



## **3<sup>rd</sup> Islamic Conference of Culture Ministers**

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

## **Final Communiqué of the Third Islamic Conference of Culture Ministers**

**(Doha, 14-16 Shawal 1422 A.H / 29-31 December 2001)**

Under the high patronage of His Highness Sheikh Hamad Bin Khalifa Al-Thani, Emir of the State of Qatar, President of the Ninth Islamic Summit Conference and with generous hosting on the part of His Highness, and at the invitation of the Islamic Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, in cooperation and coordination with the Government of the State of Qatar and the Secretariat of the Ninth Islamic Summit Conference, the Islamic Conference of Culture Ministers held - with the grace of God - its Third Session, in Doha, on 14-16 Shawal 1422 A.H, coresponding to 29-31 December, 2001 A.D. The opening ceremony was attended by His Highness Sheikh Jassem Bin Hamad Al-Thani, Qatari Heir Apparent, the Secretary General of the Organization of the Islamic Conference, the Director General of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, UNESCO, and the Director General of the Arab League Educational, Cultural and Scientific Organization - ALECSO.

His Highness Sheikh Hamad Bin Khalifa Al-Thani honoured the Conference by chairing the opening session and delivering a lofty address in which he indicated that the Conference was being held under critical international circumstances, the negative impacts and repercussions of which were reflected on the norms of life and the set of values and concepts. That in turn, made it imperative for all of us to explore the right means to deal with these conditions and the challenges posed to our Islamic nation.

His Highness stressed that it was imperative upon us to embark on rectifying the distorted and false image of Islam and Muslims in order to be able to enhance mutual understanding since many people engaged recently in propagating such ideas in wide intellectual and media circles particularly in the West. This responsibility required us to make use of all our potentials to develop a positive and frank dialogue with members of other civilizations with the objective of conveying to them a crystal-clear image of Islam and Islamic culture.

His Highness further underlined the necessity of standing up against the practices of the Israeli occupation forces against the defenceless Palestinian people, the flagrant violations against their cultural and educational institutions and the destruction and confiscation of their property, shrines and historical and archaeological sites in all the occupied Palestinian territories.

He affirmed that we had to put among our priorities of joint Islamic cultural action the setting up of an Islamic satellite channel, being an essential means of communication and dialogue with other civilizations, so as to be accessible to various Islamic schools of thought and cultural theories.

His Highness finally commended the momentous achievements of the Islamic Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization in the service of its Islamic nation.

The Conference decided to adopt the address by His Highness Sheikh Hamad Bin Khalifa Al-Thani, Emir of the State of Qatar, as an official document of the Conference.

Then, His Excellency the Secretary General of the Organization of the Islamic Conference, Dr. Abdelouahed Belakziz, took the floor and stressed the importance of holding the Third Islamic Conference of Culture Ministers at this juncture which the Muslim world was going through. He indicated that the Muslim Ummah was facing a fierce attack targeting its values and historical position by means of obliterating the leading role it has discharged to erect the universal civilizational edifice. The Secretary General also pointed out that the Organization of the Islamic Conference had assigned paramount importance to culture, given its decisive role in consolidating the identity of peoples, highlighting the importance of dialogue among cultures and civilizations to secure coexistence and mutual respect and to ward off conflicts which had torn apart those relations over history. He concluded by commending the momentous achievements of ISESCO.

Speaking at this opening session, H.E. Dr. Abdulaziz Othman Altwaijri, Director General of the Islamic Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, highlighted the role played by culture, indicating that irrespective of the divergence of opinions and perceptions of its mission in life and role in society, culture remained the most crucial element in the development of man, the advancement of societies, the building of the future and the shaping of civilizations. Culture, in its broader sense, played a role of utmost importance in guiding the human mind, enlightening man's thought, creating powerful incentives and strong motives for the exercise of the influencing act, capable of triggering change, progress and modernization at all levels. The Director General pointed out that the axis around which evolved culture, in all cases, was the building and shaping of the human being's personality.

His Excellency the Director General of the Islamic Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization went on to say : *“Every nation forges its present and plans for its future helped in that by what she produces in terms of thought and what she has accumulated in terms of heritage and civilization. And the Muslim Ummah precisely has in possession a civilization asset that provides her with factors of strength, immunity and*

*solidity, and supplies her with the means and capabilities to enter the civilization enterprise and competition not for the sake of stirring cultural conflict and civilization clash, but for the sake of contributing to the alleviation of the intensity of the conflict and pushing international relations in the direction of dialogue and communication based on international law, on humane principles and on the teachings of the Revealed Religions”.*

During the opening session of the Conference, H.E. Mr. Mohamed Al-Achaari, Minister of Culture and Communication in the Kingdom of Morocco and Chairman of the 2nd Session of the Islamic Conference of Culture Ministers, delivered a speech in which he expressed his high esteem for the Emir, Government and people of the State of Qatar for their gracious hosting of this Conference. He pointed out the necessity for laying down an Islamic cultural order affirming the need for the pursuit of efforts to counter the fierce attack on Islamic culture, triggered by ignorance, misunderstanding and conflict of interests. He indicated that the rehabilitation of our culture would only be possible if we worked out an integrated project built on the resolutions of the recent Islamic Summit Conference. His Excellency Mr. Mohamed Al-Achaari condemned the Israeli aggression against the Palestinian people and called for harnessing the militant spirit of the blessed Al-Aqsa Intifada to elaborate an Islamic information and cultural uprising.

The Director General of UNESCO, Dr. Koichiro Matsuura, delivered an address in which he highlighted the civilizational message promoted by Arab Islamic culture, indicating that its success materialized in its receptiveness to other cultures. He pointed out that the Arab Islamic culture helped much salvage the Mediterranean and Middle Eastern culture, commending on the same occasion, the cognitive advancement of this culture.

He affirmed that the Arab Islamic civilization had stricken an example to be emulated in terms of cultural coexistence, stressing that the Universal Declaration on cultural diversity offered a regulatory framework liable to help us safeguard the cultural diversity. He urged on the translation of the Declaration into action, appealing to UNESCO Member States to contribute more forcefully to the preservation of the cultural diversity and safeguard of the shared universal heritage.

UNESCO Director General commended the role discharged by ISESCO as a medium of dialogue among civilizations, hailing the two recent symposia held by the Organization in Rabat and Tunis.

In his address delivered at the opening session, the Director General of ALECSO, Dr. Mounji Bousneina, stressed the importance of the fruitful cooperation existing between ISESCO and ALECSO in their common fields of action. He affirmed the necessity to promote this cooperation for the best interest of the Arab Islamic Ummah,

indicating that the Arab Islamic culture had always been working to advance coexistence, empathy and exchange.

He underlined that Islam was a religion of tolerance, openness, moderation and love of general well-being, indicating that the West itself might be victim of the position of its extremists, as one could not fail to notice ignorance, misconception and impulsiveness on their part. He called for a calm dialogue initiated to promote mutual recognition and to lay down the foundation of a joint system of coexistence.

The Conference elected His Excellency Mr. Abdullah Bin Khalifa Al-Attiyah, Minister of State, President of National Council for Culture, Arts and Heritage as chairman of the Conference.

The floor was then taken successively by Their Highnesses and Their Excellencies the Ministers and the representatives of Islamic, Arab and international organizations, all of whom expressed appreciation and esteem for the State of Qatar and for His Highness the Emir of the State. They lauded the invitation extended to them by the Islamic Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization to attend the Conference as representatives of Member States and of the organizations bound to ISESCO with fruitful cooperation relations. They unanimously agreed on considering the Conference an auspicious opportunity provided to the OIC Member States to give a fresh impetus to the implementation of the Cultural Strategy for the Islamic World.

The Conference members examined the issues and items on the agenda, adopting a transparent and comprehensive approach encompassing all the components making up the general cultural scene in the Islamic world. They reaffirmed their collective will to push for a conscious and responsible implementation of the Cultural Strategy, in the light of the international changes reflected - positively or negatively - on the overall conditions in the Islamic world.

They noted with satisfaction the efforts exerted by the Islamic Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization aiming at implementing the resolutions and recommendations issued by the previous Session of the Conference, and commended the achievements attained in this respect, expressing, on the same occasion, their determination to provide all resources and to work for creating more suitable opportunities to carry on work, taking into account the nature of the circumstances experienced by the Islamic world in the light of the deep changes occurring in the world in the aftermath of the horrendous events of the few past months.

The discussions which took place during the Conference sessions focused on the general cultural conditions prevailing in the Islamic world and the repercussions of globalization trends in so far as culture and information are concerned, on culture in the Islamic societies. The discussions underscored the manifold challenges enfeebling the cultural identity of the Islamic Ummah, knocking down its immunity and making pressure to bear on the Islamic civilizational identity, bringing thereby prejudice to the firmness and stability of the Islamic cultural and civilizational position.

The Conference stressed the necessity to intensify, coordinate and pool efforts in order to implement the Cultural Strategy and to adapt it to the international and regional changes, given the fact that it is a flexible action plan and a dynamic framework responding to the requirements of comprehensive development in the Islamic world and taking into account variation of conditions, and diversity of cultural choices and policies in each Islamic country.

The Conference extensively discussed the reports presented by the Islamic Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization on the implementation of the Resolutions of the 2nd Conference Session as well as the implementation of the Strategy for Islamic Cultural Action in the West. The Conference also looked into the activities of the Islamic Organization within the framework of the International Year of Dialogue among Civilizations : 2001, the recommendations of the specialized commissions of the Organization of the Islamic Conference on the Cultural Strategy, as well as the media denigration of Islam and Islamic civilization under the present juncture, the preservation of Islamic cultural hallmarks and institutions in Al-Quds Al-Sharif, the recovery and return of the spoiled Islamic cultural property, the draft programme of the capitals of Islamic culture and the project of establishing an Islamic satellite. It took appropriate resolutions therein.

The Conference reaffirms the Muslim World position on dialogue among civilizations based on Islam's principles and teachings which advocate civilizational tolerance, peaceful coexistence and mutual respect for cultural and civilizational specificities of nations. It, likewise, reaffirms the sincere wish of the Muslim World to pursue dialogue with human cultures; and calls upon the international parties to respond to the Muslim World positive stance on dialogue among civilizations and to express sincere wish for the achievement of mutual understanding among the peoples of the world to spare mankind crises.

The Conference decided to extend full support to the Islamic Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization to carry on follow-up action of the application of the Cultural Strategy and the Strategy for Islamic Cultural Action in the West, and called upon the Islamic Organization to work out a comprehensive perception of its integrated vision to the Islamic cultural action in the West in the light of the international changes.

The Conference entrusted the Islamic Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization with the task of setting up a detailed programme in response to the defamation campaign launched by the media against Islam and Islamic civilization, provided that it be submitted to the Member States for consideration. It called upon Member States to take part most actively in this programme to refute the allegations and fallacies circulated by Western media and to call upon diplomatic missions to shoulder the responsibilities devolved on them.

In this context, the Conference stressed that refuting smear media campaigns was a collective responsibility among non-governmental media, journalists and educated people, urging Member States to take initiatives at the level of their information bodies, within their own possibilities and under their own information and cultural policies, in order to contribute to rehabilitating the image of Islam in the West.

The Conference displayed an increased interest in the extensive report presented by the Islamic Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization on the preservation of the Islamic cultural landmarks and institutions in Al-Quds Al-Sharif. The Conference stressed the necessity to protect the Palestinian people in general, upon which an all-out colonial aggression has been perpetrated by the occupying Israeli authorities and the Jewish settlers in the Palestinian territories. The Conference called upon the international community to promptly intervene to secure international protection for the Palestinian people, including, naturally, the preservation of the Islamic cultural landmarks and institutions in Al-Quds Al-Sharif. The Conference stressed the responsibility of UNESCO and other competent organizations for protecting these Palestinian landmarks and cultural institutions and for supporting the stance of the Islamic world vis-à-vis this cause.

The Conference adopted the project for setting up an Islamic Satellite Channel in accordance with the study elaborated by the Islamic Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, and requested ISESCO and the competent parties in the State of Qatar to follow up implementation of the Project, appealing to all Member States to provide every support to have this Project carried out as soon as possible.

The Conference called upon the international community, governments and institutions, to expedite the recovery of the despoiled Islamic cultural properties in compliance with the rules of international law, and as part of enforcement of the right of the peoples to enjoy their cultural specificities and their right to preserve their cultural and historical properties, plundered under occupation and colonization. It warned against the purchase of any plundered cultural property item from any person or party and urged on informing Interpol and the countries to whom belong the items. The Conference appealed to the Member States to approach Western countries retaining these properties to look with them into ways of returning properties to their lands of origin.

The Conference adopted the draft programme on Islamic capitals of culture and selected the city of Makkah Al-Mukarramah as capital of Islamic culture for the year 2004, as a first capital marking the launching of the Programme.

The Conference mandated the Islamic Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization -ISESCO- with the selection, on a regular basis, of Islamic capitals of culture, in such a way as to select, each year, three capitals for Islamic culture from among the cities of OIC Member States.

The Conference elected the new members of the Consultative Council for implementation of the Cultural Strategy for the Islamic World and expressed thanks to the former members of the Council. Once again, the Conference entrusted the Islamic Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization with the follow-up of the proceedings of the Consultative Council, and requested it to support the Council to help it discharge its mission, in coordination with the OIC General Secretariat.

The Conference urged the Member States which have not yet joined ISESCO, to do so.

The Conference addressed a letter of protestation to the Chairman of the Swedish Academy, contesting the award of the Nobel Prize in Literature for the year 2001 to the racist writer, V.S. Naipaul. It called upon the Academy to reconsider its decision, expressing at the same time its strong condemnation of the decision by the Swedish Academy to award Nobel Prize to a writer known for his hostility to Islam and Muslims, stirring up hatred among peoples and fuelling conflicts among cultures and civilizations, in a blatant violation of the international rules, covenants and declarations and in outcrying disrespect for universal human values and religious principles.

At the closing of its proceedings, the Conference addressed a message of thanks and esteem to His Highness Sheikh Hamad Bin Khalifa Al-Thani, Emir of the State of Qatar, President of the Ninth Islamic Summit Conference.