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Delegation of Morocco

**STATEMENT BY MR. OMAR ZNIBER,
AMBASSADOR AND PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF
MOROCCO, AT THE MEETING OF THE
OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

6 May 2010

**In response to the presentation by H.E. Mr. Ekmeleddin Ihsanoglu,
Secretary General of the Organisation of the Islamic Conference**

Mr. Chairperson,
Excellencies,
Distinguished delegates,

On behalf of the Moroccan delegation, I should like first of all to welcome His Excellency Mr. Ekmeleddin Ihsanoglu, Secretary General of the Organisation of the Islamic Conference (OIC), and to congratulate him on the quality of his presentation to the Permanent Council today.

My country – a member of the OIC and an OSCE Mediterranean Partner for Co-operation – believes that, as has already been strongly emphasized by the Chairperson and by the Secretary General of the OSCE, there is great potential for co-operation between the two organizations, among other things, in combating stereotypes, prejudices and misunderstandings between civilizations.

On several occasions, the OIC has expressed its desire to co-operate in areas of common interest, such as countering terrorism in all its forms and manifestations, along with organized crime, drug trafficking, corruption, money-laundering, and trafficking in human beings, and to promote the Islamic values of moderation, tolerance and respect for diversity.

In this regard, the 11th Session of the Islamic Summit Conference, held in Dakar on 13 and 14 March 2008, “welcomed the development of interaction with the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) in the context of the upcoming Chairmanship of the OSCE by the Republic of Kazakhstan in 2010.”

Allow me to refer to the final communiqué of the OIC Summit Conference, which brought together the Heads of State of the Organisation’s member countries. This document comprises basic elements that can pave the way for very close co-operation with the OSCE, particularly with regard to countering terrorism, intolerance, discrimination and xenophobia.

The final communiqué of the conference emphasizes, for instance, that “terrorism continues to pose a threat to international peace, security, and stability. It does not have any justification and should be condemned unreservedly. Terrorism has no particular religion, race, ethnic origin, nationality, or geographic region.” It goes on to state: “In this regard, any attempt to associate terrorism with any religion, especially with Islam, would serve the interests of terrorists. It is not possible to combat terrorism effectively without international solidarity and cooperation.”

The conference expressed “its strong support of the initiative of His Majesty King Mohammed VI of the Kingdom of Morocco calling for developing an international charter that defines appropriate standards and rules for exercising the right of freedom of expression and opinion, and the obligation to respect religious symbols and sanctities as well as spiritual values and beliefs” – for we believe that freedom of expression must not constitute a justification or pretext for an assault on the dignity of over one billion believers.

My delegation had emphasized at the appropriate time that in Europe, as elsewhere, many trials were conducted – and rightly so – of persons who uttered racist opinions having nothing to do with freedom of expression, or who called for discriminating against or stigmatizing communities.

The conference also emphasized “the need to develop [a] legally binding international instrument to prevent intolerance, discrimination, prejudice, and hatred on the grounds of religion and defamation of religions and to promote and ensure the respect of all religions”. In this context, I should like to underscore the role of the media in promoting tolerance and understanding between representatives of different cultures and civilizations. The impartial teaching of history and responsible political speech are also important in promoting a culture of tolerance and mutual understanding.

My country welcomes the decision of Kazakhstan to organize a high-level conference on tolerance and non-discrimination on 29 and 30 June 2010. We should like to recall that the Andalusian era, in which the dialogue of civilizations and the coexistence of religions was a historical fact, unequivocally demonstrates the baselessness of the theory of the clash of civilizations – a theory that we should all reject as an outright deception and an intellectual fraud.

In addition, I take this opportunity to reaffirm our appreciation for the work of the Personal Representatives of the OSCE Chairperson-in-Office for combating discrimination against Muslims, Jews and Christians, as well as the efforts undertaken by the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights in this area.

Considering the importance of questions related to the Middle East for the OIC, and in connection with the near future of the Mediterranean partnership, my delegation once again urges the OSCE participating States to support the request by the Palestinian National Authority for Palestine to be awarded the status of an OSCE Mediterranean Partner for Co-operation.

Emphasizing the need for a just and definitive resolution to the conflict between Israel and Palestine, which inevitably involves the creation of a viable Palestinian State on the basis of the Arab Peace Initiative and the Road Map, my country reaffirms the Arab and Islamic

character of East Jerusalem and the need to preserve the sanctity of the Islamic and Christian holy sites there.