in addition to 280 artifacts loaned from local and international institutions.

The Biennale's schedule included the organization of a wide range of activities, trips, workshops, meetings with artists, discussions, lectures, seminars, and artistic and cinematic works. It focused on several topics, mainly the heritage of the Islamic world and its cultural value for contemporary society, and the organization, collection, safe-

guarding and teaching of Islamic arts.

Julian Raby, Director Emeritus of the National Museum of Asian Art of the Smithsonian Institution in Washington, D.C., said that there are two main parts in the narrative of "The First House", the first among the newly constructed halls, and titled the "Qibla", and "it is actually a very structured exhibition"; and the other is located under the giant tents in the pilgrims' hall, and is titled "The Migration".

Raby begins by talking about the "Qibla" section, saying that despite its relatively small size, it includes a huge collection of exhibits. The Islamic Arts Biennale, he adds, "is very much about the emotional side of some of these rituals". The guide says: "We start with a dimly lit room in which we see a video showing the Grand Mosque in Mecca, but the sound is the main thing here, as we hear calls to prayer from all over the Islamic world." The room leads to other successive rooms, each of which deals with a specific ritual such as Wudhu (ablution), prayer, then Al-Salat Al-Jami'a (universal prayer) and death, to end through a long, dimly lit corridor toward the Kaaba room. He went on to say: "In a bright white room, one can see the golden door of Kaaba, constructed by order of King Abdulaziz in 1940." The display features another door to the Kaaba from the era of Sultan Murad IV, dating back to the year 1630. "It remained in place for more than 300 years, before it was replaced by the door of King Abdulaziz. There are also the Meezab and a wide range of textiles."

Catalogue of Award-Winning Plates in IRCICA's International Calligraphy Competition



The Research Center for Islamic History, Art and Culture (IRCICA) has published a catalogue containing reproductions of the works that won the first three prizes and the mentions in each category of the 12th edition of IRCICA's International Calligraphy Competition. It is a valuable record and a souvenir of the Competition. The present, and earlier, catalogues of the competition can be requested from IRCICA.

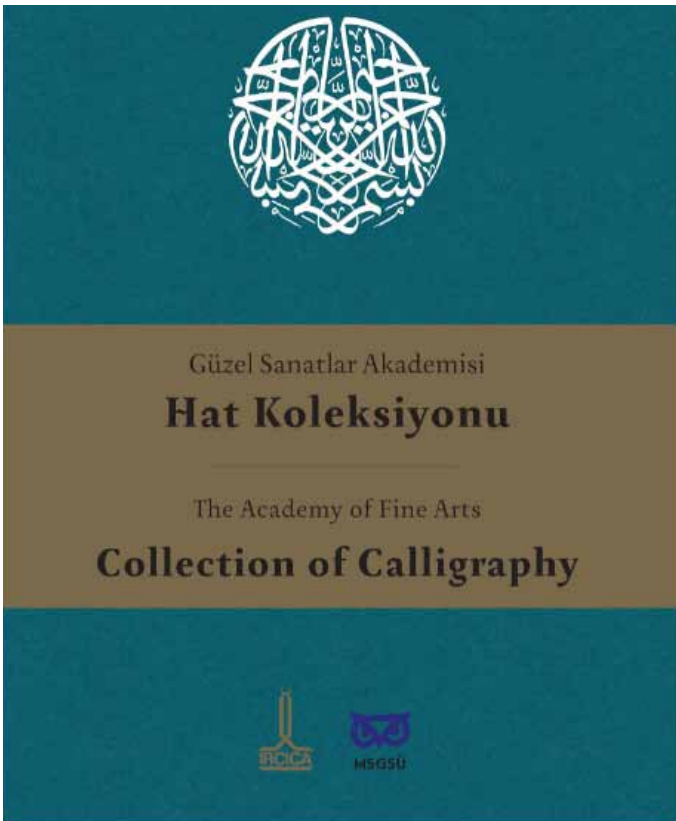
The Competition, conducted in 2022, received 697 works by 535 participants from 31 countries. 61 works, submitted by 49 calligraphers from 10 countries, won awards. The competition was organized in ten categories of styles: Jaly Thuluth, Thuluth, Naskh, Muhaqqaq, Thuluth-Naskh, Jaly Taliq, Taliq, Jaly Diwani, Diwani, Qufi. Its results were announced on May 21, 2022. The Jury, composed of experts from Egypt, Iraq, Iran, Morocco, Syria and Türkiye, commended the artistic quality of the winning works.

The 12th edition of the Competition was dedicated to Mustafa R kim (1758-1826), who contributed to the advancement of this art with significant innovations, particularly in the Jaly Thuluth style. Mustafa R kim was also a painter. Sultan Selim III appreciated a painting made by him and invited him to have his portrait made. He was granted the title of müderris (professor), and also assigned with designing coins and writing tughras (monograms). Later R kim taught Thuluth and Jaly Thuluth calligraphy to Sultan Mahmud II. He produced works in these styles and also in Taliq, writing Jaly inscriptions on monuments and tombstones. As was customary among Ottoman scholarly circles, he was granted the title of Kadi (Judge) of Izmir in his honor. Granted several promotions over time, he was finally, in 1823, appointed Kadiasker (Chief Judge) of Anatolia with full status.

An Album of Original Calligraphy Artworks of Mimar University

With the publication of this album, an exquisite collection of original calligraphy artworks belonging to Mimar Sinan Fine Arts University (MSFAU), Istanbul, becomes permanently accessible to the public for the first time, after a sample exhibition held in April 2022 in Istanbul, Türkiye. The collection, named "Academy of Fine Arts Collection of Calligraphy" due to the University's earlier status as Academy, consists of the works of a group of well-known artists who taught in the Department of Turkish Decorative Arts during the second third of the 20th century.

The Department was incepted in 1936, when the former Madrasah for Calligraphers, which was founded in 1915 and later renamed School of Oriental Decorative Arts, was attached to the Academy with the same faculty. Over the course of time, some of the Department's teachers reached the compulsory retirement age but were not entitled to pensions due to their being employed as adjunct teachers. To help them make ends meet, an arrangement was made to pay them fees in exchange of a work of calligraphy to be provided every month. As a result, a precious collection came into being under the auspices of the Academy.



Women Contribute to the Development of New Uzbekistan

Reforms in Uzbekistan to protect the rights and legitimate interests of women, provide social support to women in need, and ensure gender equality continue to unfold systematically. The strategy for achieving gender equality in Uzbekistan by 2030 was adopted in order to take these matters to a qualitatively higher level.

The legal age for men and women to marry was set at minimum of 18 years old, and the list of jobs with unfavorable working conditions, in which women's labor is prohibited in whole or partially, was abolished. In accordance with the Decree of the President, dated March 7, 2022 on measures to further accelerate work on systematic support for family and women, the national program (2022-2026) for increasing the activity of women in all economic sectors as well as in political and social life was approved. A number of measures aimed at ensuring the social, political and economic rights of women were determined under this program, which is currently under way. In particular, a 4% quota was allocated for young women from families in need of social protection to study at a higher educational institution.

Starting from February 9, 2022, the length of service for women, which includes the period of maternity leave, has been increased from three to six years. The period of working experience for children with disabilities since childhood has been extended from 16 to 18 years.

Since September 2022, pregnancy and childbirth allowances have been established for women in private enterprises and organizations at the expense of the state budget. Interest-free education loans were provided for women studying at higher education institutions and at technical schools and colleges, and the procedure for state reimbursement of contract fees of all women studying at the Master's level were established.

A procedure was introduced to cover the educational contracts of low-income family members, orphans, or female students deprived of parental care, without the condition of reimbursement at the expense of additional resources of the local budget. An Alimony Fund was also established.

Reforms designed to significantly increase the role of women in the socio-political life and business sphere in Uzbekistan are still in progress. In this regard, a unique system was created for preparing socially active women for leadership positions and upgrading their qualifications. As a result, the number of women leaders increased from 7% in 2016, to 12% in 2020, and then to 27% in 2022, and 25% among entrepreneurs.

An electronic database of promising women candidates working in state bodies and organizations was created, and a reserve list of over 25,000 women for leadership was created. In 2022, a program to increase the activity of women in public administration was developed with the participation of ministries and agencies, and directed toward implementation.

Today, in the system of state and public organizations, about 1,400 women are working in leadership positions at the level of republics and regions, and over 43,000 at the level of districts and cities. 32-48% of the 150 deputies elected to the Legislative Chamber are women. It is not an exaggeration to assert that these results are achieved due to the conditions created for women in the field of politics and management to serve the future of the country.

The Academy of Public Administration and the State Committee for Family and Women developed the 552-hour School for Women Leaders program for training female leaders. As part of this program, 100 active women were trained. Data on 142 female graduates of the Academy during the period of 1996-2021 were compiled and included in the national personnel reserve database. At the same time, an information system was created to record women victims of harassment and violence.

Women are making a worthy contribution to the development of New Uzbekistan. This is the result of the reforms implemented to strengthen the influence of women and protect their rights and interests in all fields.

In recent years, significant efforts have been made to further strengthen the legal basis for ensuring gender equality in all areas. Important measures have been taken to reinforce the legislative and institutional basis for achieving these goals, and over 20 normative legal documents have been adopted aimed at further improving the system of comprehensive support of women, and protection of their rights and legal interests. The concepts of "Gender expertise" and "Gender audit" were introduced into the national legislation. A law was adopted on simplification of the legal basis of the adoption procedure, pursuant to which those who committed a minor crime and served a sentence were allowed to adopt a child.

Based on the United Nations recommendation, the Law on Protection of Women from Harassment and Abuse and other relevant legal documents were improved, the concept of "domestic violence" was included in the law, and responsibility for domestic violence was established as a separate crime.



Malika Kadir Khanova
Chairperson of the Senate Committee of the Oliy Majlis on Women and Gender Equality

Since September 2022, pregnancy and childbirth allowances have been established for women in private enterprises and organizations at the expense of the state budget

Libya

Capital: Tripoli
Area: 1.8 million sq. km
Official language: Arabic
Currency: Libyan dinar



Libya, officially the State of Libya, is an Arab country in North Africa. It is bordered by the Mediterranean Sea to the north, Egypt to the east, Sudan to the southeast, Chad and Niger to the south, and Algeria and Tunisia to the west. It covers an area of almost 1.8 million square kilometers (700,000 square miles).

Libya is the 17th largest country in the world. It ranks 9th among the top ten countries with the largest proved oil reserves in the world. Tripoli, to the west, is the country's capital and largest city, and is home to over one million people out of the country's total population, which exceeds 6 million. The second largest city is Benghazi, located in the east, with a population of 700,000 people.

Libya is member of a number of regional and international organizations, including the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, the United Nations, the African Union, the Arab Maghreb Union, the League of Arab States, the Non-Aligned Movement, the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC), and COMESA.

Islam spread into Libya in the 7th century AD. In the 16th century, the Spanish Empire occupied the city of Tripoli, followed by the

period of Ottoman rule in 1551. Libya got involved in the Barbary Wars under the independent rule of the Karamanli Dynasty, to be later ruled by the Ottomans, till the signing of an agreement with Italy, and thus began the Italian occupation period, with Libya becoming an Italian colony from 1911 till 1943. During World War II, Libya was an area of warfare in the North African Campaign. Libya gained independence in 1951 as the United Libyan Kingdom, before it changed to the Kingdom of Libya in 1963. Libya extends over an area of 1,759,540 square kilometers. It is somewhat smaller than Indonesia in terms of land area, and is roughly the size of the State of Alaska. At 1,770 kilometers (1,100 miles), Libya's coastline is the longest of any African country bordering the Mediterranean. The portion of the Mediterranean Sea north of Libya is often called the Libyan Sea.

The climate is mostly dry (desert and semi-desert), with the exception of the northern regions that enjoy a moderate Mediterranean climate, moderate in spring and autumn, hot in summer, and relatively cold in winter.

Libya has a diverse climate, mostly Mediterranean and semi-desert in the central north,

with desert climate in the south, i.e. cold winters, hot summers, and rare rainfall. The temperature does not exceed 30°C in the Green Mountain in summer, while it may reach the freezing point in winter, with snowfall in some cities. Snow covers the city of Bayda in winter, like some mountainous areas in the north of the country.

Tripoli is the commercial hub of the country, with Libya attracting international companies to invest in various sectors. Libya's natural resources include gypsum, oil and natural gas, being the country's principal sources of income. Oil reserves in Libya are the largest in Africa with 41.5 billion barrels. The Libyan Desert, which covers much of Libya, is one of the most arid and sun-baked places on earth. In places, decades may pass without seeing any rainfall at all, and even in the highlands rainfall seldom happens, once every 5–10 years. At Uweinat, as of 2006 the last recorded rainfall was in September 1998.

The Libyan economy depends primarily upon revenues from the oil sector, which account for over half of GDP and 97% of exports. Libya holds the largest proven oil reserves in Africa and is an important contributor to the global supply of light, sweet crude.



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
 OIC - OCI



Islamic Republic of Mauritania
Hosts 49th Session of the
OIC Council of Foreign Ministers (CFM)
Nouakchott – 2023



The Chinguetti Mosque is a mosque in Chinguetti, Adrar Region, Mauritania. It was an ancient center of worship created by the founders of the oasis city of Chinguetti in the Adrar region of Mauritania in the thirteenth or fourteenth century.

