

**STATEMENT BY H.E. EKMELEDDIN IHSANOGLU, SECRETARY GENERAL OF
THE ORGANIZATION OF ISLAMIC COOPERATION (OIC)
TO THE PERMANENT COUNCIL OF THE OSCE
VIENNA, NOVEMBER 29, 2012**

Mr. Chairperson,
Mr. Secretary General,
Distinguished Permanent Representatives,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I have the pleasure to address the Permanent Council of the OSCE for the third time. I recall my earlier interactions with the Council the last of which was in 2010 and the fruitful and constructive exchanges between the OIC and OSCE. It is also worth noting that out of OSCE's 57 Participating States eight are also OIC members; out of OSCE's eleven Partners, six are also OIC Member States and two OSCE Participating States and one OSCE Partner are also observers to the OIC; and finally, three OSCE Participating States and one OSCE Partner have appointed Special Envoys to the OIC; therefore there is quite a large overlap.

The fact that an earlier Chairmanship was held by an OIC Member State – Kazakhstan – proves the point and stands in testimony to our common endeavours to devote our energies for durable international peace, security and stability. It goes without saying that Kazakhstan's Chairmanship was one of the successful Chairmanships. I had the honor to address the historic OSCE Summit in Astana.

Allow me also to congratulate Mongolia for their very recent membership to the OSCE being the 57th member of the OSCE, and thus making the OSCE the second largest intergovernmental organisation after the UN, together with the OIC.

On this occasion, I would also like to refer to the last visit of the OSCE Secretary General to the OIC Headquarters in April 2012 on the occasion of the OIC-UN-OSCE Workshop on Mediation, when we also had the opportunity to have a frank and substantive discussion on issues of mutual concern.

I would also like to pay a special tribute to the present Irish Chairmanship, as well as to the Director of ODIHR, for their interest and determination to have regular political dialogue and practical cooperation with the OIC to address issues related to peace and stability.

Excellencies,

It is my firm belief that conflict prevention and conflict resolution require a multi dimensional approach and not only use of military means to guarantee sustainable peace. The OIC attaches importance to identifying and addressing the root causes of conflicts and disputes. Dealing with conflict through a comprehensive approach obviously carries far more benefits as against the military option alone.

Bearing in mind that most conflicts and trouble spots in the world are unfortunately located in and around the Muslim world, the OIC occupies a very important position and bears an added

value in contributing to the global peace and security. The OIC has become a `strategic partner` of the UN, as also described by the UN Secretary General.

The principles embodied in Ten Year Program of Action of 2005 and its new Charter adopted in 2008, foresee strengthening the role of the OIC in conflict prevention, confidence building, peace keeping, conflict resolution and post conflict rehabilitation in the OIC Member States through negotiation, shuttle diplomacy, mediation and the use of good offices.

The OIC has committed itself to adhere to the principles of the UN Charter, to contribute to international peace, harmony and security, and to promote inter-state relations based on justice, mutual respect and good neighbourliness. To this end, the OIC is ready to enhance relations with other international and regional organizations in conflict prevention, conflict resolution and post conflict peace building.

Indeed, the OIC has continued to pursue concrete actions seeking to deepen its partnership and cooperation with, including the UN, the OSCE, the EU, the LAS and the AU, on conflicts affecting their common membership. The Organization has also brought its active support to the newly formed UN Peace Building Commission to which it made a modest financial contribution.

Excellencies,

Very recently at their meeting in Djibouti in mid November, the OIC Council of Foreign Ministers decided to establish a specialized unit within the OIC General Secretariat dedicated to maintenance of security and conflict resolution. This will increase the role and capacity of the OIC to contribute to international efforts in terms of conflict prevention, conflict resolution and mediation. To this end, we have close cooperation with the UN Mediation Support Unit. Similarly, we are ready to cooperate with the Conflict Prevention Center of the OSCE.

In view of the foregoing, allow me to touch upon certain issues dominating the political agenda of the OIC nowadays.

In the midst of the current global upheaval, the Muslim world is going through the most testing moment in its modern history. It is going through decisive and critical changes, with successive developments taking place in some of the OIC Member States. Peoples are awakening, their aspirations for a decent life and good governance are becoming more pronounced and the understanding that leaders serve their peoples is gaining acceptance. Masses are determined not to live outside the context of history. And all these have led to a paradigm shift in the balances of power, leading to an unprecedented change for the better.

Wisdom has it that the purpose of government is to meet people's demands and this fact is now prevalent in these countries also.

The Palestinian-Israeli conflict remains the core of the OIC's political agenda and a source of serious concern to all. As also mentioned by the UN Secretary General the other day in Vienna, which I fully concur, Israel should end its occupation and blockade over the Palestinian territories without further delay.

Today, Palestine will submit its application to the UN General Assembly to acquire non-member observer state status in the United Nations system which the OIC strongly supports. We call on the whole international community, including the OSCE Participating States, to support this noble cause as well. We believe that this new status will open the way for a negotiated and lasting two-state solution.

With regard to Syria, we condemn the ongoing bloodshed, deliberate killing of civilians, and destruction of property. OIC was the one of the first to intervene in order to solve the crisis in Syria at its outset. However, the Syrian leaders have failed to put an end to violence by insisting on the military option to silence the voices demanding freedom and dignity.

We strongly support the efforts of the new UN-Arab League Joint Special Envoy to stem the bloodshed and to reach a peaceful solution to the legitimate demands of the Syrian people in the framework of maintaining Syria's territorial integrity, security and stability. In this connection, we welcome the Syrian opposition's agreement in the recent meeting in Doha to unify their ranks.

Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

OIC has proved its added value in the field of mediation and conflict resolution. In this respect, OIC has been one of the major interlocutors in bringing peace and stability such as in Somalia, Philippines, Mali and the Sahel region.

Afghanistan is about to enter a decisive phase in its history where it takes control of its own security and armed forces. In this connection, we reiterate our support for the people and government of Afghanistan in their efforts to lay the ground for a more secure and more peaceful future. I am fully confident that the package of confidence-building measures adopted by the `Heart of Asia` process and backed by the international and regional parties concerned paves the way for greater cooperation and confidence in the region. Similarly, we support the reconciliation process within Afghanistan and we try to contribute to efforts to enhance cooperation between Afghanistan and its neighbours through the OIC Action Plan on Central Asia.

Concerning the situation in Myanmar, the OIC has raised international awareness about the serious violations perpetrated against some two million Muslims. We call upon the international community, particularly the United Nations and the EU, to display responsibility in protecting minorities and their human rights, and when necessary to revisit the benchmarks for applying effective sanctions. We, on our part, will intensify our efforts through collective action of the OIC members within the UN, including at the UN General Assembly and the Human Rights Council.

Excellencies,

Today, the OIC, with its new vision and identity from being a `Conference` to becoming `Cooperation`, has matured into a strong international organization committed to peace and security.

Our policies and activities are inspired by our guiding principles of moderation and modernization. In pursuit of these policies, the OIC has taken bold initiatives in meeting the

challenges of the 21st Century in line with the road map provided in the Ten Year Programme of Action of 2005.

Together with our active participation in international efforts and initiatives in conflict resolutions, we have at the same time prioritized strengthening human rights within the OIC. The establishment of the Independent Permanent Human Rights Commission, which is chaired by a lady from Indonesia and which comprises of four women members, has become fully functional.

The Commission has already developed a close partnership with the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights and we would expect this to be replicated within the existing OIC-ODIHR cooperation.

The OIC has also laid great emphasis on the cause of empowering women. The OIC Plan of Action for Advancement of Women has spelled out the target areas for addressing the issues concerning women and to facilitate their access to opportunities for their empowerment. In a few days, I will be addressing the Fourth OIC Ministerial Meeting on Women in Jakarta where we will discuss further ways and means to empower women in the OIC countries.

Excellencies,

I have in my earlier interactions with you underscored the serious threat to global security looms large due to rise of intolerance and racial discrimination based on religious beliefs and faith. I have also emphasised on the need for the OIC and the OSCE to work in concert in addressing the issue.

In this connection, intolerance and discrimination on many grounds, including on religious beliefs and faith, has emerged as a major threat global stability and tranquility.

In this respect, Muslims, especially in the West, are increasingly facing negative stereotyping, stigmatization and marginalization, and discrimination. In short, their basic human rights living in peace with the majority populations are being denied in some cases. In order to draw attention and to address the increasing phenomenon of Islamophobia particularly in the Western societies, I established an Observatory within the OIC General Secretariat to follow anti-Muslim and anti-Islamic acts and movements, which has produced annual reports, the last of which has just been published and is available on the OIC web-site.

Furthermore, I have appointed a Special Envoy on Combating Intolerance and Discrimination, who in his previous capacity also acted as the Personal Representative of the OSCE Chairperson-in-Office with a similar portfolio.

I would also like to commend the past and current Chairs in Office for prioritizing intolerance in the agenda of the OSCE. I should also praise the efforts of past and current Personal Representatives of the OSCE on Combating Intolerance and Discrimination against Muslims, with whom we had intensive consultations in Jeddah. I would urge this Council to further initiate necessary remedial steps to contain the perpetrators of discrimination.

I would like to take this opportunity to state that the issue of racial, ethnic and religious discrimination, stigmatization and incitement of violence through intolerance for religious diversity has dominated the deliberations of the just concluded 39th session of the OIC Council of Foreign Ministers held in Djibouti.

The recent anti-Muslim incidents, in particular the irresponsible media representation such as the release of a reprehensible film, confirmed our serious concerns of the long term implications of misuse of freedom of expression. At this point, I would like to draw your attention to the Joint Statement issued by the OIC, the EU, the Arab League and the African Union which both condemned any act of incitement to hatred as well the violent demonstrations which resulted in unfortunate loss of lives.

Recently, I shared our concerns and views with the EU High Representative for Foreign and Security Policy, who had addressed the OIC Council of Foreign Ministers as a Special Guest. She reiterated her determination to intensify the collaboration between the two Organizations.

I was pleased to note that we were on the same line of thinking on the gravity of the issue of religious intolerance and on the importance of responsible use of freedom of expression.

Here allow me to reiterate that the OIC position on freedom of opinion and expression is clear and resolute. However we should not be indifferent that the exercise of this right be tool or a licence to impair or encroach on other fundamental rights and freedoms, or to incite hate. We have to keep in mind that in the intimate interdependence of our present day world of diversity, we cannot remain oblivious to the cultural values and religious sentiments of others. At the end of the day, we should not remain hostages to the extremists on either side.

Excellencies,

In my address to the 15th session of the Human Rights Council in Geneva, I outlined a new approach towards evolving a consensus against combating intolerance and discrimination, and incitement to hatred and violence. The eight points in the proposed approach went well with all the negotiating partners and formed the basis of the consensus reflected in the unanimous adoption of HRC Resolution 16/18 entitled “combating intolerance, negative stereotyping and stigmatization of, and discrimination, incitement to violence, and violence against persons based on religion or belief”.

In fact, the OIC’s initiative with the US and European Governments in drafting and adopting this resolution broke the myth that a meeting of minds on the issue of intolerance was not possible. In order to effectively implement the clauses of the 16/18 Resolution, I initiated a political process called the “Istanbul Process”. Our first meeting in July 2011 was co-chaired by the US Secretary of State Mrs. Clinton and myself and which was participated by Foreign Ministers of a large number of OIC Member States and Western countries, as well as the EU High Representative, lent strong support to the need for implementation of Resolution of 16/18. The first follow up meeting of the Istanbul Process was held in Washington DC in 2011 and the second session is scheduled to be held next week in London. In this regard, I am glad to inform you that a few hours ago an agreement has been reached in New York between the OIC, US and the EU on related two Resolutions, which were adopted by consensus.

The OIC and OSCE are uniquely positioned to adopt a common strategy in addressing the vexing issue of religious intolerance. I would urge you to pool our resources together and

develop a network to reach the common people in raising awareness of the malaise of fanning hatred and violence. Our common goal must be devoted to develop a culture of peaceful cohabitation among diverse civilizations.

We in the OIC attach importance to developing relations, regular political dialogue and practical cooperation with the OSCE and see it as a relevant partner for furthering the historical reconciliation initiative, human rights and democratization.

Mr. Chairperson,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Before concluding my remarks, I would like to reiterate my thanks to the OSCE Chairmanship for providing this opportunity to address this august body and express our readiness for dialogue and cooperation with the next OSCE Chairmanship and the OSCE as a whole.

Thank you for your attention.