

# OIC

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Donor Conference to Support Refugees and  
Displaced Persons in the Sahel and Lake Chad Region



OIC Media Observatory on Israeli Crimes against the Palestinians

## Israel is Wiping out Entire Cities





50th Session of the Council of Foreign Ministers

Yaoundé – Republic of Cameroon

August 29-30, 2024

Theme: (Developing intra-OIC transportation and communication infrastructure: key instrument for combating poverty and insecurity)

Yaoundé is the capital of the Republic of Cameroon, and contains many manufacturing and processing industries, such as wood factories and printing presses, and is also a market for one of the richest agricultural regions in the country.



# OUR MESSAGE

## 2024: Intense Momentum of Action and Emergency Preparedness

The year 2024 has seen unprecedented global events, with significant impacts on politics, the economy, climate, and all aspects of life. In the face of these developments, which have affected all Member States, the OIC has witnessed an intense momentum of action, probably the most significant in recent years, with increased coordination and consultation between the General Secretariat and Member States.

The 15th Islamic Summit Conference was held, with brilliant success, in Banjul, the capital city of the Republic of The Gambia, on May 3-4, 2024. The Leaders and their representatives addressed a wide range of issues, in particular, the Palestinian Cause and the repercussions of the ongoing Israeli aggression against the Palestinian people in Gaza, the West Bank, and occupied Al-Quds. They also covered political, economic, social, cultural, humanitarian, and scientific issues, in addition to sensitive topics such as Islamophobia and the fight against hate speech, extremism, and terrorism, as well as the rights of Muslim communities in non-member states. All these issues were thoroughly and seriously discussed, resulting in the adoption of resolutions reflecting the unified stance of Member States.

The current year also saw the convening of three extraordinary ministerial meetings to discuss the Israeli aggression on Gaza, reflecting the great attention that the OIC attaches to the Palestinian Cause and the need to follow up on its developments and advance a unified position toward a just solution that would end the suffering of the Palestinian people and pave the way for the establishment of their independent State.

We have thus convened four successive extraordinary ministerial meetings, (with an extraordinary meeting previously held at the end of 2023) since the brutal Israeli aggression on Gaza began on October 7, 2023. In addition, a Joint Extraordinary Arab-Islamic Summit between the OIC and the Arab League was hosted by Saudi Arabia, in the city of Riyadh, on November 11, 2023.

Efforts to halt the brutal Israeli aggression against the Palestinian people, lift the siege imposed on them, and ensure delivery of humanitarian aid to the Gaza Strip, have been a primary preoccupation for the OIC. In this context, we have launched work with the Ministerial Committee emanating from the Joint Arab-Islamic Summit, which resumed its international moves on May 29, 2024, with intensive meetings in Spain and Norway. The Committee will pursue its moves in other countries of the world.

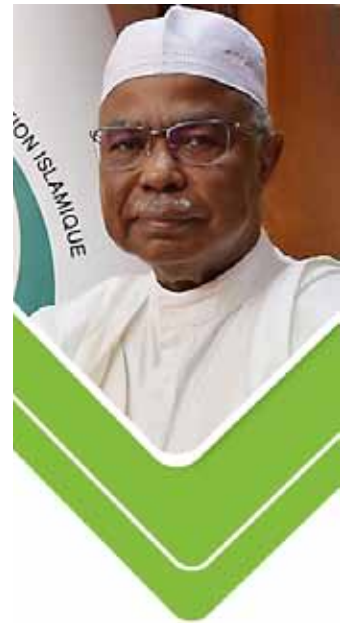
As part of these same endeavors, the OIC General Secretariat and the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People (CEIRPP) held, in early July at the OIC headquarters, an international Symposium on the Question of Jerusalem: "Jerusalem and the Gaza War: Palestinian Identity and Existence Under Threat of Erasure". Participants in the Symposium shed light on the Israeli occupation's policies and its violations of international law and international humanitarian law. Among these violations are the forced displacement of Palestinians from their homes and the confiscation of their properties in the city of Al-Quds through the Judaization policy. These actions were placed in a broader context involving similar illegal measures taken in other regions of the Occupied Palestinian Territory.

On the other hand, the OIC played an active role in the legal proceedings at the International Court of Justice (ICJ) in support of the Palestinian Cause. On February 26, 2024, the Secretary-General presented, on behalf of the OIC, an oral pleading before the ICJ judges in The Hague, in which he highlighted the crimes of Israel, the occupying power, against the Palestinian people, particularly its war on Gaza. The ICJ oral and written hearings were held in response to a previous request made by the United Nations General Assembly in 2022 for an advisory opinion by the ICJ on the Israeli occupation of the Palestinian Territory and its legal implications.

Another significant event during the past summer was the 50th session of the Council of Foreign Ministers, held in Yaoundé, the capital city of the Republic of Cameroon, on August 29, 2024, under the theme of: "Developing Intra-OIC Transport and Communication Infrastructure: A Key Instrument for Combating Poverty and Insecurity."

This session addressed a range of significant issues in the Islamic world, including the necessity to move forward with the promising Dakar-Port Sudan Railway project, which will have significant positive impacts on trade, transport, and development, in addition to strengthening communication between OIC Member States in East and West Africa.

In response to the humanitarian crisis affecting displaced persons and refugees in Nigeria, Niger, Chad, Cameroon, Burkina Faso, and Mali, a "Donor Conference to Support Refugee and Displaced Persons in the Sahel and Lake Chad Region" will be held on October 26, 2024. The event will be organized jointly by the OIC General Secretariat, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (represented by the King Salman Humanitarian Aid and Relief Center), the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR).



**Hissein Brahim Taha**

Secretary-General of the  
Organization of Islamic  
Cooperation

*Israel has not left a single gap in Gaza's geography without filling it with crimes against humanity, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and all the calamities, disasters and massacres that this entails. I reiterate my call to hold it accountable and question it for all the crimes it has committed throughout the occupied Palestinian territories.*



## OIC Organs

### Standing Committees:

Al-Quds Committee

Standing Committee for Information And Cultural Affairs (COMIAC), Dakar (<https://comiac.gouv.sn/>)

Standing Committee for Economic and Commercial Cooperation (COMCEC), Istanbul (<https://www.comcec.org/>)

Standing Committee For Scientific And Technological Cooperation (COMSTEC), Islamabad (<https://comstech.org/>)

### Subsidiary Organs:

The Statistical, Economic and Social Research and Training Centre for Islamic Countries (SESRIC), Ankara (<https://www.sesric.org/>)

Research Centre For Islamic History, Art and Culture (IRCICA), Istanbul (<https://www.ircica.org/>)

Islamic University of Technology, Dhaka (<https://www.iutoic-dhaka.edu/>)

The Islamic Centre for Development of Trade, Casablanca (<https://icdt-cidc.org/>)

The International Islamic Fiqh Academy, Jeddah (<https://iifa-aifi.org/en>)

Islamic Solidarity Fund, Jeddah (<https://isf-fsi.org>)

Islamic Civil Aviation Council, Tunis

### Specialized Institutions:

Islamic Development Bank, Jeddah (<https://www.isdb.org/>)

The Islamic World Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, Rabat (<https://icesco.org/en/>)

The Union OIC News Agencies, Jeddah (<https://una-oic.org/en/>)

OIC States Broadcasting Union, Jeddah (<https://osbu-oic.org/>)

The Islamic Committee of the International Crescent, Benghazi (<https://icic-oic.org/en/index.htm>)

Islamic Organization for Food Security, Astana (<https://www.iofs.org.kz/>)

Labour Center of the OIC, Baku

Organization of Islamic Cooperation Standing Committee on Scientific, Technological Cooperation (COMSTEC Secretariat) Islamabad (<https://comstech.org/>)

Women Development Organization, Cairo (<https://www.wdo-odf.org/en/>)

The Organization of Islamic Cooperation Center for Cooperation and Coordination between Police Agencies, Istanbul

### Affiliated Institutions:

Islamic Chamber of Commerce, Industry & Agriculture, Karachi (<https://www.iccia.com/>)

Organization of Islamic Capitals and Cities, Makkah (<https://www.oicc.org/en>)

Islamic Solidarity Sports Federation, Riyadh (<https://issf.sa/en/>)

Organization of the Islamic Ship-owners Association, Jeddah

World Federation of Arabo-Islamic International Schools, Cairo (<https://facebook.com/wfaiis.oic.schools>)

Islamic Cooperation Youth Forum, Istanbul (<https://www icyforum.org/>)

International Union of Muslim Scouts, Jeddah (<https://msihs.org>)

Islamic World Academy of Sciences, Amman (<https://www.iasworld.org/>)

The Federation of Consultants from Islamic Countries, Istanbul (<https://www.thefcic.org/home>)

General Council For Islamic Banks And Financial Institutions, Manama (<https://www.cibafi.org/Home>)

Federation of Contractors from Islamic Countries, Riyadh

OIC Computer Emergency Response Team, Cyberjaya, Malaysia (<https://www.oic-cert.org/en/index.html>)

Standards and Metrology Institute for Islamic Countries, Istanbul (<https://www.smiic.org/en>)

Real Estate Union in Islamic States, Djibouti

OIC Broadcasting Regulatory Authorities Forum, Ankara (<https://www.oic-ibraf.org/>)

International Islamic University Malaysia, Kuala Lumpur (<https://www.iiu.edu.my/v2/>)

Association of Tax Authorities of Islamic Countries, Khartoum Global Forum for Moderation, Amman (<https://wasatyeanet/en>)

OIC Media Forum, Türkiye King Faisal University, Chad, Ndjamena (<https://urft.net/>)

The Islamic Halal Bodies Accreditation Forum, Saudi Arabia

### Islamic Universities:

Islamic University in Niger, Niamey (<https://universite-say.com/>)

Islamic University in Uganda, Mbale (<https://www.iuiu.ac.ug/>)

### Independent Organs:

Independent Permanent Human Rights Commission (IPHRC), Jeddah (<https://www.oic-iphr.org/>)



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## OIC CFM in Yaoundé Addresses Hot Issues in the Islamic World

The 50th session of the OIC Council of Foreign Ministers witnessed significant momentum driven by events taking place in the Islamic world, and requiring a unified Islamic stance.

The OIC Secretary-General, H.E. Mr. Hissein Brahimi Taha, raised various issues in his speech at the opening session of the CFM, held under the auspices of H.E. Mr. Paul Biya, President of the Republic of Cameroon.

Addressing the opening session, held in Yaoundé, the Capital of Cameroon, on August 29, 2024, H.E. Dr. Joseph Dion Ngute, Prime Minister of the Republic of Cameroon, speaking on behalf of the President of Cameroon, expressed his country's support for the OIC and the importance of solidarity with its Member States in the fight against poverty, climate change and terrorism. He touched on the serious escalation in Palestine, particularly in the Gaza Strip.

H.E. Mr. Lejeune Mbella Mbella, Minister of External Relations of the Republic of Cameroon, delivered his country's speech after assuming the chairmanship of the current CFM session.

The Minister underlined the significance of the theme chosen for the 50th CFM session:

"Developing Intra-OIC Transportation and Communication Infrastructure: A Key Instrument for Combating Poverty and Insecurity". He stressed the importance of development, peace, and security for Member States, and pointed to the escalation and violence in Palestine, emphasizing the principle of the two-state solution.

For his part, H.E. Mr. Hissein Brahimi Taha, OIC Secretary-General, stated, in his speech at the opening session, that the Cause of Palestine and Al-Quds Al-Sharif is going through serious developments that pose a challenge to the international community in general, and to the OIC in particular. He noted that the Israeli occupation forces continue their unprecedented military aggression on the Gaza Strip and on all parts of the Palestinian Territory, including Al-Quds Al-Sharif, which has caused thousands of casualties. He stressed that the OIC is pursuing its efforts to face the repercussions of the brutal Israeli aggression against the Palestinian people, to strengthen their steadfastness in their land, and to defend their legitimate rights.

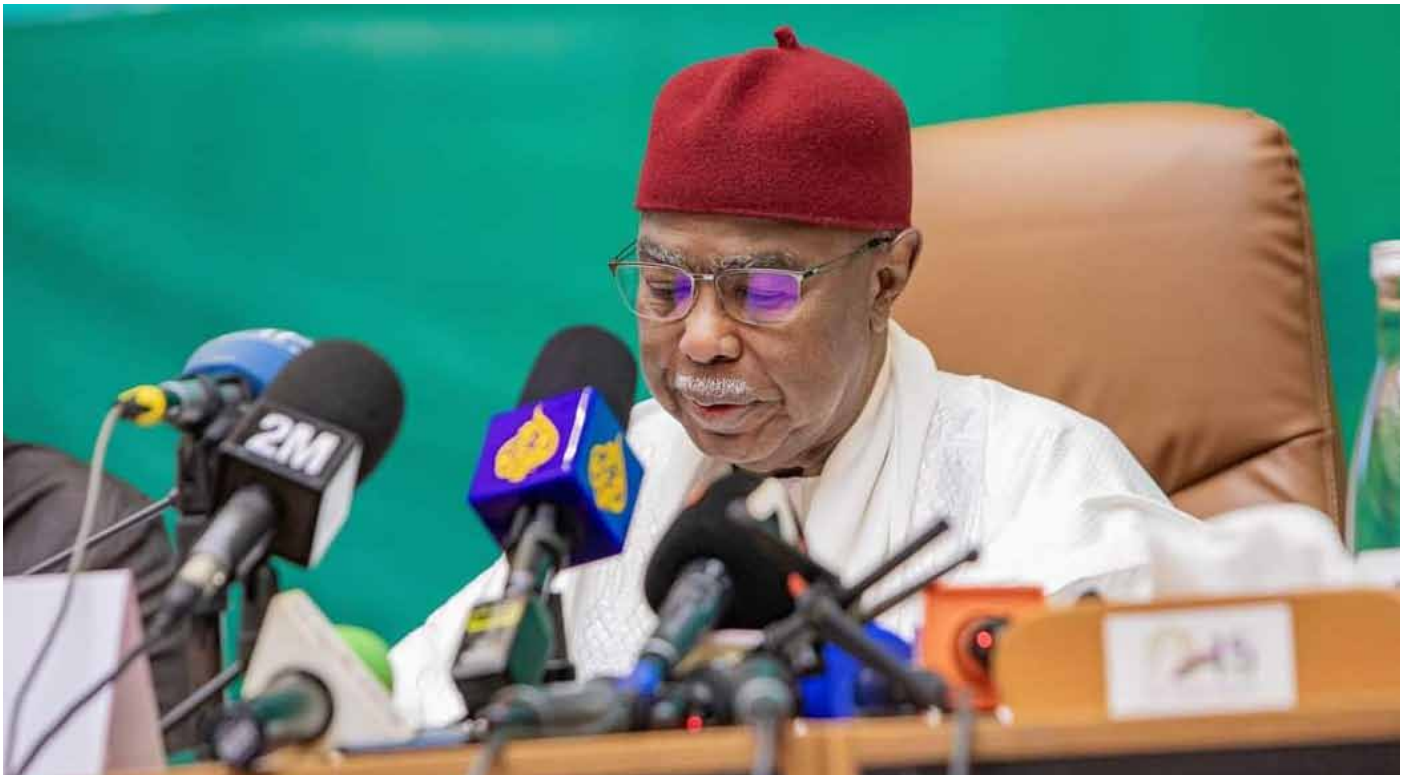
The Secretary-General highlighted the OIC's humanitarian efforts as part of constructive dialogue on various issues in Afghani-

stan, particularly the continued ban on girls' education and on women's work and their participation in public life. He pointed to the continuous visits paid by the Secretary-General's Special Envoy, Amb. Tarig Ali Bakheet, and by the delegations of scholars and OIC institutions to Afghanistan, aimed at engaging in dialogue with the de facto government to end this ban.

The Secretary-General reviewed the latest developments in relation to the issue of Jammu and Kashmir, and highlighted the efforts exerted by the OIC and his Special Envoy, Mr. Yousef Al-Doubeay, and his field visits in the implementation of the resolutions of the Islamic Summit and the Council of Foreign Ministers. He reiterated the OIC's principled position in support of the territorial integrity of the Republic of Azerbaijan, and welcomed the end of the armed conflict between Azerbaijan and Armenia, and the restoration of Azerbaijan's sovereignty and territorial integrity within its national borders.

The Secretary-General stated that the OIC is paying special attention to the multifaceted challenges facing the Sahel and Lake Chad region, and called for more solidarity with its peoples.





## Secretary-General: Contact Group Meeting Reflects OIC's Commitment to the Cause of the Kashmiri People

The OIC Contact Group on Jammu and Kashmir met on August 29, 2024, on the sidelines of the 50th session of the OIC Council of Foreign Ministers, held in Yaoundé, Cameroon.

Addressing the meeting in his capacity as Chairman, the OIC Secretary-General, H.E. Mr. Hissein Brahim Taha, stressed that holding this meeting reflects the OIC's firm commitment to the cause of the Kashmiri people. He noted that the OIC, in all its efforts concerning Jammu and Kashmir, is keen to intensify activities of advocacy, awareness, and communication in order to cover the multifaceted dimensions of the Jammu and Kashmir conflict.

The Contact Group meeting discussed the situation in Jammu and Kashmir. The previous meeting held on May 5, 2024, on the sidelines of the 15th session of the Islamic Summit Conference in Banjul, had confirmed the OIC's firm position on this issue. In this same context, the OIC General Secretariat reaffirmed, in a press release, the resolutions of the Islamic Summit and the

Council of Foreign Ministers with regard to Jammu and Kashmir. It called for the respect of the internationally recognized status of Jammu and Kashmir and for the reversal of all illegal and unilateral measures taken on and after 5 August 2019. It expressed full solidarity with the Kashmiri people in their quest for their right to self-determination. It called on the international community to increase efforts for the settlement of the Jammu and Kashmir dispute in accordance with the relevant UN Security Council resolutions.

The OIC Ministerial Committee on Accountability for Human Rights Violations Against the Rohingya also met on the sidelines of the 50th session of the OIC Council of Foreign Ministers in Yaoundé, Cameroon.

During the meeting, a briefing was made on the latest developments regarding the case filed against Myanmar at the International Court of Justice concerning the Rohingya. Addressing the meeting, the OIC Secretary-General, H.E. Mr. Hissein Brahim Taha, reaffirmed the OIC's unwavering position in

support of the Rohingya, and its continuous calls on Myanmar to ensure their safety and security, recognizing their fundamental rights, including the right to citizenship, and provide favorable conditions for the voluntary, safe, dignified, and sustainable return of Rohingya refugees and IDPs to their homeland.

The Secretary-General emphasized that the OIC General Secretariat will pursue its efforts to mobilize international support for a lasting solution to this complex crisis and to defend the rights and interests of the Rohingya. The OIC, he added, will work to enhance dialogue and cooperation with key international actors to address the underlying causes of this crisis.

Participants in the meeting urged Myanmar to address the root causes of the conflict, restore the legitimate rights of the Rohingya Muslims, fully comply with the Court's orders, and take all necessary measures to prevent the perpetration of acts of genocide against them.

## Intensive Preparatory Meetings ahead of CFM Meeting in Yaoundé

The OIC General Secretariat held, on August 4, 2024, at its headquarters in Jeddah, the Senior Officials Meeting preparatory to the 50th session of the OIC Council of Foreign Ministers, convened in Yaoundé, Cameroon, on August 29-30, 2024.

Addressing the meeting, the OIC Secretary-General, H.E. Mr. Hissein Brahim Taha, extended his sincere congratulations to the Republic of Cameroon, which assumed the presidency of the 50th CFM session. He also expressed deep appreciation to the Islamic Republic of Mauritania for its valuable efforts and significant initiatives during its presidency of the 49th session.

The Secretary-General noted that the Senior Officials Meeting is being held at a time when the Cause of Palestine and Al-Quds Ash-Sharif is facing serious challenges and grave developments as a result of the unprecedented Israeli military aggression on the Gaza Strip and on all parts of the Palestinian Territory, including the occupied city of Al-Quds, in flagrant violation of international law and the relevant UN resolutions. He stressed the need to unify the efforts of the OIC Member States at the international level in order to exert further pressure for the implementation of the UN Security Council and General Assembly resolutions calling for an immediate cessation of the Israeli military aggression, as well as to ensure adequate and sustainable access to humanitarian aid throughout the Gaza Strip, lift the inhumane Israeli blockade, and support the UNRWA.

The Secretary-General reviewed the OIC's efforts and initiatives with regard to the situation in Afghanistan and in Jammu and Kashmir, as well as its efforts to promote peace, security, stability, and development in all OIC countries, and to defend the rights of Muslim communities and minorities in non-member states. He also touched on the OIC's humanitarian work, especially the efforts underway to host an international donors' conference at the OIC headquarters in Jeddah in October 2024, with the aim of mobilizing resources to help address the challenges facing refugees and displaced persons in northeastern Nigeria, Lake Chad, and the Sahel region.

Previously, during the 46th session of the Islamic Commission for Economic, Cultural and Social Affairs (ICECS), the OIC Secre-



tary-General, H.E. Mr. Hissein Brahim Taha, noted that the meeting is taking place amid rising global conflicts and economic downturns. He added that the OIC is working closely with its Member States and institutions to organize joint cultural events and encourage the holding of multidisciplinary festivals aimed at fostering the values of mutual cooperation and highlighting cultural diversity in the Muslim world.

Addressing the opening session of the ICECS meeting on July 28, 2024, the Secretary-General welcomed all participants in the preparatory meetings for the 50th CFM session.

On the economic level, the Secretary-General stressed that the inauguration of the OIC Labor Centre in Baku, Azerbaijan, will promote OIC-wide solutions to the development challenges through support to the workforce. He also touched on the inaugural session of the General Assembly of the Islamic Forum for Halal Accreditation Bodies (IFHAB), a new affiliated organ of the OIC, held in Makkah Al-Mukarramah in November 2023.

The Secretary-General underlined the need to address the pressing issues facing the OIC Member States, particularly in the fields of STI, higher education, health, and the environment. He indicated that the challenges

faced by the OIC countries, exacerbated by climate change, energy scarcity, and the ongoing threat of diseases and pandemics, necessitate a concerted effort towards further collaboration and innovation within the OIC.

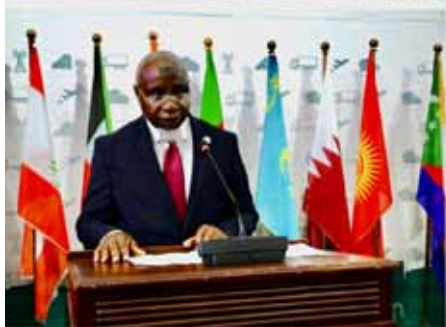
In this context, the Secretary-General welcomed the offer made by the Republic of Azerbaijan to host the 3rd OIC Summit on Science and Technology, noting that such a summit will provide a platform to review the OIC's collective progress in the fields of science and technology.

In terms of social development, women's empowerment, and gender equity, the Secretary-General commended the efforts of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia in hosting the "International Conference on Women in Islam: Status and Empowerment", which focused on the rights and responsibilities of women in Islam.

In conclusion, the Secretary-General commended the OIC institutions working in the social, economic, and cultural fields, in science and technology, as well as in education, health, and environment, for their continued collaboration with the OIC General Secretariat through the Annual Coordination Meeting of OIC Institutions (ACMOI) and its relevant thematic committees.



## Assistant Secretaries-General Take Oath of Office on the Sidelines of the 50th CFM in Yaoundé



Gabon, Niger, Mauritania, Chad, Burkina Faso and Gambia Sign OIC Agreements  
During the 50th session of the OIC Council of Foreign Ministers, held in Yaoundé, Cameroon, under the theme of: "Developing Intra-OIC Transport and Communication

Infrastructure: A Key Instrument for Combating Poverty and Insecurity", the Assistant Secretaries-General of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) took the oath of office: Amb. Samir Bakr Diab, from the State of Palestine, for the position of Assistant

Secretary-General for Palestine and Al-Quds Affairs; Amb. Tarig Ali Bakheet, from Sudan, for the position of Assistant Secretary-General for Humanitarian, Cultural, and Social Affairs; Mr. Yousef Al-Dobeay, from Saudi Arabia, for the position of Assistant Secretary-General for Political Affairs; Dr. Ahmad Kawesa Sengendo, from Uganda, for the position of Assistant Secretary-General for Economic Affairs; Amb. Aftab Khokhar, from Pakistan, for the position of Assistant Secretary-General for Science and Technology; and Amb. Musa Kulalikaya, from Turkey, for the position of Assistant Secretary-General for Administration and Finance.

During the 50th session of the OIC Council of Foreign Ministers, several agreements and statutes established within the OIC were signed on August 30, 2024.

Gabon signed three agreements, namely the "Makkah Al-Mukarramah Convention on Anti-Corruption Law Enforcement Cooperation", the "Agreement on Establishment of the Islamic Committee of the International Crescent", and the "Statute of the Islamic States Telecommunications Union."

Mauritania, Burkina Faso, Niger, Chad, and Gambia signed the Statute of the OIC Fund to Support Youth in the Sahel and Lake Chad Basin.

Gambia also signed the Protocol on the Preferential Tariff Scheme for the Trade Preferential System (TPS) among the OIC Member States, the TPS-OIC Rules of Origin, the Statute of the International Islamic Court of Justice, and the Statute of the OIC Labor Center.

### Secretary-General Meet with Cameroon's Minister of External Relations on the Sidelines of the CFM Session in Yaoundé

The OIC Secretary-General, H.E. Mr. Hissein Brahim Taha, received, on August 28, 2024, at his residence in Yaoundé, H.E. Mr. Lejeune Mbella Mbella, Minister of External Relations of the Republic of Cameroon. The Secretary-General welcomed the Minister and expressed to him his thanks for the

warm welcome and generous hospitality extended to the OIC delegation since their arrival in Cameroon. He commended the efforts invested by the Republic of Cameroon for the organization of the 50th CFM session.

In this regard, the Minister expressed his

thanks to the Secretary-General and to the OIC General Secretariat for the work accomplished during the preparatory meetings for this session. He indicated that he will pursue efforts to make sure the Yaoundé session will be one of full consensus among Member States on all issues.

## Bilaterals



Secretary-General, H.E. Mr. Hissein Brahim Taha, received, on August 29, 2024, H.E. Mr. Karamoko Jean Marie Traoré, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Burkina Faso.



Secretary-General, H.E. Mr. Hissein Brahim Taha, received, H.E. Mr. Abderaman Koulamallah, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Chad.



Secretary-General, H.E. Mr. Hissein Brahim Taha, met, with H.E. Minister Riyad Mansour, Head of the Palestinian Delegation, and Permanent Representative of the State of Palestine to the United Nations.



The OIC Secretary-General, H.E. Mr. Hissein Brahim Taha, received, H.E. Mr. Bakary Yaou Sangaré, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Cooperation and Nigeriens Abroad of the Republic of Niger.

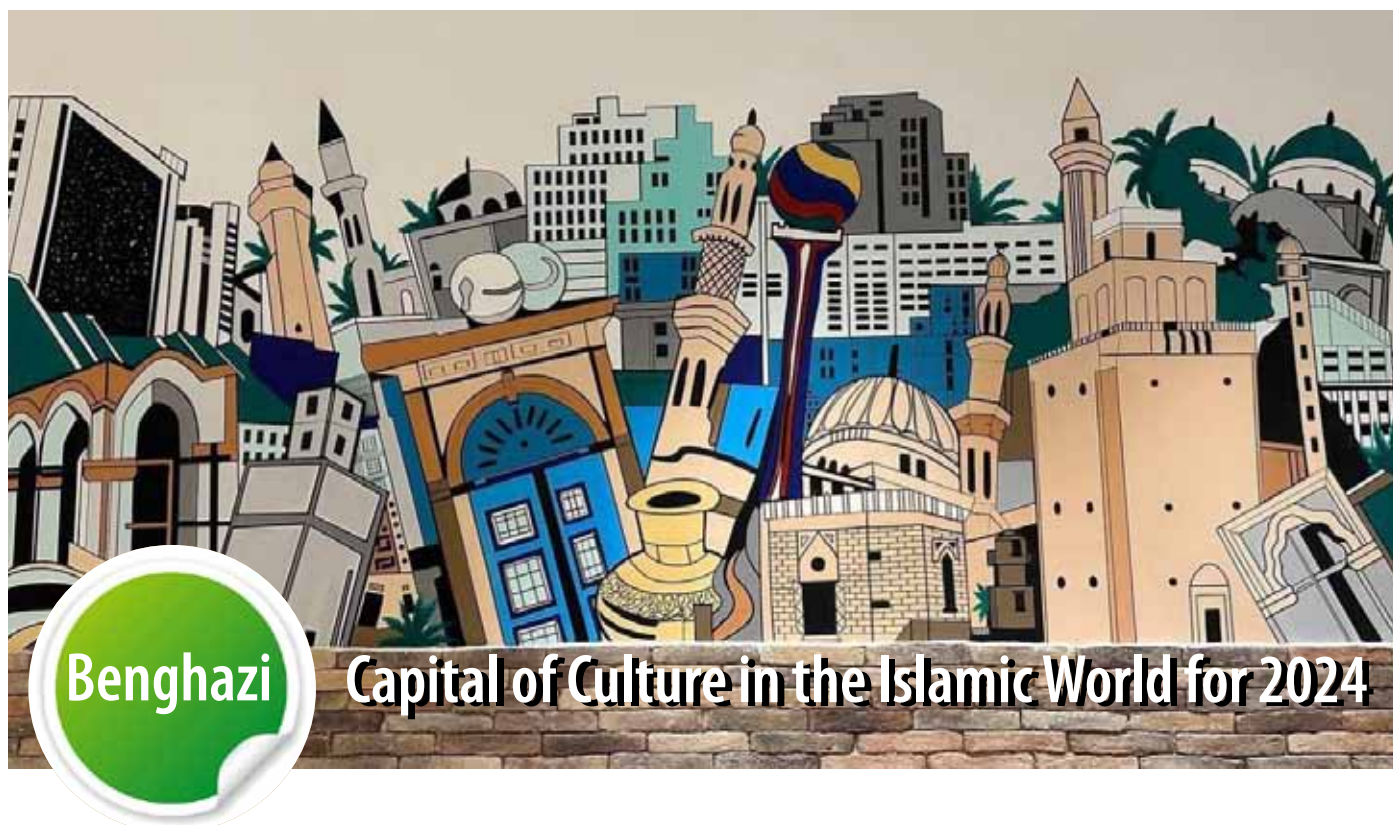


The OIC Secretary-General, H.E. Mr. Hissein Brahim Taha, received H.E. Mr. Elmedin Konakovic, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Bosnia and Herzegovina.



Secretary-General, H.E. Mr. Hissein Brahim Taha, met with H.E. Dr. Dunoma Umar Ahmed, Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Nigeria.





The Islamic World Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (ICESCO) and the Libyan National Commission for Education, Science and Culture announced the launch of the Celebration of "Benghazi as Capital of Culture in the Islamic World for 2024".

The announcement was made during a press conference attended by H.E. Mr. Abdul Hamid Dbeibah, Prime Minister of the Government of National Unity of the State of Libya, H.E. Dr. Salim M. AlMalik, ICESCO Director-General, H.E. Dr. Musa Muhammad Al-Maqrif, Libyan Minister of Education, President of the Libyan National Commission for Education, Science and Culture, along with several ministers and senior officials.

In his statement at the press conference, held in the Libyan capital, Tripoli, on May 7, 2024, Mr. Dbeibah stressed that the Celebration of Benghazi as the Capital of Culture in the Islamic World attests to its high status and rich heritage as a beacon of knowledge and home to the first university in Libya. He commended the initiatives launched by ICESCO with the aim of enhancing the identity and culture of the Islamic world. He concluded by expressing his full support for all the activities to be held as

part of the Celebration.

For his part, Dr. AlMalik commended, in his statement, Benghazi's glorious history and its great figures who significantly impacted the fields of arts, thought, and science throughout the ages. He highlighted the prominent landmarks of the city that reflect its unique civilizational heritage, including Al-Sanabel Theatre, Al-Manar Palace, the tomb of Omar Mukhtar, and Benghazi Lighthouse. He stressed that ICESCO will spare no effort to ensure the success of the programs and activities of the Celebration, and that it will continue its commitment to supporting Libya in its areas of competence. He concluded with a poem he wrote for this occasion entitled "The Virtuous Benghazi." Dr. Al-Maqrif also delivered a statement in which he asserted that Benghazi truly deserves to be selected as part of ICESCO's Culture Capitals Program, given its deep-rooted history and significant contributions to science, thought, and culture. He noted that this year-round Celebration will feature several cultural, heritage, scientific, educational, and sporting activities in various Libyan cities.

For his part, Mr. Ibrahim Hadiya Al-Majbari, Chairman of the Higher Committee for the

Celebration of Benghazi as the Capital of Culture in the Islamic World, stated that Culture is a unifying element for the people of Libya, and that this Celebration is an occasion to promote the heritage of Benghazi across the Islamic world.

At the end of the press conference, Dr. Al-Malik and Mr. Dbeibah exchanged honorary shields.

Benghazi is the second largest city in Libya, located on the Mediterranean coast. The city's layout is radial, with Lake Benghazi at its center. Greater Benghazi encompasses towns and cities to its south, such as Qaminis, Suluq, Al Abyar, and Tokra. Benghazi is the largest city in eastern Libya, with a recorded population of 500,120 in the 1995 census, which increased to 670,797 in the 2006 census.

Benghazi generally has a warm, moderate climate. To the north, the climate is Mediterranean, particularly in the Green Mountain region, while to the south, it turns into a semi-desert climate. Summers in Benghazi are relatively hot with high humidity, while winters are mild with some rainfall and occasional hailfall, especially in December. The city's average annual rainfall is 268 mm (10.6 inches).

## DONOR CONFERENCE

26 October 2024



## SAUDI ARABIA HOSTS DONOR CONFERENCE TO SUPPORT DISPLACED PERSONS AND REFUGEES IN THE SAHEL AND LAKE CHAD BASIN REGION



As part of the good offices undertaken by the OIC and its Member States, and to contain the humanitarian crises of refugees and displaced and affected persons in Nigeria, Niger, Chad, Cameroon, Burkina Faso and Mali, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, represented by King Salman Humanitarian Aid and Relief Center (KSrelief), announced that it will host, on October 26, 2024, a Donor Conference to Support Refugees and Displaced Persons in the Sahel and Lake Chad Region, in cooperation with the OIC and in coordination with OCHA and UNHCR.

The Conference seeks to mobilize resources for humanitarian and development initiatives targeting the affected populations, in-

cluding displaced people and refugees, with particular focus on UN-coordinated Humanitarian Response Plans (HRPs). It is also designed to raise awareness of the multifaceted crisis in this region, and the ways and means of addressing it, including through building strong partnerships to promote effective humanitarian response and greater support for longer-term solutions.

The United Nations estimates that nearly 33 million people across the Sahel and Lake Chad Region are in need of humanitarian assistance and protection, including around 11 million IDPs and refugees.

The Sahel and Lake Chad countries have been facing a multifaceted crisis for over a

decade. The whole region is faced with significant challenges, resulting in social and economic instability and disruption of livelihoods. Furthermore, the drying up of Lake Chad, a lifeline for millions, has exacerbated the humanitarian situation, which necessitates urgent intervention.

The OIC Secretary-General, H.E. Mr. Hissein Brahim Taha, expressed his pride in the implementation of the Resolution of the OIC Council of Foreign Ministers. He noted that the Conference seeks to mobilize humanitarian assistance in support of refugees and displaced persons in the Sahel and Lake Chad Region.



## Who is Capable of Taming the Machine?

It has now become common to see, at the entrances of some international airports, queues of people lined up in front of self-check-in kiosks to print out their boarding passes. All you need to do is enter your booking number and passport information, and then your boarding pass comes out. You then rush with your heavy bags to stand in another queue, this time in front of a slightly larger machine, next to a conveyor belt, for weighing luggage.

After scanning your information and – as a routine practice - clicking on the button indicating your prior knowledge of the prohibited carry-on items, you place your bag, making sure not to exceed the weight limit stated in your ticket by more than a few, negligible grams. To your surprise, however, you discover that the new machine doesn't smile, and that the friendly banter and fake sense of humor that you used to show when weighing the bag, in the hope that the elegant check-in officer will turn a blind eye to the extra weight, do not work with it.

You discover that it is a speechless machine, with a small weight calculator inside, but it doesn't engage in negotiations. You are then left with no choice but to pay for the extra weight in another - equally emotionless - machine that pays no heed to your frowning eyebrows, weak excuses, or funny jokes.

It is an abstract reality, leaving absolutely no room for the passenger to vent out some of his anger resulting from this routine process that takes place every other minute at airports worldwide.

It can be inferred from the above that Man is seeking, through artificial intelligence, to build a highly precise and disciplined system imposing an environment that cannot be breached or circumvented. This will ultimately lead to a supposed order where the law is strictly adhered to, with no room left for any transgressions.

Yet, this machine, devoid of the emotions possessed by the human being, remains incomplete, despite its creator's pursuit of perfection. Who is then capable of taming that machine?

The paradox is that Man, in his quest for a machine without emotions to serve him without requiring flattery or causing displeasure, seeks at the same time to inject those very emotions into this same machine. This idea takes us back to the year 2001, when the film "A.I. Artificial Intelligence", directed by Steven Spielberg, was released. The film tells the story of a "robot boy" designed to fulfill the emptiness of parents who have lost or cannot have children, and provide a human substitute meant to fulfill the dream of motherhood and profit at the same time.

What is striking is that the woman who plays the role of the robot boy's mother dies of an incurable disease, leaving the child abandoned. He then embarks on a journey to find a way to bring his presumed mother back to life, driven by emotions seemingly programmed into him by the company that designed him. This creative depiction explores the idea of a machine truly possessing human feelings in a science-fiction context.

The Hollywood film library contains many such films, the most recent being "Finch", starring Tom Hanks, which tells the story of a man living in a post-apocalyptic world who, feeling lonely, creates a robotic companion, one that seems to become somewhat human by the film's end. Other films include "I, Robot" which features a robot rebelling against humans, haunted by the idea of rejecting servitude, and "Bicentennial Man" which tells the story of a robot who falls in love with a woman.

It is noteworthy that "A.I. Artificial Intelligence", the film written by Ian Watson, is based on a 1969 science fiction short story by Brian Aldiss titled "Supertoys Last All Summer Long". If we delve further into the history of this strange human imagination, we find that in 1880, the Italian novelist Carlo Collodi wrote "The Story of Pinocchio", the wooden boy with the long nose, which illustrates how feelings of fatherhood and sonship developed between both the woodcarver and the animated puppet.

The above cinematic and fictional narratives show that Man, while seeking to achieve perfect quality and build a world operating with clockwork precision, returns, again and again, to search for some sort of "chaos", often inspired by the very inventions he himself created. Although Man has stepped away from the human role in providing services in favor of the machine's discipline and precision, we see him return to seek out the human touch, attempting once again to inject it into high-tech devices.

This human habit of accumulating inventions and counter-inventions may not be too different—albeit sarcastically—from "Omeprazole", the medicine that doctors recommend taking each morning before meals to protect the stomach from the effects of daily medications. It's as if Man is constantly in search of a cure for a treatment he once deemed safe and reliable!



**Aiman Abboushi**

Editor of the OIC Journal

*The paradox is that Man, in his quest for a machine without emotions to serve him without requiring flattery or causing displeasure, seeks at the same time to inject those very emotions into this same machine*



## OIC Rejects Israel's Designation of UNRWA as a "Terrorist Organization"

On August 7, 2024, the Organization of Islamic Cooperation held its third emergency meeting at the level of Foreign Ministers, since October 7, 2023, to address and confront the Israeli aggression on the Gaza Strip.

The OIC Secretary-General, H.E. Mr. Hissein Brahim Taha, addressed the opening session of the Open-Ended Extraordinary Meeting of the Executive Committee at the level of Foreign Ministers, held to "discuss the Israeli occupation's ongoing crimes against the Palestinian people and infringement on the sovereignty of the Islamic Republic of Iran". The meeting took place on August 7, 2024, at the headquarters of the OIC General Secretariat, in the presence of H.E. Dr. Mamadou Tangara, Minister of Foreign Affairs of The Gambia, Chair of the 15th Islamic Summit Conference, along with Foreign Ministers and Heads of Delegation of the Executive Committee members and OIC Member States.

The Secretary-General strongly condemned the war crimes and genocide daily committed by the Israeli occupation against the Palestinian people in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank, including the occupied City of Al-Quds, the most recent of which being the heinous assassination of Mr. Ismail Hani-

yeh, Chief of Hamas Political Bureau, former Palestinian Prime Minister, while he was in Iran. He affirmed that the persistence of Israel, the occupying power, in committing these crimes reflects its blatant disregard of all norms, laws, and international resolutions. These crimes also constitute an assault on Iran's sovereignty and national security, in flagrant violation of the principles of international law and the provisions of the United Nations Charter.

The Secretary-General called on the UN Security Council to assume its responsibilities and take the necessary measures to compel Israel, the occupying power, to comply with the rules of international law and stop its attacks that threaten regional and international peace and security, to impose an immediate and comprehensive cessation of the ongoing Israeli aggression on the Gaza Strip, and to avoid sliding toward a full-scale regional war that would undermine security and stability in the entire Middle East region. The Secretary-General stressed the need to mobilize joint efforts in order to compel Israel to abide by international legitimacy resolutions, as well as to take the necessary measures to implement the Advisory Opinion recently issued by the International Court of Justice regarding the illegality of

the Israeli occupation, and to hold it accountable for all its crimes in accordance with international criminal law.

The Secretary-General condemned all the Israeli illegal measures, including the adoption of resolutions opposing the establishment of the Palestinian State, and the designation of UNRWA as a "terrorist organization". He called for providing more political and financial support to UNRWA's budget, so that it can undertake its vital role in providing basic services to Palestinian refugees and contribute to alleviating the humanitarian suffering of the Palestinian people in the Gaza Strip. The Secretary-General called on key international actors to engage in sponsoring a political process to end the Israeli occupation and achieve peace based on the vision of a two-state solution, in accordance with international legitimacy resolutions, and to expand recognition of the State of Palestine and support its membership in the United Nations. He commended, in this context, the tremendous efforts of the Ministerial Committee emanating from the Extraordinary Joint Arab-Islamic Summit, chaired by HH Prince Faisal bin Farhan, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, and the visits paid to a number of key countries.



## On the Sidelines of the Extraordinary Ministerial Meeting on Gaza: OIC Secretary-General Meets with Foreign Ministers of Somalia and Iran



On the sidelines of the OIC Open-Ended Extraordinary Meeting of the Executive Committee at the level of Foreign Ministers, the OIC Secretary-General, H.E. Mr. Hissein Brahim Taha, received the Foreign Ministers of the Federal Republic of Somalia and the Islamic Republic of Iran.

On August 7, 2024, the Secretary-General received, in his office at the headquarters of the General Secretariat, H.E. Mr. Ahmed Maalim Faqi, Minister of Foreign Affairs and



International Cooperation of Somalia. The meeting reviewed political, economic, humanitarian, and security developments in Somalia. The Minister stressed the importance that Somalia attaches to cooperation with the OIC with a view to enhancing its role and promoting joint Islamic action. For his part, the Secretary-General commended the Somali government's efforts to achieve development and stability and to combat terrorism, and reaffirmed the OIC's support



for it.

The OIC Secretary-General also met with H.E. Mr. Ali Bagheri Kani, Acting Minister of Foreign Affairs of Iran. The meeting reviewed regional developments and issues of common interest. The Acting Foreign Minister affirmed Iran's support for the OIC and its primary cause, the Palestinian Cause. For his part, the Secretary-General stressed the priority that the Palestinian Cause enjoys on the OIC agenda.

## OIC Condemns Knesset's Opposition to the Establishment of a Palestinian State and Israeli Attempts to Undermine UNRWA

The Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) strongly condemned the Israeli Knesset's adoption of a bill opposing the establishment of a Palestinian State, considering it as a continuation of the colonial occupation policies and ongoing violations of Palestinian rights, in blatant defiance of international law and relevant UN resolutions.

The OIC reaffirmed its unwavering support for the two-state solution, and called on the international community to fulfill its responsibilities to end the Israeli occupation, achieve a just, lasting, and comprehensive peace in the region, and enable the Palestinian people to enjoy their legitimate national rights, including the right to return, self-determination, and the establishment of their independent sovereign State on the borders of June 4, 1967, with Al-Quds Al-Sharif as its capital.

The OIC also condemned the intrusion of the extremist minister of the Israeli occupa-

tion government, Itamar Ben-Gvir, into the courtyards of the blessed Al-Aqsa Mosque under the protection of the Israeli occupation forces. It reiterated its condemnation of all Israeli occupation policies aimed at altering the geographic and demographic reality in the occupied city of Al-Quds, and its attempts to undermine the historical and legal status of the blessed Al-Aqsa Mosque. The OIC stressed the shared responsibility to defend the holy city and work towards its return to the Palestinian sovereignty, as it constitutes an integral part of the Palestinian territory occupied in 1967 and the capital of the State of Palestine.

The OIC affirmed its support for all efforts made by the State of Palestine to engage the international community's responsibility, including through activating the mechanisms of international justice to hold Israel, the occupying power, accountable for its war crimes and genocide, and to rectify the

historical injustice that continues to be inflicted on the Palestinian people.

On the other hand, the OIC strongly condemned the actions of the Israeli occupation authorities aimed at undermining the status and role of UNRWA, by intensifying direct attacks on its facilities, targeting its employees, and impeding its activities in the occupied Palestinian territory. It considered these actions as an extension of the serious Israeli violations of the UN Charter and resolutions and the Convention on the Privileges and Immunities of the United Nations.

The OIC reaffirmed its resolutions adopted at successive Summits and Ministerial Councils, urging continued collaboration with key international actors to halt the ongoing Israeli military aggression against the Palestinian people, particularly in the Gaza Strip. It also reiterated its call on all countries that have not yet recognized the State of Palestine to do so.



## OIC and the United Nations Hold Symposium on Al-Quds and the Gaza War

Addressing the International Symposium, held on July 1, 2024, on the Question of Al-Quds, entitled: "Al-Quds and the Gaza War: Palestinian Identity and Existence under the Threat of Erasure", the OIC Secretary-General, H.E. Mr. Hissein Brahim Taha, commended the efforts of the United Nations and its various bodies, in particular the UN Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, its Chairman, H.E. Ambassador Cheikh Niang, and all members of the Bureau. He considered their tireless work in the service of the just Palestinian Cause as vital.

The Symposium, jointly organized by the United Nations Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People and the OIC General Secretariat, was an opportunity to express deep thanks to all participants for their commitment, which has significant political implications.

The Secretary-General underlined the centrality of the question of Al-Quds for the OIC and the United Nations. He reaffirmed the shared commitment to take effective and concrete action to enable the Palestinian people to obtain their legitimate rights. The Secretary-General reiterated that the situation in Al-Quds is grave, with repeated Israeli attacks on the city's Islamic and Christian holy sites, its steadfast inhabitants, and its Arab identity. He stressed that settlement policies, the confiscation of land, the demolition of houses, and the construction of the apartheid wall are all serious violations. He

reaffirmed that the holy city of Al-Quds, the capital of the State of Palestine, is an integral part of the Palestinian territory occupied in 1967, and that all the Israeli policies and measures are illegal and illegitimate, and constitute an assault on the political, historical, and legal rights of the Palestinian people.

The Secretary-General also strongly condemned Israel's military aggression against

*Hissein Taha: Settlement policies, the confiscation of land, the demolition of houses, and the construction of the apartheid wall are all serious violations.*

the Gaza Strip, causing thousands of Palestinian martyrs and the destruction of numerous civilian infrastructures. He added that the failure of the UN Security Council to compel Israel to comply with its resolutions is worrying, and called on the international community to assume its responsibilities to put an end to this cycle of violence.

The Secretary-General concluded by commending the significant role assumed by UNRWA in providing humanitarian services to Palestinian refugees, and rejected any at-

tempt to undermine its efforts and vital role. The Symposium focused on the Israeli occupation policies, particularly the forced displacement of Palestinians and the confiscation of Palestinian properties in the city of Al-Quds, with intensified Judaization efforts. These actions fall within a series of other similar illegal measures in other parts of the occupied Palestinian territory, especially with the ongoing Israeli war on Gaza, the forced mass displacement of Palestinian civilians, and other blatant violations of international law, including International Humanitarian Law and Human Rights Law.

The Symposium emphasized shared support for international efforts to halt the Israeli aggression on Gaza, to relaunch an irreversible political process aimed at ending the Israeli occupation and achieving just, comprehensive, and lasting peace based on international law and relevant UN resolutions, and to realize the independence of the State of Palestine on the borders of June 4, 1967, with East Al-Quds as its capital.

The program of the symposium included statements by participants, including representatives from Saudi Arabia, Palestine, and the United Nations, as well as the Chair of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People. It also featured a panel discussion entitled "Al-Quds Amid the War on Gaza: Challenges to Peace and Security in the Region and Beyond", with the participation of four experts from the city of Al-Quds.





## OIC Welcomes Widespread International Recognition of the State of Palestine

In recent months, there has been widespread international recognition of the State of Palestine, which constitutes a significant support from the international community for the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people on their path to establishing their independent State with Al-Quds as its capital. The OIC welcomed the significant international recognition of the State of Palestine by the following countries: Spain, Norway, Ireland, Armenia, Trinidad and Tobago, the Bahamas, and Slovenia.

The OIC considered that this important step is in line with international law and relevant UN resolutions, and enables the Palestinian people to exercise their legitimate rights, including the right to return and to self-determination, as well as the realization of the independent State of Palestine along the borders of June 4, 1967, with Al-Quds as its capital. It appreciated such positions supporting international efforts aimed at ending the Israeli colonial occupation.

The OIC renewed its call on all States of the world that have not announced their recognition of the State of Palestine to do so as soon as possible, as part of support for international efforts aimed at ending the Israeli occupation and achieving peace and stability in the region in line with the vision of two-state solution and the relevant resolutions of international legitimacy.

The OIC also welcomed the General Assembly's adoption, with overwhelming support, of a historic resolution affirming that the

State of Palestine is qualified for full membership in the United Nations, granting it additional privileges and rights, and recommending to the Security Council to reconsider the matter positively. It considered that this resolution expresses international consensus to support the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people, including their right to self-determination, freedom, justice, and independence, and the need to end the Israeli colonial occupation of the Palestinian territory since 1967.

The OIC reaffirmed its full support for the legitimate right of the State of Palestine to realize its political and legal status at the United Nations, like other countries of the world, as a decades-old enforceable entitlement. This is pursuant to the political, legal, historical, and natural rights of the Palestinian people on their territory, as affirmed by the relevant UN resolutions and on the strength of the recognition it enjoys from 144 countries, as well as its full membership in scores of international organizations and conventions.

The OIC Secretary-General, H.E. Mr. Hissein Brahim Taha, appreciated the stances of the countries that supported the UNGA draft resolution, and at the same time urged the UNSC to positively reconsider the request of the State of Palestine to gain full membership in the United Nations. He called on the States that are yet to recognize the State of Palestine to do so; thereby supporting efforts to end the Israeli colonial occupation,

halt the crime of genocide against the Palestinian people, and enable them to exercise their legitimate rights, including the right to return, to self-determination, to realize the establishment of their independent Palestinian State along the borders of June 4, 1967 with Al-Quds Al-Sharif as its capital, and thus achieve just, comprehensive and durable peace in the region, on the basis of relevant UN resolutions and the Arab Peace initiative.

On the other hand, the OIC welcomed the additional measures issued by the International Court of Justice (ICJ) ordering Israel, the occupying power, to immediately stop its military offensive on Rafah and other actions that can lead to partial or total destruction of the city, to open the Rafah crossing to humanitarian aid, and to take effective measures to ensure unhindered access for any committee investigating the accusation of genocide against the Palestinian people in the Gaza Strip.

The OIC called on the international community to ensure that Israel, the occupying power, complies with the Court's order, and to assume its responsibility toward ensuring justice for the Palestinian people, providing international protection for them, and putting an end to the genocide they face in the Gaza Strip.

The OIC reiterated its gratitude to the Republic of South Africa and other countries that joined the suit filed against Israel at the International Court of Justice.



## Ministerial Committee Continues its Tour in an Effort to Stop the Israeli Aggression against the Palestinians

The Ministerial Committee assigned by the Extraordinary Joint Arab-Islamic Summit on developments in the Gaza Strip held an official discussion session with HE the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of Spain, José Manuel Albares, in Madrid, Spain. The Committee was chaired by HH Prince Faisal bin Farhan bin Abdullah, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Saudi Arabia, and included HE Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman Al Thani, Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs of Qatar, HE Dr. Mohammed Mustafa, Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs and Expatriates of Palestine, HE Mr. Ayman Al-Safadi, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs and Expatriates of Jordan, HE Mr. Hakan Fidan Minister of Foreign Affairs of Türkiye, and HE Mr. Hissein Brahim Taha, OIC Secretary-General. The meeting discussed the efforts exerted to halt the Israeli aggression on the Gaza Strip and the city of Rafah and its surroundings, as well as the need for an immediate ceasefire and to ensure delivery of adequate and sustainable humanitarian aid in all parts of the Strip.

The Ministerial Committee commended Spain's recognition of the Palestinian State as a victory for the inalienable right of the Palestinian people to live in dignity and freedom in their independent and sovereign State on the borders of June 4, 1967, with East Al-Quds as its capital.

The meeting also reviewed the efforts of the Ministerial Committee in support of the recognition of the Palestinian State and the necessary steps to implement the two-state solution in light of the Arab Peace Initiative and other relevant international initiatives. The Ministerial Committee stressed the importance of the international community taking urgent steps to recognize the Palestinian State, thereby ensuring a return to the path of peace in a way that leads to a just and comprehensive peace, preserves the rights of the Palestinian people, and achieves security in the region. The Committee also underlined the need to stop all the illegal and illegitimate unilateral Israeli measures in the West Bank, to enforce international law and international humanitarian law, and to hold the Israeli occupation accountable for its crimes against defenseless civilians.

On May 29, 2024, the Prime Minister of Spain, Pedro Sánchez, received the members of the Ministerial Committee assigned by the Extraordinary Joint Arab-Islamic Summit. The Committee members expressed their appreciation for Spain's recognition of the State of Palestine and their commitment to pursue all means of support to activate the recognition of the Palestinian State, which would ensure that the entitlements of the Palestinian people are met, and serve security and peace in the region and all over

the world in the face of extremism, rising violence, and continued violations of international law.

The meeting reviewed the efforts of the Ministerial Committee in support of the recognition of the Palestinian State, and the pressing need to take the necessary steps to implement the two-state solution by establishing the Palestinian State on the borders of 4 June 1967, with East Al-Quds as its capital, in line with the Arab Peace Initiative and relevant international initiatives.

On the other hand, the OIC Secretary-General, H.E. Mr. Hissein Brahim Taha, visited, on May 27, 2024, the headquarters of the OIC Permanent Observer Mission to the European Union in Brussels. His visit followed his participation in the meeting of the Ministerial Committee assigned by the Extraordinary Joint Arab-Islamic Summit to discuss efforts to implement the two-state solution, including recognition of the Palestinian State. The meeting was jointly chaired by Saudi Arabia and Norway, in cooperation with the European Union.

During this visit, the OIC Secretary-General toured the headquarters' facilities and met with the staff members to assess the progress of work. He also reviewed the various files, programs, and projects undertaken by the Mission.





## 76th Anniversary of the Nakba

The OIC commemorated, on August 21, 2024, the 55th painful anniversary of the attempted arson of the blessed Al-Aqsa Mosque, the first of the two Qiblas and the third of the Holy Mosques. This commemoration came amidst escalating violations by Israel, the occupying power, with repeated incursions into the Mosque's courtyards by Israeli occupation government officials and extremist settler groups, as well as acts of desecration, gates' closures, brutal assaults on worshipers, and restrictions on access to the Mosque, all in blatant violation of the sanctity of holy places, freedom of worship, and international law.

On this solemn anniversary, the OIC reaffirmed the eternal attachment of Muslims to the blessed Al-Aqsa Mosque, and underscored the necessity to preserve the legal and historical status of Islamic and Christian holy places in the occupied city of Al-Quds. These include, in particular, the blessed Al-Aqsa Mosque, Al-Haram Ash-Sharif, with its entire area of 144 dunums, as an exclusive place of worship for Muslims.

The OIC also stressed that the city of Al-Quds Ash-Sharif, the capital of the State of Palestine, is an integral part of the Palestinian territory occupied in 1967. It rejected any

measures or decisions aimed at altering the city's geographical or demographic character, as well as any attempts to impose an alleged Israeli sovereignty over this city and its holy sites, deeming such actions illegal and illegitimate under international law and relevant UN resolutions.

On this painful occasion, the OIC called on the international community, especially the UN Security Council, to assume its responsibilities in putting an end to the ongoing aggression in the Gaza Strip, halting the Israeli colonial occupation and settlement activities, and enabling the Palestinian people to recover their legitimate rights, including the right of return and the establishment of their independent Palestinian State on the borders of June 4, 1967, with East Al-Quds as its capital, in accordance with relevant UN resolutions.

The OIC expressed its deep appreciation for the Palestinian people who remain steadfast in defending their land and their holy sites. It affirmed its solidarity and unwavering support for their legitimate national rights, and called for strengthening solidarity and support for the city of Al-Quds and its steadfast people.

On May 15, 2024, the OIC commemorated

the 76th anniversary of the Nakba of Palestine's land, people, and history, following the establishment of Israel, the colonial occupying power, and the accompanying crimes of genocide, ethnic cleansing, organized terrorism, forced displacement, deliberate destruction of hundreds of Palestinian villages, and confiscation of land and property of the indigenous Palestinian people.

The OIC stressed that the repercussions of the Nakba continue to unfold in an unprecedented manner, through crimes of murder, destruction, forced displacement, and genocide as a result of the continuing Israeli aggression against the Palestinian people.

On this occasion, the OIC affirmed that this painful event is still alive in the individual and collective memory of the Muslim Ummah, as a dark stain in the human conscience and a setback to the values of freedom and justice, causing human tragedies, mass displacement, and denial of the legitimate national rights of the Palestinian people.

On the other hand, the OIC expressed its gratitude and appreciation for the role undertaken by UNRWA and its tireless efforts in providing basic services to the Palestinian refugees, whose number is estimated at 6.5 million.



## One Year Since October 7: Israel is Wiping out Entire Cities in Occupied Palestine

By September 15, 2024, nearly a year since October 7, 2023, Israel has destroyed nearly 360,000 housing units in the Gaza Strip, equivalent to a large global city with its suburbs. In the West Bank, it has demolished 572 homes and 255 commercial facilities, equating to a small city, and uprooted 5,867 olive, almond, citrus, and fig trees, among others, an area akin to an entire forest. It has confiscated thousands of dunams of land, and, of course, killed 42,147 Palestinians.

In that way, Israel has wiped out, in the fullest sense of the word, entire communities, cities, and forests. Moreover, the Israeli forces and settlers have destroyed crops, prevented Palestinian villagers from harvesting their agricultural crops, damaged farming tools and facilities, and poisoned or seized wells, among other actions.

The report of the "OIC Media Observatory on Israeli Crimes against Palestinians" draws an overall picture of the grim Palestinian scene, one year after October 7. It highlights the range of crimes committed by the Israeli army and settlers against Palestinians in the West Bank, occupied Al-Quds, and Gaza during this period.

The report indicates that land confiscation occurred 72 times in the West Bank, in addition to 747 attacks on agricultural lands in Palestinian villages and towns. These attacks included uprooting, cutting, burning, or breaking tree branches.

Still worse, these facts and figures, indicating genocidal crimes in every sense of the word, are accompanied by brazen and insolent statements from Israeli officials. A report from the Palestinian Presidential Office, a copy of which was obtained by the OIC Media Observatory, documented a statement by the Israeli Finance Minister Bezalel Smotrich who said: "No half jobs. Rafah, Deir al-Balah, Nuseirat, total and utter destruction." This statement reflects Israel's premeditated intent to destroy entire cities as part of a systematic policy of committing genocidal crimes.

Similarly, Knesset member Boaz Bismuth said, "Establishing a Palestinian state on land soaked with the holy blood of Jews is a reward for terrorism and a victory to today's Nazis", a statement that, once again, affirms Israel's policy of exclusion, rejection, and even elimination of the other.

Another statement came from Deputy

Speaker of the Knesset, Nissim Vaturi: "We are too humane. Burn Gaza now, no less."

A similar statement was made by the Israeli Communications Minister Shlomo Karhi: "We should encourage voluntary migration, and we should compel them until they say they want it. The war does that." This statement by a member of the current Israeli government further reflects the tendency towards genocide, systematic killing, and mass expulsion of Palestinians, rather than selective individual expulsion as was the case in the past, i.e. forced displacement as happened in 1948 and 1967.

Over the past months, and since the establishment of the OIC Media Observatory, it has become clear that Israel is pursuing a policy that aims to kill the Palestinian human beings, demolish as many buildings and neighborhoods as possible, and make entire Gaza an uninhabitable place. International reports, in fact, indicate that Gaza has become the most expensive place in the world when it comes to basic commodities, due to their scarcity. Action is also underway to make the West Bank equally uninhabitable.





## Archaeology in Kuwait: Origins and Evolution

Kuwait – Hajjaj Salama – (DPA)

The State of Kuwait has known archaeology for many decades. This science, which involves the study of the country's history as well as ancestral antiquities and monuments dating back thousands of years, has garnered significant attention from Kuwaitis, who have been keen to make their own contributions to this field. This goal has been realized through a group of archaeologists and scholars who have produced numerous specialized studies published in international scientific journals concerned with archaeological research.

Those researchers have enriched the Kuwaiti, Gulf, and Arab library collections with works in which they presented the findings of their studies on the history of Kuwait and the Gulf region. They have also produced publications documenting the history of archaeological excavations in Kuwait, and translated works of foreign archaeologists who conducted excavations in this country. The National Council for Culture, Arts, and Letters (NCCAL), along with its Department of Antiquities and Museums, and the Kuwait National Museum, have played a significant role in enriching the Kuwaiti and Arab library collections with works on Kuwait's

ancient history and antiquities.

According to the Department of Antiquities and Museums, archaeological excavations in Kuwait began in 1958, that is 66 years ago. The Department has contributed to these efforts both independently and in collaboration with specialized institutions, both Arab and foreign. Since then, archaeological discoveries have not ceased.

The earliest archaeological expeditions in Kuwait were driven by the interest of Danish archaeologists who had visited the country for the first time in 1957. A team led by Geoffrey Bibby and Peter Vilhelm Glob initiated archaeological activities in 1958, marking that year as a significant milestone in the commencement of archaeological studies in Kuwait.

Since its inception in the 19th century, Middle Eastern archaeology has focused primarily on the major centers of civilization in Egypt, Mesopotamia, and Iran, paying relatively little attention to the regions bordering the Gulf. Interest in the Gulf region by European archaeologists only began in the second half of the 20th century.

Following the Danish archaeological mission, other expeditions arrived from Egypt, the United States, Italy, and other countries

to conduct excavations for several seasons.

The book entitled: "The Kuwaiti-Slovak Archaeological Mission to Failaka Island from 2004 to 2008," published by the NCCAL, details the history and conditions of archaeological excavations on Failaka Island. It shows how ancient archaeological, environmental, and ethnographic studies were utilized to uncover aspects of life on the island during the Bronze Age.

Dozens of archaeological sites have been uncovered across various regions of the country. According to the NCCAL, Kuwait boasts numerous archaeological sites and excavation areas, with continuous efforts being made to make new discoveries and gain a deeper knowledge of Kuwait's history. The NCCAL and its Department of Antiquities and Museums are tirelessly working to protect and restore those sites and their archaeological riches.

The science of archaeology in Kuwait dates back several decades, and its evolution has been driven by the attention paid by the State to antiquities as an integral part of Kuwaiti culture and national identity. The first Law on Antiquities was issued in 1960, and the first Kuwait National Museum was established in 1957.

## Bilaterals



The OIC Secretary-General, H.E. Mr. Hissein Brahim Taha, received, on June 30, 2024, at the OIC headquarters, H.E. Mr. Jasem Mohamed AlBudaiwi, Secretary-General of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC).



The OIC Secretary-General, H.E. Mr. Hissein Brahim Taha, met in Algiers on July 31, 2024, with H.E. Mr. Ahmed Attaf, Algerian Minister of Foreign Affairs and National Community Abroad.



The OIC Secretary-General, H.E. Mr. Hissein Brahim Taha, received, on August 13, 2024, at the OIC headquarters, H.E. Ambassador Turko Daudov, Permanent Observer of the Russian Federation to the OIC.



The OIC Secretary-General, H.E. Mr. Hissein Brahim Taha, received, on June 9, 2024, in his office, H.E. Mr. Faris Asad, Official Representative of the United States of America to the OIC.



H.E. Mr. Hissein Brahim Taha, received, on June 24, 2024, in his office, H.E. Mr. Kairat Abdrakhmanov, High Commissioner on National Minorities at the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE).



The OIC Secretary-General, H.E. Mr. Hissein Brahim Taha, received, on June 6, 2024, H.E. Mr. Chang Hua, Ambassador of the People's Republic of China to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.



## Bilaterals



The OIC Secretary-General, H.E. Mr. Hissein Brahim Taha, received, on May 14, 2024, at the headquarters of the General Secretariat, H.E. Mr. Madiyar Menilbekov, Ambassador of the Republic of Kazakhstan.



The OIC Secretary-General, H.E. Mr. Hissein Brahim Taha, received, on August 11, 2024, Ambassador Da-fallah Al-Haj Ali who presented his credentials as Permanent Representative of the Republic of The Sudan.



The OIC Secretary-General, H.E. Mr. Hissein Brahim Taha, received, on July 14, 2024, in his office at the General Secretariat, H.E. Mr. Mohamed Salah Sobhi, Permanent Representative of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan.



The OIC Secretary General, H.E. Mr. Hissein Brahim Taha, received, on July 9, 2024, H.E. Ambassador Mohamed Al-Hafi, Permanent Representative of the State of Libya to the OIC.



The OIC Secretary General, H.E. Mr. Hissein Brahim Taha, received, on July 25, 2024, H.E. Ambassador Fawed Sher, Permanent Representative of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan to the OIC



The OIC Secretary-General, H.E. Mr. Hissein Brahim Taha, received, on July 18, 2024, H.E. Ambassador Omar Gibril Sallah, Permanent Representative of the Republic of The Gambia to the OIC.

## Secretary-General Takes Part in Chadian President's Investiture Ceremony



The OIC Secretary-General, H.E. Mr. Hissein Brahim Taha, took part, on May 23, 2024, in N'Djamena, Chad, in the investiture ceremony of H.E. President Mahamat Idriss Déby Itno, who took the constitutional oath of office after his victory in the presidential elections held on May 6, 2024, ending the transitional period. The Secretary-General took this opportunity to reiterate his congratulations and best wishes for success to the first elected President of the 5th Republic. He also wished the people of Chad further progress and prosperity.

Previously, the OIC Secretary-General had extended his warm congratulations to H.E. Mr. Mahamat Idriss Deby Itno, following his election as President of the Republic of

Chad. He wished the President-elect every success, and expressed his confidence that, under his leadership, Chad will further strengthen its democratic institutions, achieve national reconciliation, and promote peace, stability, and progress toward a prosperous future for all Chadians. He also commended the commitment of the Chadian people to the peaceful and orderly conduct of the electoral process.

On the other hand, the Secretary-General received, in his office at the OIC General Secretariat, His Eminence Cheikh Dr. Mahamat Khatir Issa, President of the Supreme Council for Islamic Affairs (CSAI) in the Republic of Chad, Head of the Regulatory Body for Hajj and Umrah in Chad, and his

accompanying delegation.

His Eminence Cheikh Dr. Khatir Issa commended the existing cooperation between the OIC and its institutions and the Republic of Chad in various fields. He also appreciated the efforts of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and its positions in support of the Republic of Chad at all levels.

For his part, the Secretary-General commended Saudi Arabia's efforts to serve pilgrims and provide all means of comfort and appropriate conditions to facilitate the performance of their rituals.

Both sides discussed cooperation and coordination between the OIC General Secretariat and its organs and the Supreme Council for Islamic Affairs of the Republic of Chad.

## OIC Secretary-General Celebrates "Africa Day"

On the occasion of 'Africa Day', celebrated every year on May 25th, the OIC Secretary-General, H.E. Mr. Hissein Brahim Taha, extended his warm congratulations to African countries as well as to the African Union. He commended, on this occasion, the significant progress made by the African Continent in promoting peace, security, health, education,

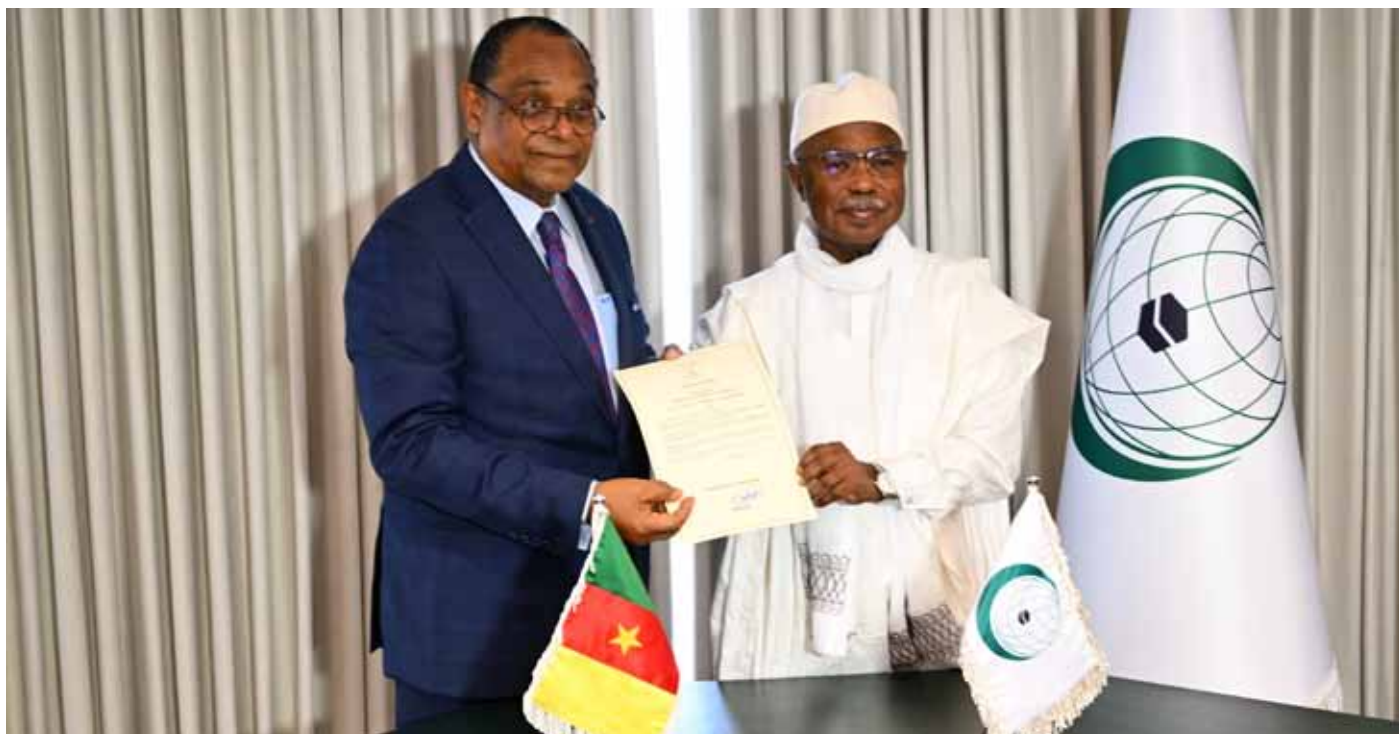
and economic development, which reflects Africa's immense potential and capacity for achieving development and growth for all African peoples. He reaffirmed the OIC's commitment to mobilizing efforts to contribute to the development of the peoples of African OIC Member States in all fields.

On the other hand, the OIC Secretary-General

expressed his solidarity with the governments and peoples of Burkina Faso, Mali, Niger, Nigeria, and Chad following the heavy floods that hit these countries since August 16, causing significant material and human losses. He extended his heartfelt condolences to the victims' families, and expressed his sympathy with all those affected.



## Cameroon Signs Statute of the OIC Labor Center



The OIC Secretary-General, H.E. Mr. Hissein Brahim Taha, received, on July 11, 2024, in his office at the OIC headquarters, H.E. Mr. Gregoire Owona, Minister of Labor and Social Security of the Republic of Cameroon.

The Minister, who was on a working visit to the OIC, signed the Statute of the newly established OIC Labor Center, a recently created specialized

OIC institution based in Baku, Azerbaijan.

The meeting stressed the need for increased intra-OIC cooperation in the field of labor for the benefit of all Member States.

It is worth noting that Cameroon is the 18th OIC Member State to sign the Statute of the OIC Labor Center, which entered into force last year with the generous support of the Govern-

ment of the Republic of Azerbaijan, the host country of the Center.

The Secretary-General seized this opportunity to call on the remaining Member States to sign and ratify the document in order to fully participate in the activities of the Center and contribute to achieving the goals for which it was established.

### OIC Secretary-General Receives Ambassador of Senegal to Saudi Arabia

The OIC Secretary-General, H.E. Mr. Hissein Brahim Taha, received, on August 15, 2024, H.E. Mr. Mamadou Mamoudou Sall, Ambassador of the Republic of Senegal to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and Permanent Representative of Senegal to the OIC, as his mandate came to an end.

Both sides commended the excellent cooperation relations between the OIC and Senegal. The Secretary-General wished the Ambassador every success in his future duties.

### OIC and BADEA Sign MoU

A delegation from the OIC General Secretariat paid a visit, on May 9th, 2024, to the headquarters of the Arab Bank for Economic Development in Africa (BADEA) in Riyadh. This visit was conducted as part of efforts to strengthen cooperation between the OIC and international and regional organizations and institutions, with the aim of implementing joint development projects and providing social protection for vulnerable groups in the least developed countries in the Islamic world, particularly in the African continent.

The OIC Delegation met with Dr. Sidi Ould Tah, Director-General of BADEA, who was accompanied by Mr. Diab Karrar, Director of Operations at the Bank.

During the meeting, Dr. Amina Al-Hajri, Head of the OIC Delegation and Director-General of Cultural, Social, and Family Affairs, expressed her gratitude to Dr. Sidi Ould Tah for the warm welcome as well as for the Bank's willingness to discuss the development projects the OIC is currently working on and the Bank's potential contribution to their implementation.

For his part, the Director-General of BADEA welcomed Dr. Amina Al-Hajri and the OIC Delegation, and indicated that the Bank stands ready to contribute to the implementation of development projects aimed at promoting social protection in African countries, particularly the projects designed to promote the empowerment of women and youth in Africa.

## OIC Acts to Promote Dialogue, Tolerance, and Peaceful Coexistence



The OIC General Secretariat took part, on May 21-22, 2024, in the Panel Session on “Protecting Pluralism in Euro-Mediterranean Societies”, organized by the Anna Lindh Foundation in collaboration with the European Union.

Representing H.E. Mr. Hissein Brahim Taha, OIC Secretary-General, H.E. Yousef Al-Do-beay, Assistant Secretary-General for Political Affairs, delivered a speech at the opening session of this event which saw the participation of H.R.H. Princess Rym Ali, President of Anna Lindh Foundation, and Mr. Sven Koopmans, EU Special Representative for the Middle East, along with representatives of CSOs from the 43 countries of the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership.

In his speech, the Assistant Secretary-General highlighted the OIC’s initiatives and efforts as well as its firm stance in support of dialogue, tolerance, moderation, and peaceful coexistence. He emphasized the partnership between the OIC and King Abdullah bin Abdulaziz International Center for Interreligious and Intercultural Dialogue (KAICIID).

For her part, HRH Princess Rym Ali reviewed the activities undertaken by the Anna Lindh Foundation in promoting the Euro-Mediterranean partnership, particularly in fostering

religious pluralism and acceptance of others. The EU Special Representative for the Middle East commended the holding of this important event, which provided an opportunity for official institutions to listen to the viewpoints of CSOs on the issue of protecting religious pluralism.

It is worth noting that this event is part of efforts to strengthen peaceful coexistence and leverage religious, ethnic, and cultural diversity in the region for the benefit of its people. On another note, on June 18, 2024, the OIC celebrated the International Day for Countering Hate Speech. A statement issued by the General Secretariat on this occasion stressed that the OIC, guided by the teachings of Islam and the principles of peace, tolerance, and moderation, has become a key partner to the international community in promoting peace and countering hate speech. The OIC seized this opportunity to reaffirm its commitment to enhancing its partnership with other international, regional, and local organizations in order to contribute to global and regional initiatives aimed at fostering the culture of peace, tolerance, and respect among religions, cultures, and civilizations.

The OIC stressed that in line with its relevant resolutions, it will pursue its efforts, in coor-

dination with States, to combat hate speech and to formulate appropriate legislation that helps curb the spread of this phenomenon and its serious implications for global peace and security.

On this occasion, the OIC Secretary-General called on the international community to step up its efforts to counter hate speech in all its forms and manifestations, particularly in digital platforms, and to tackle its root causes in order to enhance mutual understanding and respect among civilizations and cultures.

In a related context, the OIC General Secretariat followed with concern and outrage the statements repeatedly made by the Argentinian President Javier Milei, on several occasions, which are offensive to Islam, to Muslims, and to the time-honored Islamic civilization, with his use of such hostile expressions as “Islamic terrorism” and “Islamic fanaticism”, and his association of terrorism with Islam.

The General Secretariat strongly condemned such statements made by the president of a country with which the OIC Member States have deep-rooted relations of friendship and cooperation and common economic interests.



## OIC Secretary-General Addresses 33rd Arab Summit

The OIC Secretary-General, H.E. Mr. Hissein Brahim Taha, addressed the opening session of the 33rd Ordinary Summit of the League of Arab States, hosted by the Kingdom of Bahrain on May 16, 2024.

The Secretary-General highlighted the deep-rooted relations between the OIC and the Arab League and their shared principles, values, and challenges. He expressed the OIC's aspirations for more enhanced cooperation, solidarity, coordination, and integration between the two Organizations.

The Secretary-General noted that the Arab Summit was taking place a few days after the 15th Islamic Summit held in Banjul, Gambia, which gave a new momentum to Arab and Islamic common causes.

The Secretary-General reaffirmed that the Cause of Palestine is the central and unifying cause of the joint Arab and Islamic action systems. He commended all the efforts expended by Member States, in particular the Joint Arab-Islamic Ministerial Committee, to address the consequences of the Israeli aggression against the Palestinian people, defend their legitimate rights, and strengthen their steadfastness on their land, in accordance with the resolutions of the Joint Arab-Islamic Summit, held in Riyadh on November 11, 2023. He equally welcomed the historic resolution adopted by the UNGA which affirms that the State of Palestine is qualified for full membership of the United Nations.

The Secretary-General further stressed that



the OIC supports international and regional efforts to find lasting political solutions to the various crises and challenges currently facing the Arab and Islamic worlds, and that the OIC is making every effort to encourage all relevant parties to pursue the path of dialogue in order to reach a peaceful solution. He emphasized that the political solution remains the only path to resolve all crises facing several Member States.

The Secretary-General pointed out that combating terrorism and extremism and countering hate speech and Islamophobia across the world are key challenges for Arab and Islamic countries, requiring intensified efforts to enhance cooperation at regional and international levels and consolidate the values of tolerance, mutual understanding and peaceful coexistence.

## Baghdad Provides New Headquarters for the OIC Office

The Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Iraq, H.E. Mr. Fuad Hussein, received, on June 3, 2024, in his office at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in the Iraqi capital, Baghdad, a delegation from the OIC General Secretariat headed by the Assistant Secretary-General for Political Affairs, Mr. Yousef Al-Dobeay.

Both sides stressed the importance of enhancing relations between the OIC and Iraq, and explored avenues for further strengthening cooperation in various fields. On behalf of the OIC Secretary-General, H.E. Mr. Hissein Brahim Taha, the delegation thanked the



Iraqi government for generously providing a new headquarters for the OIC Office in Baghdad, which will resume its work in the near

future.

The meeting was an opportunity to exchange views on key issues of common concern, and review the OIC's efforts in serving the causes of the Islamic Ummah and promoting joint Islamic action.

The delegation also met with the Undersecretary of the Iraqi Ministry of Foreign Affairs and a number of officials from the Ministry. The meeting discussed the future role of the OIC Office in Iraq in line with the relevant resolutions of the OIC Council of Foreign Ministers.

## OIC Participates in UN Meeting of Special Envoys on Afghanistan



The Envoy of the OIC Secretary-General for Afghanistan, Ambassador Tarig Ali Bakheet, took part in the 3rd UN Meeting of Special Envoys on Afghanistan, which was held on June 30, 2024, in Doha, Qatar, under the auspices of the United Nations.

Addressing the meeting, Amb. Bakheet underlined the urgent need to adopt a coordinated and integrated strategic approach to deal with the many challenges facing Afghanistan and its people, indicating that the path toward achieving this goal is to engage continuously and constructively with the existing authorities in the country. He affirmed the OIC's commitment to pursue constructive dialogue with the de facto government in Afghanistan on these various challenges, in line with the resolutions of the OIC Islamic Summit and Council of Foreign Ministers, especially the issues related to women's rights to education and work, and the issue of combatting terrorism.

On the other hand, on the sidelines of the 50th session of the Council of Foreign Ministers, held in Yaoundé, Cameroon, Amb. Bakheet met, on August 29, 2024, with the Minister of Foreign Affairs in the de facto government of Afghanistan, Mawlawi Amir Khan Motaki.

The Special Envoy discussed the follow-up on the implementation of the resolutions of the Council of Foreign Ministers on Afghanistan, especially the demand that the Afghan au-

thorities review the decisions they have taken with regard to girls' education and women's work. The meeting also addressed efforts to combat terrorism and drugs, as well as the security, humanitarian, and economic situation in the country.

In the same context, the Secretary-General's Envoy for Afghanistan, Amb. Tarig Ali Bakheet, the Secretary-General of the Islamic Fiqh Academy, Dr. Qutub Sano, and the Executive Director of the Women's Development Organization, Dr. Afnan Al-Shuaibi, met, on August 29, 2024, with the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the de facto government in Afghanistan, Malawi Amir Khan Mutaqi, on the sidelines of the 50th session of the Council of Foreign Ministers, held in Yaoundé, Cameroon.

The meeting discussed the follow-up to the previous visits paid by the Secretary-General of the Academy and delegations of scholars to Afghanistan, and the visit paid by the Director of the Women's Development Organization to Kabul, which discussed the issues of girls' education, women's work, and women's participation in public life, as part of the follow-up to the relevant OIC resolutions. The meeting stressed the importance of pursuing visits by Muslim scholars to Afghanistan, in addition to the effective preparation of the Conference of Scholars of Afghanistan with their counterparts in the Muslim World, which was called for by the recent Islamic

Summit in Banjul to be held under the umbrella of the Islamic Fiqh Academy and in coordination with the OIC General Secretariat. The meeting also underlined the need to pursue constructive dialogue with the de facto government in Afghanistan on issues of utmost importance, such as tolerance and moderation in Islam, as well as women's education and participation in public life.

Still in Afghanistan, intense flash floods hit hard the northern Afghan province of Baghlan and at least three other neighboring provinces, causing significant human losses, according to local reports. Heavy seasonal rainfall on May 10, 2024, caused severe flooding, affecting hundreds of families and wreaking extensive damage to infrastructure, property, and farmland. The devastating flash floods hit Afghanistan just a few months following a string of deadly earthquakes that rocked several provinces across the country. The tragic consequences of the floods sounded an alarm bell for the OIC community and beyond, with increasing numbers of vulnerable families and children in need of urgent support for survival and recovery.

In response to this emergency situation, the OIC appealed to all Member States and other countries across the world, as well as to relief organizations, to promptly channel life-saving aid and support to help the Afghan populations impacted by the ongoing floods.



## Cultural Diplomacy and Dialogue Among Civilizations for OIC Countries

History shows us that religious diversity has significantly contributed to promoting human rights and peaceful coexistence. Most religions say that all individuals are equal and should enjoy equal rights and opportunities. The principle of equality does not, however, mean that we must all be identical; rather, it calls for unity within diversity. Thus, achieving true equality and peaceful coexistence requires that we respect the right to difference.

Religion, being an essential part of human existence, is a complex and appealing phenomenon in human history. Incidents such as the desecration of the Holy Quran in Sweden and similar threats to burn the Torah and the Bible have brought to light the sensitivity surrounding this topic, hence the need for in-depth reflection to build bridges of mutual understanding among followers of different religions.

Samuel Huntington argued that the “clash of civilizations” would be the central focus of global politics, and that cultural and religious identities would be the main sources of conflict after the Cold War. This theory, however, failed to recognize that the roots of most conflicts are political and economic, rather than religious or cultural. It also overlooked the importance of communication and interaction among different civilizations. It is worth recalling, in this context, that the European Renaissance was driven by cultural influences from other civilizations, including the scientific and intellectual heritage of Islamic civilization.

Tolerance and peaceful coexistence are key principles that foster harmonious relationships. They are vital for building inclusive societies and promoting respect for human rights and dignity. These principles were echoed in the “Makkah Al-Mukarramah Document”, which covered various aspects centred on human happiness and respect for dignity, with 17 articles focusing on the right to equality, rejection of racism, and the right to religious and cultural difference.

International instruments, such as the United Nations Charter, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, and UNESCO’s Constitution, serve as foundational documents promoting tolerance and peaceful coexistence. The UN General Assembly recently adopted Resolution 76/254 (2022), designating March 15th as “International Day to Combat Islamophobia”. Additionally, the General Assembly adopted Resolution 16/18 on Combating Intolerance and Negative Stereotyping, alongside the Action Plan proposed in the Istanbul Process.

Islamic thought emphasizes the principle of diversity and pluralism on the basis of which Allah created all creatures, reflecting that differences are governed by harmony and complementarity. Islam, in fact, does not have a negative vision toward the world’s cultures; it is rather viewed as a logical continuation of all preceding Abrahamic religions. Cultural and religious diversity is thus accepted and promoted as a “divine matter”. As stated in the Quran: “Had Allah willed, He could have easily made you one community [of believers], but He leaves to stray whoever He wills and guides whoever He wills. And you will certainly be questioned about what you used to do.” (Surat An-Nahl, 93).

The Quran also instructed Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) to adhere to the sound traditions of people, and consider them as a fundamental reference for legislation. To deal with pluralism, the Quran traced the path of dialogue, notably in the following verse: “Say: O People of the Book: Come to a word common between us and you,” (Surat Al-Imran, 64). When Umar ibn al-Khattab conquered Jerusalem, he signed a peace treaty with the Patriarch St. Sophronius, ensuring the protection of the city’s Christian and Jewish inhabitants and allowing them to continue practicing their religion freely. Jerusalem, under nearly 400 years of Islamic rule, became a center of knowledge, worship, and trade.

From the perspective of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), which consists of 57 Muslim countries with diverse cultures and social traditions, interfaith and intercultural dialogue remains a key priority in fostering a culture of peace and moderation among nations and civilizations. Promoting interfaith harmony remains at the core of the OIC’s cultural diplomacy, which remains committed to protecting cultural diversity and fostering dialogue and development. The OIC-2025 Programme of Action seeks to revitalize dialogue, harmony, and mutual respect among different schools of thought, religions, cultures, and civilizations.

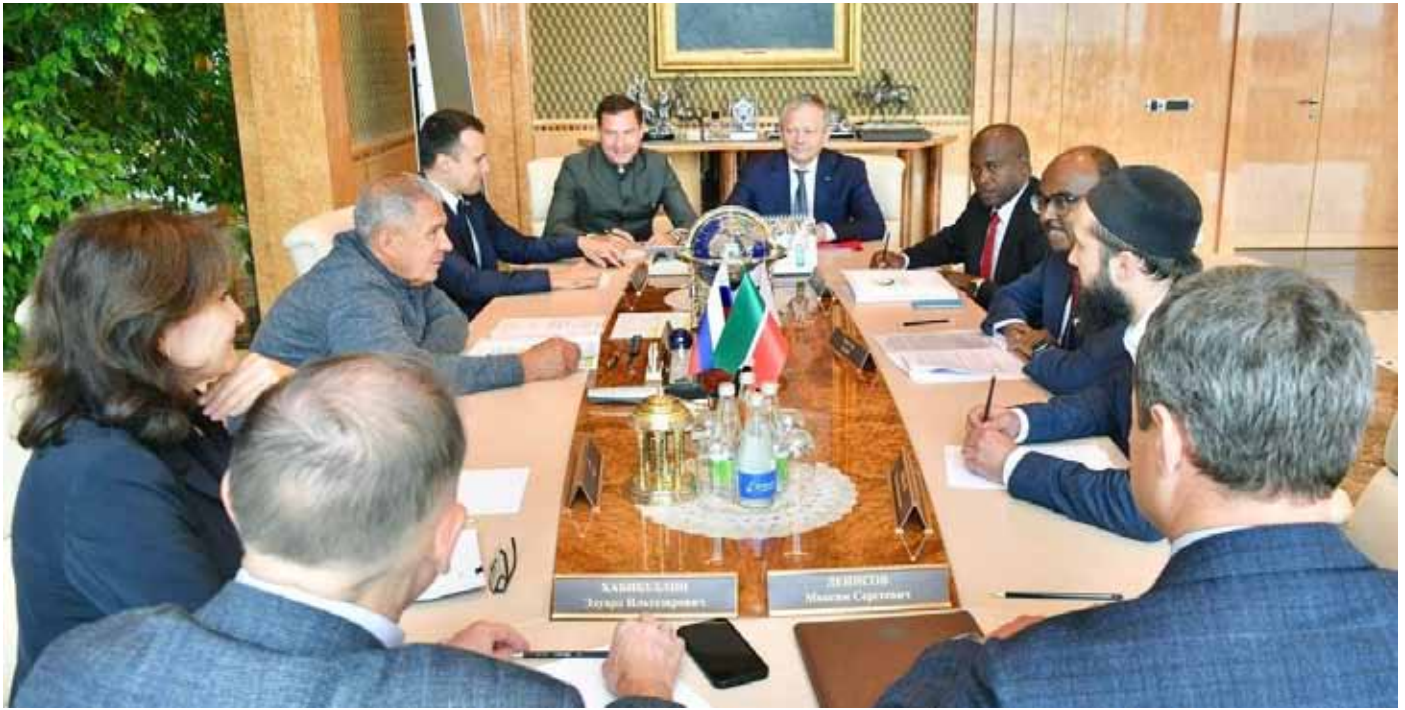
As one of the main OIC bodies, the Independent Permanent Human Rights Commission (IPHRC) undertakes a crucial role in promoting respect for Islamic culture and noble values, and in fostering dialogue among civilizations. It has supported the OIC Council of Foreign Ministers’ Resolution 42/49 on the “Living Together in Peace” Initiative, as well as the designation of May 16th as the “International Day of Living Together in Peace.” The Resolution calls on Member States, alongside the General Secretariat and IPHRC, to observe this Day in order to uphold the culture of living together in peace.



**Prof. Dr. Noura bint Zaid Al-Rashoud,**  
Executive Director of  
OIC-IPHRC

*Interfaith and intercultural dialogue remains a key priority in fostering a culture of peace and moderation among nations and civilizations. Promoting interfaith harmony remains at the core of the OIC’s cultural diplomacy*

## OIC Participates in the 3rd Kazan Global Youth Summit



At the opening ceremony of the 3rd Kazan Global Youth Summit, Ambassador Tarig Ali Bakheet, Assistant Secretary-General for Humanitarian, Cultural and Social Affairs, delivered a speech on behalf of the OIC Secretary-General, H.E. Mr. Hissein Brahim Taha. Amb. Bakheet noted that the Kazan Youth Summit provides an opportunity for participants from governments, institutions working in the field of youth, and representatives of youth organizations, to discuss the best ways and means to empower youth in the Islamic World and work jointly to address the challenges facing them.

The Summit was attended by Ministers and representatives of the governments of over 42 countries, along with representatives of relevant OIC organs and institutions.

H.E. Mr. Rustam Minakhanov, President of the Republic of Tatarstan in the Russian Federation, received Ambassador Tarig Ali Bakheet, Assistant Secretary-General for Humanitarian, Cultural and Social Affairs and his accompanying delegation participating in the 3rd Kazan World Youth Summit, hosted by the Republic of Tatarstan, on August 21-24, 2024.

During the meeting, Amb. Bakheet conveyed the greetings of the OIC Secretary-General,

H.E. Mr. Hissein Brahim Taha, to H.E. the President and his government for hosting the third edition of the Global Youth Summit, and valued the initiatives of Tatarstan in

*The Third Global Youth Summit highlighted the need to balance rapid technological advancements with the preservation of traditional values in an ever-changing world.*

the field of youth empowerment and sports development.

The meeting reviewed the joint efforts being made to support youth issues. The Assistant Secretary-General briefed the President on the OIC's efforts in this regard, and the initiatives launched by the relevant OIC organs and institutions to support Member States' efforts in the field of youth empowerment, in line with the relevant OIC Strategy.

The Third Global Youth Summit highlighted the need to balance rapid technological ad-

vancements with the preservation of traditional values in an ever-changing world. It addressed several topics related to technology and youth policies, and adopted an action plan to effectively integrate technology into the life of children and youth. A set of recommendations was also adopted, aimed at paving the way for establishing long-term cooperation programs across the Islamic world, BRICS States, and the Asia-Pacific region, in a way that supports youth development efforts worldwide.

An open dialogue was conducted among youth from the participating countries, focusing on "the right directions for youth development." It was emphasized that cultural diversity enables Muslim youth worldwide to connect with one another. Participants expressed their desire for more such conferences in order to build bridges among young people globally.

The Summit discussed several topics, including the transformative impact of digitization in the world, the role of advanced technological tools in shaping youth policy, as well as the ethical implications of artificial intelligence and its positive impact in various fields of life.



## Uzbekistan Hosts OIC International Youth Forum



Under the patronage of H.E. Mr. Mirziyoyev Shavkat, President of the Republic of Uzbekistan, the OIC International Youth Forum kicked off on June 27, 2024, in Samarkand, Uzbekistan, under the theme of "Spreading the Ideas of Peace, Mutual Respect and Understanding among Youth in the OIC Member States."

The Forum was attended by relevant Uzbek authorities, representatives of relevant OIC organs and institutions, and youth delegates from OIC Member States.

Addressing the opening ceremony on behalf of the OIC Secretary-General, Ambassador Tarig Ali Bakheet, Assistant Secretary-General for Humanitarian, Cultural, and Social Affairs, stated that Uzbekistan's hosting of this Forum is a clear testament to its active role in supporting the OIC activities and programs, and its commitment to promoting youth empowerment. He noted that the Forum provides an excellent platform for interaction and cooperation among youth from different OIC countries with diverse educational and cultural backgrounds, which will contribute to achieving the goals spelt out in the OIC Youth Strategy. He stressed that the OIC attaches significant importance to youth em-

powerment and capacity-building through its 2025 Program of Action and through the Resolutions adopted by the Islamic Summit, the Council of Foreign Ministers, and the Islamic Conference of Youth and Sports Ministers.

On the sidelines of this event, Amb. Bakheet met with Ministers and Heads of Delegation participating in this event.

An OIC Youth Garden was established in Samarkand on the occasion of the Forum. The inauguration ceremony, held on June 27, 2024, was attended by political, social, and religious figures from Uzbekistan, alongside the heads of delegation of Member States, officials from OIC bodies and institutions participating in the Forum, and representatives from the Institute of Botany at the Academy of Sciences of Uzbekistan.

Amb. Bakheet planted a tree in the OIC Youth Garden on behalf of the OIC General Secretariat. On this occasion, he delivered a statement on behalf of the OIC Secretary-General in which he welcomed Uzbekistan's initiative to establish a garden bearing the name of the OIC as a tribute to the youth of the Islamic world. He stressed that tree-planting and environmental care are among

the key activities advocated by Islam and the OIC Charter. He urged youth in OIC Member States to pay significant attention to tree planting as part of their contribution to Member States' efforts and the international community's response to the impacts of climate change on human life.

On the other hand, Amb. Bakheet and the OIC delegation participating in the Forum met with H.E. Mr. Alisher Sa dullayev, Director of the Youth Affairs Agency in the Republic of Uzbekistan. Mr. Sa dullayev appreciated the efforts of the OIC General Secretariat and its significant collaboration and coordination to ensure the success of this important Forum. For his part, Amb. Bakheet conveyed the OIC Secretary-General's gratitude and appreciation to the government and people of Uzbekistan, under the wise leadership of President Shavkat Mirziyoyev, for their active role in supporting the OIC activities, particularly the hosting of the first edition of this Forum. He also commended the excellent arrangements made by the relevant Uzbek authorities for all participants to ensure the Forum's success.



## Intensive OIC Action in Youth and Sports Fields

The OIC Steering Committee on Youth and Sports held its first meeting in virtual format on July 22, 2024, under the chairmanship of H.E. Mr. Abdul-Aziz bin Abdul-Rahman Al-Musaed, Undersecretary of the Ministry of Sports, in charge of Sports and Youth Affairs in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, Chair of the Islamic Conference of Youth and Sports Ministers.

In a speech he delivered on behalf of the OIC Secretary-General, Ambassador Tarig Ali Bakheet, Assistant Secretary-General for Humanitarian, Cultural and Social Affairs, stressed that the Steering Committee is an added value in the OIC's efforts to enhance youth capacity-building, increase youth engagement, and promote the development of sports in the Islamic world. He asserted that the General Secretariat is keen to ensure the Committee plays a major role in this regard, by providing advice to the Islamic Conference of Youth and Sports Ministers, following up on the implementation of the resolutions and recommendations issued by the Conference, as well as monitoring progress in implementing the OIC Youth Strategy and the OIC's Strategy for Sports Development.

The Committee reviewed the efforts of Member States in the three OIC geographical regions, as well as of the relevant organs and institutions, in implementing the Resolutions adopted by the 5th Islamic Conference of Youth and Sports Ministers.

It is worth recalling that the Committee is composed of the Troika of the Conference (Saudi Arabia, Azerbaijan, Libya), along with Türkiye from the Asian Group, Iraq from the Arab Group, and Niger from the African group, in addition to the General Secretariat and the OIC relevant organs and institutions. On the other hand, and upon a kind invitation from H.E. Mr. Farid Gayibov, Minister of Youth and Sports of the Republic of Azerbaijan, the OIC General Secretariat took part in the opening ceremony of the "Shusha: OIC Youth Capital 2024" event, organized by Azerbaijan in collaboration with ICYF in Shusha on June 3-6, 2024. The Minister of Youth and Sports attended the ceremony, along with the representatives of relevant OIC organs and institutions and youth delegates from OIC Member States.

In his statement on behalf of the OIC General Secretariat, Mr. Boubakari Maiga, Head of the Youth and Sports Department, indi-

cated that Azerbaijan's hosting of this event is a further testament to its active role in supporting the OIC activities and program and its commitment to youth empowerment. He pointed out that this important program in Shusha will provide an excellent platform for interaction and collaboration among youth from different OIC countries with diverse educational and cultural backgrounds, which will certainly contribute to achieving the goals spelt out in the OIC Youth Strategy.

On the sidelines of this ceremony, Mr. Boubakari Maiga met with H.E. Mr. Farid Gayibov, Minister of Youth and Sports of Azerbaijan. Both sides discussed ways and means of strengthening cooperation for youth empowerment in the Muslim world, based on the relevant OIC resolutions.

On the occasion of "International Youth Day", annually celebrated on August 12th, the OIC Secretary-General, H.E. Mr. Hissein Brahim Taha, extended his cordial congratulations to youth all over the world, especially youth in the OIC Member States. He expressed his strong concern for the well-being of youth in conflict zones.



## Establishment of a Center for the Translation of the Meanings of the Holy Quran in Libya



The International Conference on Translating the Meanings of the Holy Quran, which ran over three days, concluded on May 8, 2024. The Conference was organized by the Institute of the Holy Quran in Libya, under the auspices of the Libyan Ministry of Culture and Knowledge Development, with academic support from ICESCO.

At its close, the Conference announced the opening of a Center for the Translation of the Meanings of the Holy Qur'an. It issued a series of recommendations, chief among which was a call to establish an observatory for translating the meanings of the Holy Quran.

The closing ceremony saw the attendance of a large number of prominent officials, scholars, and researchers from Muslim and non-Muslim countries, including Ms. Mabrouka Toghi Othman, Libyan Minister of Culture and Knowledge Development, and Mr. Nasr Al-Din Al-Fazani, Libyan Minister of Tourism and Traditional Industry.

In his speech at the closing ceremony, Dr. Salim M. AlMalik, ICESCO Director-General, commended Mr. Mohamed Al-Menfi, President of the Libyan Presidential Council, who had agreed, during their meeting prior to the Conference, to launch an initiative for establishing and funding a center for the translation of the meanings of the Holy Qur'an. Dr. AlMalik added that the Board of Directors of the World Islamic Call Society (WICS) in Libya had also agreed to finance this project as part of cooperation with ICESCO.

Dr. AlMalik thanked Libya, its leadership, government, and people, as well as the Institute of the Holy Quran in Libya, for organizing this Conference, which serves the Book of Allah by facilitating the understanding of its true meanings. He emphasized the weight of this responsibility and the challenges facing it, calling, in this regard, for establishing a global institution that rallies the Islamic world and harnesses its significant collective capabilities and resources in service of the Holy Quran.

Speakers at the closing session of the Conference commended the meticulous organization of this significant event, which yielded significant recommendations serving the dissemination of more accurate translations of the meanings of the Holy Qur'an, and thus helping non-Arabic speakers to correctly understand the Book of Allah. Furthermore, they appreciated ICESCO's roles and initiatives, including, in particular, the "Read it to Understand it" initiative, which aims to counter the desperate attempts made by some extremists to desecrate the Holy Quran by burning copies of it.

After the ceremony, certificates of appreciation were handed to the participants. The Director-General of ICESCO received a Commemorative Shield from the Libyan Minister of Culture and Knowledge Development.

On the other hand, Dr. Salim M. AlMalik, Director-General of ICESCO, and Dr. Saleh Salim Al-Fakhri, Chairman of the Steering Committee of the World Islamic Call Society

(WICS), held a meeting at the WICS headquarters in Tripoli, Libya, to discuss ways to scale up ICESCO-WICS cooperation, through the implementation of joint programs and projects across the Islamic world countries.

At the outset of the meeting, attended by the WICS Board of Directors and Heads of Departments, Dr. AlMalik stressed ICESCO's keenness to significantly enhance cooperation with WICS in the coming period, in order to serve the Islamic world in areas of mutual interest. He reviewed key programs and projects implemented by ICESCO in its Member States in light of its new vision and strategic directions.

For his part, Dr. Al-Fakhri commended ICESCO's significant contributions to promoting education, science, and culture in its Member States and across the Islamic world. He looked forward to deepening cooperation with ICESCO, particularly through the implementation of qualitative programs.

The meeting discussed the progress of programs, projects, and activities jointly implemented by the two sides. It was mutually agreed to scale up cooperation by launching a series of programs and projects, across Islamic world countries, to be implemented and overseen by ICESCO, with funding provided by WICS. It was also agreed that a delegation from WICS would visit the ICESCO headquarters in Rabat to discuss future cooperation projects and to draft a new cooperation agreement.

## Nigeria's First Lady Leads African First Ladies in a Campaign to Curb Cancer Infection



Raising cancer awareness took the center stage at the High-level Seminar on Promoting Cancer Awareness and Advocacy Programs in the OIC African Member States, which was held on May 15th, 2024 in Abuja, Nigeria.

The two-day event, organized by the OIC in collaboration with the Office of the First Lady of Nigeria, relevant OIC institutions, and international partners, explored innovative approaches to cancer prevention, early detection, and treatment in OIC African Member States.

The First Ladies, led by the First Lady of Nigeria Senator Oluremi Tinubu, and the participating stakeholders undertook to mobilize greater funding and massive efforts to reduce infection with cancer that claims hundreds of thousands of lives, especially in the African region.

In her welcome remarks, the First Lady of Nigeria commended the OIC for organizing the Seminar and for choosing Nigeria to host this important event. She called for closer collaboration among all relevant stakeholders to fight the scourge of cancer.

Addressing the Seminar, Dr. Ahmad Kawesa Sengendo, Assistant Secretary-General for

Economic Affairs, Science, and Technology, representing the OIC Secretary-General in this event, stressed that the OIC General Secretariat is committed to providing all assistance to continue this fight against cancer till the end. He highlighted the need to identify, document, and preserve all the available indigenous knowledge and plant species that are used in the traditional treatment of cancer in African countries.

For her part, the First Lady of Türkiye, H.E. Mrs. Emine Erdoğan, who attended the Seminar as a Special Guest, lamented the abandonment of the fundamental life lessons that had been transmitted across generations for millennia as a result of the consumption culture that this age has instilled in people. She pointed out that in Asia, Anatolia, and Africa, there was once a prevalent way of life centered on healing. In the past, she added, medicinal practices were catered to meet the individual's temperament at healing homes situated in Anatolia along trade routes traversed by caravans which transported not only cultures but also epidemic diseases and the indigenous way of life and dietary practices that used to protect them.

The Seminar was also addressed by the First Ladies of Sierra Leone and The Gambia, the Director-General of the International Atomic Agency (IAEA), the Federal Minister of State for Health and Social Welfare, and the Speaker of the Nigerian House of Representatives. The First Ladies adopted the Abuja Declaration on the First Ladies' Leadership on Cancer Control, which was read out by the First Lady of Nigeria and signed by all the participating First Ladies.

A WHO report speaks of three major cancer types in 2022: lung, breast, and colorectal cancers. The new estimates available on IARC's Global Cancer Observatory show that 10 types of cancer collectively comprised around two-thirds of new cases and deaths globally in 2022. Data covers 185 countries and 36 cancers.

Lung cancer was the most commonly occurring cancer worldwide, with 2.5 million new cases accounting for 12.4% of the total new cases. Female breast cancer ranked second (2.3 million cases, 11.6%), followed by colorectal cancer (1.9 million cases, 9.6%), prostate cancer (1.5 million cases, 7.3%), and stomach cancer (970000 cases, 4.9%).





## OIC Shares with Uzbekistan and the United Nations Concern for Women's Empowerment

The OIC General Secretariat took part in the Asian Women's Forum held under the theme of: "Regional Approach to Issues of Women's Economic, Social, and Political Empowerment". The Forum was organized jointly by the Oliy Majlis (Parliament) of the Republic of Uzbekistan and the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women) on May 13-14, 2024, in Samarkand, Uzbekistan.

The two-day Forum aimed at advancing women's economic, social, and political empowerment across the Asian continent, and highlighting the efforts and achievements of the Asian region in supporting and empowering women and promoting gender equality.

On behalf of H.E. Mr. Hissien Brahim Taha, OIC Secretary-General, Dr. Amina Alhajri, Director-General of Cultural, Social, and Family Affairs, delivered a welcoming speech in which she expressed the OIC's high appreciation and gratitude to the Leadership and people of Uzbekistan for their continuous

commitment to supporting the OIC goals and objectives with regard to women's empowerment and the promotion of their full participation in all spheres of life. She also commended the efforts of UN Women in co-organizing this important event.

Dr. Amina Alhajri also participated in a panel on "Strengthening regional cooperation in ensuring women's equal access to education, science, and digital technologies and expanding participation in innovation activities". She reviewed the OIC's efforts in promoting women's rights to equal access to education and full participation in all fields, particularly in science, technology, and innovation.

The initiative to convene the Asian Women's Forum was put forward by H.E. Mr. Shavkat Mirziyoyev, President of Uzbekistan, during the 78th session of the United Nations General Assembly, with the aim of harnessing the constructive potential of women leaders in the region, and sharing experiences on ways to further expand their participation in governance and society, and advance their roles

in the economic field.

The Asian Women's Forum served as a solid bridge between the 68th session of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW68) and the upcoming Beijing Platform for Action +30. It also reflects Uzbekistan's commitment to transformative change for women and girls in the country and beyond.

The Asian Women's Forum addressed women's participation in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the role of parliaments in enhancing economic opportunities for women. It focused on promoting women's involvement in business and society, gender-responsive budgeting, bridging the gender gap in access to financial opportunities, and ending all forms of violence against women and children. The Forum also touched on women's participation in science and innovative activities, the use of digital technologies, and poverty reduction by expanding economic opportunities for women in the global economy through entrepreneurship, leadership, and innovation.



## Family's Role against Contemporary Challenges

Speaking on behalf of H.E. Mr. Hissein Brahim Taha, OIC Secretary-General, at the event on Youth and the Family Concept, organized by the Bolgar Islamic Academy in the city of Bolgar, Tatarstan, on August 21, 2024, within the framework of the 3rd Kazan Global Youth Summit, the Assistant Secretary-General for Humanitarian, Social and Cultural Affairs, Ambassador Tarig Ali Bakheet, underlined the importance of the promoting the status of the family in line with the principles of the Islamic religion and the high values and ideals of humanity. He pointed out that the path to any prosperous and peaceful society passes through the empowerment of the family institution.

Amb. Bakheet reviewed the key elements related to the family contained in the OIC Charter, which stress the need to "protect the family and strengthen its role as a natural and basic unit of society." He also highlighted the provisions of the OIC Cairo Declaration on Human Rights, and the OIC Strategy on Family Empowerment.

Amb. Bakheet emphasized the importance of concerted efforts to meet the challenges facing the family in today's world, which are contrary to Islamic and human principles

and values. He touched, in particular, on the new trends aimed at redefining the marriage and family institution in various international forums, in complete disregard of the social, cultural and religious sensitivities of a large number of countries. He, therefore, stressed the need to pool efforts to strengthen the role of the marriage and family institution against these contemporary challenges. He also reviewed the efforts of the OIC and its relevant institutions in this regard.

Amb. Bakheet highlighted the significant role of the media, educational institutions, religious leaders, key religious actors, and other stakeholders in protecting and strengthening the marriage and family institution.

In the same context, the OIC celebrated, on May 15th, 2024, the 30th anniversary of the International Day of Families. On this occasion, the OIC Secretary-General, H.E. Mr. Hissein Brahim Taha, stressed that the OIC has consistently spotlighted the importance of the family and its role in achieving sustainable development, ensuring social welfare, and addressing economic, cultural and social challenges.

The Secretary-General noted that this year's celebration is taking place under the theme

of "Families and Climate Change". It is of prime significance, he said, that families across the world be empowered, through proper awareness-raising programs for sustainable action to protect and preserve the Planet and its climate.

The Secretary-General urged the OIC Member States and the international community to dedicate their efforts to effectively come to grips with the challenges posed by climate change, through joint action to build a sustainable future for the coming generations. He pointed out that the OIC General Secretariat has drawn up, in coordination with relevant OIC organs and institutions, a major document on Islamic values related to women and children, in line with the relevant resolutions adopted by the Council of Foreign Ministers.

The Secretary-General underlined the call made in the Banjul Declaration, issued by the 15th Islamic Summit Conference held on May 4-5, 2024, for "... the need to step up international efforts to protect the rights of women, children, youth, the elderly, and people with special needs, as well as to preserve Islamic values."



# Women Empowerment: A Cornerstone of Sustainable Development

Women empowerment is a cornerstone of sustainable development. When women are empowered, they significantly contribute to economic growth, social stability, and overall community well-being. However, in developing countries in general, and in areas beyond capital cities in particular, women often face unique challenges that hinder their potential. These regions, characterized by limited production opportunities, significant labor out-migration, and persistent stereotypes about women's role in society, require innovative solutions to harness women's full capabilities. Despite existing development constraints and limited budgetary support from local governments, communities can create value-added products that drive development by leveraging local resources (including intangible assets like social capital, cultural norms, and branding) that could be monetized through creative expression; and women can make a major contribution towards that process. Creative economy has significant potential to boost GDP and employment, by enabling individuals to innovate and produce valuable products and services. These industries create jobs, improve life quality, and foster inclusive societies, benefiting from greater involve-

ment of women.

According to the Ministry of Economy and Commerce in the Republic of Kyrgyzstan, 40% of those employed in creative industries are women, most of whom work informally. However, the UNDP's research on creative skills conducted in 2023 shows that despite strong interest among respondents in creative employment, half of the women cited "lack of financial support" as a key barrier to developing their skills. Additionally, 59% of women highlighted the need for safe creative spaces to meet, share ideas, support each other, and exchange experiences as a crucial institutional measure to enhance their engagement.

To address these challenges, UNDP launched Women Creative Labs (WCL), the first women-oriented co-working space in Kyrgyzstan, offering an extremely enabling and nurturing peer environment. Operating on the basis of cooperation with local NGOs and municipal governments, the Lab serves multiple functions, including giving access to seed financing sources to test or speed up women's business ideas in creative enterprises, running special training and tutoring support programs, as well as providing conducive

environment for exchanging information and knowledge on the topic of interest, such as financial literacy, gender equality, legal rights, and even sexual and reproductive health.

The successful experience of the laboratory in Osh in 2022 made it possible to launch laboratories in Jalal-Abad and Batken in 2023. By applying human-centered design approach and principles of inclusivity, the Laboratories aim to affect changes on multiple levels, going bottom up from beneficiaries to partners to communities. Participating women are the primary beneficiaries, gaining essential resources and skills to empower themselves financially, emotionally, and psychologically.

Women are engaged not only in tourism but also in creating traditional carpets, patchwork items, and much more, which are long-standing parts of Kyrgyz culture. The Women's Creative Laboratory has assisted participants with training, workshops, and creating conditions for women in rural areas to work in various fields such as tourism, craftsmanship, and other areas. This has enabled women to develop the potential of their region, draw attention to its tourism potential, and create conditions for prosperity.



## OIC and Turkish Cooperation and Coordination Agency Sign MoU



H.E. Mr. Hissein Brahim Taha, OIC Secretary-General, and H.E. Mr. Serkan Kayalar, President of the Turkish Cooperation and Coordination Agency (TIKA), signed, on June 5, 2024, a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) for cooperation on development projects and humanitarian assistance in the OIC Member States. The MoU, signed during the official working visit paid by the TIKA President to the OIC General Secretariat, is a milestone in the strengthening of bilateral cooperation between the OIC and the Republic of Türkiye.

The MoU is designed to govern the implementation of development projects, technical assistance activities, and humanitarian aid provision in OIC Member States affected by humanitarian crises.

During this visit, the Humanitarian Affairs Department of the OIC General Secretariat as well as the Islamic Solidarity Fund held working meetings with the TIKA delegation to discuss modalities for the effective implementation of the signed MoU.

On the other hand, in celebration of World Refugee Day, celebrated on June 20th of each year pursuant to a UNGA Resolution adopted in December 2000. H.E. Mr. Hissein Brahim Taha, OIC Secretary-General, expressed the OIC's full support and solidarity with refugees. He underlined the priority given to this vulnerable group on the OIC's humanitarian agenda, noting that refugees are forced, due to exceptional circumstances, to leave their

homelands as a result of wars, conflicts, and natural disasters.

The Secretary-General expressed his gratitude and appreciation to the OIC Member States for hosting refugees and for their continued commitment to providing them with assistance and protection, which, he added, is an Islamic and humanitarian duty dictated by the teachings of Islam, the OIC Charter, and relevant national and international laws. He urged the international community to provide the needed support to refugee-hosting Member States, in line with the principle of equitable partnership.

The Secretary-General also pointed out that OIC Member States currently bear the largest share of the global refugee burden, hosting over half of the world's refugees. He noted that among these Member States, some might be a source of refugees, a transit point, or a place of settlement for them.

The Secretary-General stressed that helping this vulnerable group requires that more efforts be expended to address the root causes of the refugee crisis in the Islamic world, with all its political, social, and humanitarian facets. He highlighted the consistent efforts of the OIC General Secretariat, jointly with international partners and relevant organizations, particularly UNHCR, to find definitive solutions to the refugee problem, and facilitate the voluntary, safe, and dignified return of refugees in accordance with the established international agreements and instruments.

The Secretary-General announced that in the last quarter of 2024, the OIC will convene a Donor Conference to Support Refugees and Displaced Persons in the Sahel and Lake Chad Region, which will be kindly hosted by the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. He appealed to Member States, Islamic finance institutions, and relevant international organizations to actively participate in the Conference and provide the needed financial donations to support these vulnerable groups in an important region with a high refugee population.

The Secretary-General highly valued the pivotal role played by the UNRWA in alleviating the suffering of Palestinian refugees, especially amid the recent developments in Palestine due to the brutal Israeli aggression against the defenseless Palestinian people, the destruction of UNRWA facilities and hundreds of tons of food and medicine in Gaza, and the attacks on UNRWA headquarters in occupied Al-Quds. He called on the international community to work seriously to stop all the legal and humanitarian violations and to hold the Israeli occupation accountable for its ongoing crimes, committed in total disregard of all international laws and norms. He also called on the international community, the United Nations, and the OIC Member States to continue providing support to the UNRWA so that it can continue its services to Palestinian refugees until the right of return is achieved in accordance with the resolutions of international legitimacy.



## OIC Calls for Promoting Respect for International Humanitarian Law



A delegation from the Humanitarian Department of the OIC General Secretariat took part in the 9th edition of the “International Conference on Effective Partnership for Better Humanitarian Aid”, hosted by the State of Kuwait.

The Conference, organized by the International Islamic Charity Organization jointly with the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), aimed to strengthen humanitarian responses, especially in Gaza, and address the ongoing crisis that the region has been facing for many months. Themed “Humanitarian Partnership,” the Conference called for an immediate ceasefire in Gaza, and stressed Kuwait’s pivotal role in humanitarian efforts.

During three panel sessions, discussions focused on the humanitarian crisis in Gaza, aid delivery methods, and the need to protect civilians, expand humanitarian response efforts,

address the consequences of displacement, and secure basic needs.

Leaders from various international organizations participated in the Conference, including charities from OIC Member States, Palestinian organizations, and representatives of the United Nations. The Conference witnessed the launch of the “Sanad” (Support) initiative which aims to strengthen humanitarian interventions in Gaza, and the announcement of pledges made by the participating parties.

The Conference affirmed commitment to implementing humanitarian programs in Gaza over the next two years, with a focus on relief, shelter, reconstruction, health, education, and economic empowerment, and highlighted the collective effort towards strengthening humanitarian interventions and facilitating early recovery in the region.

On the other hand, in commemoration of International Humanitarian Law Day marked

on May 9th of each year, the OIC General Secretariat called for increasing global awareness of the need to comply with the principles and rules of International Humanitarian Law aimed at providing protection for innocent people, especially in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, as well as for victims of conflicts and wars. This is all the more true amidst increasing armed conflicts, with their humanitarian implications, and the ongoing violations of International Humanitarian Law in the Gaza Strip and throughout the Occupied Palestinian Territory by the Israeli occupation forces.

By designating May 9th of every year an International Humanitarian Law Day, under resolution 1/42 adopted by the 42nd session of the Council of Foreign Ministers held in Kuwait in 2015, the OIC affirmed its deep commitment to promoting the principles and rules of International Humanitarian Law.





# Unprecedented Humanitarian Crisis in Sudan

A UN statement said that “the humanitarian situation in Sudan is the worst in the world, and all countries must take further actions to save lives,” noting that “after a year of senseless fighting that has devastated agricultural production and market systems, displaced ten million people, and hindered humanitarian operations, Sudan today faces the worst levels of acute food insecurity ever recorded.” In a Ministerial Meeting on Sudan convened during the “United Nations General Assembly High-Level Week in support of the Sudanese people and their aspirations for a peaceful, prosperous, and democratic future”, participants expressed deep concern about the catastrophic and still rapidly deteriorating situation in Sudan. They reiterated the commitments made in the Declaration of Principles adopted in Paris on 15 April 2024, one year into the conflict, and informed about their initiatives for advancing peace in Sudan.

The ongoing brutal hostilities continue to cause devastating suffering across the country. Participants were gravely alarmed by the escalating hostilities in El Fasher which are putting civilians at extreme risk. It was deemed essential to adhere to the commitments made in Jeddah, Geneva, and subsequent negotia-

tions, and to abide by the provisions of UNSC Resolution 2736.

Participants called on all parties to immediately re-engage in negotiations, cease hostilities, and finally end the war. They urged them to ensure the protection of civilians, including humanitarian personnel, and of civilian and critical infrastructure. They also called on them to commit, as a first step, to localized humanitarian pauses and ensure immediate humanitarian access to El Fasher, Sennar, and Khartoum, so that civilians are protected and humanitarian operations can reach those in dire need of lifesaving assistance.

Participants called upon all foreign actors, in line with relevant Security Council resolutions and the commitments made in Paris, to refrain from providing military support to the warring parties, and to focus their efforts towards building the conditions for a negotiated resolution of the conflict.

Participants expressed their readiness to support establishing a cessation of hostilities monitoring mechanism, as well as to take appropriate measures to ensure the protection of civilians. Both parties to the conflict were called to immediately engage in a constructive discussion regarding the Compliance Mecha-

nism proposed by the ALPS Group to protect civilians and to facilitate access to humanitarian assistance in all parts of Sudan.

Participants believed that the international community should be prepared to explore options to support the implementation and durability of any future local or nationwide cessation of hostilities. They expressed their support for an inclusive and comprehensive political process to meet the long-delayed aspirations of the Sudanese people for a peaceful, prosperous, and democratic Sudan.

Millions of Sudanese are suffering from acute food shortage, with hundreds of thousands being at the “catastrophe” level of food insecurity, the fifth level of the five-phase scale used by the Integrated Food Security Phase Classification.

Many people are boiling leaves and dirt to feed their children, with famine looming and threatening to ravage the country. Vital aid deliveries face challenges and obstacles despite the efforts of humanitarian workers. The UN has expressed concern over challenges hindering smooth humanitarian operations in Sudan.





# Humanitarian Crisis Turns Gaza into the Abyss

The United Nations said that “time is slipping away as the humanitarian crisis turns Gaza into the abyss”. In statements before the UN Security Council, the United Nations stressed that Israel must cooperate with humanitarian efforts.

Underscoring that the only credible measure of progress is the actual condition on the ground in Gaza, the Head of the United Nations humanitarian efforts in the Strip told the Security Council that sufficient political will is sorely needed to ensure effective humanitarian operations amid restrictions, security incidents, and continued suffering.

“Time is slipping away as the humanitarian crisis has turned Gaza into the abyss,” stressed Sigrid Kaag, Senior Humanitarian and Reconstruction Coordinator for Gaza, as she offered a “sober and somber assessment” of the situation in the Strip. While the continued lack of effective protection for civilians in Gaza is “unconscionable”, she nevertheless detailed the completion of the first phase of a two-round polio-vaccination campaign, which shows that — even in the direst of circumstances — “humanitarian action is possible” with sufficient political will.

Jorge Moreira da Silva, Executive Director of the United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS), echoed that, stating that the effective

delivery of aid at the scale required will be impossible without political will, security guarantees, and an enabling environment. Detailing UNOPS’ mechanism for a single, comprehensive supply-chain-management system for humanitarian aid to Gaza, he reported that more than 22,000 metric tons of aid cargo have been delivered to the Strip. Thanking Member States that have contributed financially to UNOPS to support the mechanism, he added: “We cannot overemphasize the challenges of delivering a humanitarian response in Gaza right now.”

In the discussion that followed, many Council members echoed that sentiment as they condemned recent events involving humanitarian workers, including the Israeli obstruction of a UN team supporting the polio vaccination campaign at a checkpoint in Gaza, and an Israeli air strike on a school run by the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) in Nuseirat. Against that backdrop, they underscored the need for the 15-member organ to implement its own resolutions.

“The Israeli repeated targeting and intimidation of the United Nations in Gaza is deeply concerning,” stressed the representative of Malta, urging the Council to demand and ensure full implementation of its resolutions, adherence

to international law, and accountability. The organ must not, she added, “reduce itself to simply commenting helplessly on this catastrophe”. The representative of Slovenia, Council President for September, spoke in his national capacity to concur: “It is time for the Security Council to ensure compliance with its resolutions.”

Joining others in underlining the immediate need for a ceasefire to achieve peace in Gaza and the wider region, Mozambique’s representative pointed to the recent humanitarian pause allowing for polio vaccinations as an example that peace is possible if the warring parties prove willing to follow the path of mutual accommodation. “As Council members, we shoulder the obligation and responsibility to change the course of events,” he stated.

“The stark reality is that daily aid deliveries have decreased significantly” since the Council adopted resolution 2720 (2023), stated the representative of Algeria, adding that this is not a logistical shortcoming; rather, it is a manifestation of a deeper political impasse. Calling for the prioritization of early recovery projects, he said that resolution 2720 (2023) requires not only a ceasefire, but also the restoration of stability and reconstruction in Gaza.

## Dakar, Cairo, and Lahore: OIC Cities of Tourism for 2025, 2026 and 2027



The 12th session of the Islamic Conference of Tourism Ministers (ICTM) was held in Khiva, Uzbekistan, on June 1-2, 2024. At the close of the Conference, the cities-winners of the OIC City of Tourism Award were announced: Dakar (Senegal) as OIC City of Tourism for 2025, Cairo (Egypt) for 2026, and Lahore (Pakistan) for 2027.

The Conference commended the elaborate plans developed by the relevant OIC institutions for the celebration of "Khiva, OIC City of Tourism for 2024", and urged OIC Member States to actively participate in the various activities to be implemented in the awardee cities for 2025, 2026 and 2027.

The Conference endorsed the State of Qatar as host country for the 13th session of the ICTM in 2026, and urged Member States and OIC institutions to actively participate in this session.

The Conference urged all OIC Member States and relevant institutions to implement the Strategic Roadmap for the Development of Islamic Tourism, and to organize annual events on Islamic tourism in order to promote intra-OIC tourist flows, through visa facilitation, investment promotion, branding, standardization, and capacity-building.

The Conference called on ICESCO to work closely with the OIC and relevant international

organizations, including UN-Tourism, on the revised Strategy for the Development of Sustainable Cultural Tourism in the Islamic World. The Conference called on OIC Member States to invest in "digitalization" in order to better promote and market their respective destinations as well as improve the tourist experiences of international visitors, with a view to speeding up recovery efforts from the COVID-19 pandemic and attracting more international tourists.

Participants in the Conference expressed their gratitude to the Republic of Uzbekistan for holding the Conference in the historical City of Khiva, under the theme of "Developing the Tourism Industry in a Sustainable and Resilient Way". They also congratulated Uzbekistan for the proclamation of Samarkand as the "Culture Capital of the Islamic World for 2025".

Addressing the opening session of the 12th ICTM, the OIC Secretary-General, H.E. Mr. Hissein Brahim Taha, stressed that tourism serves as a powerful driver for economic growth, especially for micro, small, and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs) which constitute the backbone of the OIC Member States. By investing in infrastructure, promoting cultural heritage, and facilitating entrepreneurial opportunities, he added, the OIC Member States can foster the potential of

MSMEs to generate employment, spur innovation, and drive inclusive growth.

The Secretary-General indicated that about 80% of tourism businesses are classified as MSMEs, according to UN-Tourism, with women making up 54% of the tourism workforce before the pandemic. He stressed that tourism possesses the transformative ability to alleviate poverty, by creating income-generating opportunities for local communities, particularly in rural and marginalized areas. By promoting community-based tourism initiatives and empowering local stakeholders, the OIC can ensure that the benefits of tourism reach those who need it most, thereby contributing to poverty eradication and sustainable development.

The Secretary-General expressed deep appreciation to the Government and people of Uzbekistan for hosting the 12th ICTM in the historical and cultural city of Khiva, one of the OIC's tourism destinations that is widely acclaimed for its rich Islamic cultural heritage. He also expressed sincere gratitude to the Republic of Azerbaijan for its outstanding performance as Chair of the 11th ICTM.

The Secretary-General commended the relevant OIC institutions for their significant collaboration in the implementation of the various ICTM resolutions over the past years.



## Tourist arrivals to OIC Countries Increased to 224 million in 2022



The OIC Assistant Secretary-General for Economic Affairs, Dr. Ahmad Kawesa Sengendo, highlighted the significance of the 12th Islamic Conference of Tourism Ministers (ICTM), held in Khiva, Uzbekistan, on June 1-2, 2024, which addressed the implementation of the OIC programs and resolutions in the field of tourism.

Addressing the opening session of the Senior Officials Meeting preparatory for the 12th ICTM, held in Khiva, Uzbekistan, on May 31, 2024, Dr. Sengendo noted that the OIC Member States have demonstrated a gradual but strong recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic in the tourism sector, with total tourist arrivals reaching 96 million in 2021, against 75 million in 2020. This recovery, he added, gained further momentum in 2022, as the number of international tourist arrivals to OIC countries significantly increased to 224 million. The post-pandemic growth in tourist flows has been faster in the OIC countries, leading to an increase in the share of the OIC group in

global tourist arrivals from 12.8% in 2019 to 14.8% in 2022.

Dr. Sengendo stressed that tourism development has always received priority attention on the part of the OIC countries. He indicated that one of the major tasks before the OIC during this challenging time is the scaling up of the OIC's cooperation efforts, through improving tourism policy harmonization, promoting Islamic tourism, enhancing tourism facilitation, tourism training, marketing, and investment opportunities, and developing regional tourism projects and tourism infrastructure.

Dr. Sengendo expressed satisfaction that the celebration of the OIC City of Tourism Award has promoted an appropriate focus on intensifying tourism activities in the awardee cities. It is, therefore, necessary, he added, for the OIC countries to consider ways and means of conducting these celebrations not only through festivities but also in a way that significantly enhances the tourism attractiveness of the awardee cities.

Dr. Sengendo urged all OIC Member States to actively participate and provide support to the Program of Activities of "Khiva, OIC City of Tourism for 2024", to be organized by Uzbekistan and the relevant OIC Institutions this year.

On the sidelines of the 12th session of the Islamic Conference of Tourism Ministers, held in Khiva, Uzbekistan, the OIC Secretary-General, H.E. Mr. Hissein Brahim Taha, met, on June 2, 2024, with H.E. Mr. Moslem Shojaei Alsayed, Director-General of International Tourism in the Islamic Republic of Iran.

The meeting discussed ways of enhancing joint action to promote the tourism sector in the OIC Member States. The Secretary-General commended Iran's efforts to promote Islamic tourism, stressing that the OIC is working, through Member States, to enhance cooperation and coordination to achieve further progress in this sector.

## OIC Secretary-General Meets with Chairperson of the Senate of Uzbekistan

The OIC Secretary-General, H.E. Mr. Hissein Brahim Taha, held a meeting, on May 31, 2024, in Tashkent, Uzbekistan, with the Chairwoman of the Senate of the Oliy Majlis of the Republic of Uzbekistan, Mrs. Tanzila Narbaeva.

The Secretary-General commended Uzbekistan's rich cultural and scientific heritage, emphasizing that the OIC City of Tourism Award is a recognition of the Uzbek Government's efforts to develop the tourism sector and showcase its rich history. He expressed appreciation for the excellent arrangements provided by Uzbekistan to host the 12th Islamic Conference of Tourism Ministers in the city of Khiva, from 31 May to 2 June 2024.

The Secretary-General also commended the impressive socio-economic progress and development in Uzbekistan, highlighting the significant efforts invested towards promoting regional socio-economic integration.

The meeting covered a range of regional and global issues on the OIC agenda. With regard to the Palestinian Cause, the Secretary-General reviewed the efforts exerted to halt the Israeli aggression on the Gaza Strip, including on the city of Rafah and its surroundings, stressing the need for an immediate ceasefire and for providing adequate and sustainable humanitarian aid in all parts of the Strip. On Afghanistan, the Secretary-General commended Uzbekistan's role in promoting peace, security, stability, and socio-economic development, as well as in providing humanitarian assistance to the Afghan people.



The meeting touched on the OIC's initiatives to counter Islamophobia and anti-Islamic sentiments, with emphasis on the importance of promoting Islam's true principles of peace and tolerance, through education, interfaith dialogue, and media outreach. The Secretary-General highlighted efforts to empower women by enhancing their societal roles and ensuring gender equality through various programs.

The meeting addressed socio-economic and developmental programs focused on poverty alleviation, education, scientific cooperation, and sustainable development. Cultural cooperation was also discussed, with an emphasis on preserving and promoting the rich cultural

heritage of OIC Member States through initiatives to support publications, exhibitions, and cultural exchanges.

Mrs. Tanzila Narbaeva expressed Uzbekistan's extensive support for the OIC's initiatives, highlighting the active collaboration with the General Secretariat and its organs in various fields, including cultural and heritage cooperation and the empowerment of youth and women.

This meeting underlined the strong and growing partnership between the OIC and Uzbekistan, driven by their shared commitment to fostering peace, development, and mutual understanding in the region.

## Hissein Taha Meets with the Chairman of the Tajikistan Tourism Development Committee



On the sidelines of the 12th session of the Islamic Conference of Tourism Ministers, held in Khiva, Uzbekistan, the OIC Secretary-General, H.E. Mr. Hissein Brahim Taha, met, on June 2, 2024, with H.E. Mr. Kamoliddin Muminzod, Chairman of the Tourism Development Committee of the Republic of Tajikistan.

Mr. Kamoliddin Muminzod highlighted the significant tourism potential of Tajikistan, and his country's efforts to enhance this sector. He stressed Tajikistan's readiness to increase cooperation with the OIC and its Member States in order to advance the tourism sector.

For his part, the Secretary-General commended Tajikistan's efforts in the field of tourism, stressing the OIC's support for intra-OIC cooperation in this field. He underlined the importance of sharing experience and expertise for the promotion and advancement of tourism, especially after recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic.





## Khiva:

### A Sustainable Gem and Tourism City of the Islamic World in 2024

The city of Khiva in Uzbekistan, an ancient and archaeological city famous for its rich history and vibrant culture, received large numbers of visitors from all over the world, especially from the OIC Member States, to participate in the 12th session of the Islamic Conference of Tourism Ministers (ICTM) on 31 May - June 2, 2024. The session was themed: "Development of the Tourism Industry in a Sustainable and Resilient Way". The city also hosts events and activities celebrating the "Khiva: OIC Tourism City for 2024".

Khiva, one of the most ancient cities in the Khorezm region and in the Republic of Uzbekistan in general, has a history spanning more than 2,500 years. It is famous for its medieval Itchan Kala (Ichan-Q'la) Fortress, a UNESCO World Heritage Site since 1990. This carefully preserved open-air museum offers a glimpse into the illustrious past of the region, from its vast culture and scientific progress, to its contributions to enriching Islamic civilization.

The Khorezm region of Uzbekistan was a

beacon of learning and science between the 9th and 12th centuries, with the famous Al-Ma'mun Academy in Khorezm promoting pioneering works in astronomy, mathematics, medicine, and chemistry. Prominent scholars emerged from this region, such as Muhammad bin Musa Al-Khwarizmi (the Father of Algebra), and Abu Al-Rayhan Al-Biruni, the scholar of astronomy and philosophy.

There is no doubt that visitors to Khiva are impressed by the combination of ancient traditions and modern developments, because the peaceful environment, the hospitality of the local people, and the excellent facilities available for visitors make Khiva a unique destination committed to preserving its historical heritage while providing modern amenities to ensure an outstanding experience for tourists. It is hoped that the celebration of Khiva as the Tourism City of the Islamic world in 2024 will significantly boost the tourism sector.

Ministers and tourism sector dignitaries from the OIC Member States met in Khiva from May 31 to June 2, 2024, to experience first-

hand the warmth and hospitality of the city's hospitable people. This flow of high-profile visitors highlighted Khiva's rich cultural heritage and its outstanding hospitality facilities, including upscale hotels, historical sites, and exquisite local cuisine.

The Ministerial Conference held in Khiva was designed to serve strategic tourism goals, including selecting OIC Tourism Cities for 2025 and 2026, renewing focus on developing Islamic tourism, enhancing intra-OIC cooperation in the tourism sector, highlighting the tourism potential in Central Asia, particularly in Uzbekistan, and achieving an increase in the number of tourists arriving in Uzbekistan and Khorezm (Khiva), which would contribute to strengthening the local economy and cultural exchange.

As Khiva assumes its status as "OIC Tourism City for 2024", it stands ready to impress visitors with its sustainable brilliance and profound historical significance, ushering in a new era of cultural and economic prosperity.

## OIC Secretary-General Congratulates the Islamic World on Eid al-Adha



On the occasion of the advent of the blessed Eid al-Adha 1445 AH, the OIC Secretary-General, H.E. Mr. Hissein Brahim Taha, extended his sincere congratulations to the Islamic Ummah, as well as to Their Majesties, Highnesses, and Excellencies, the Kings, Princes and Presidents of the OIC Member States.

The Secretary-General shared with the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, the OIC headquarters country, its celebration of Eid al-Adha, and congratulated the Saudi Leadership of the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques, King Salman bin Abdulaziz, and HRH Crown Prince Muhammad bin Salman. He also congratulated Saudi Arabia on the success of the great and valuable efforts it makes each year for the management of the Hajj season. He commended the significant facilities, favorable conditions, and comfortable services it provides to ensure the safe performance of the Hajj rituals, in addition to the great care offered to the guests of Allah to ensure their security and safety throughout their stay to perform the Hajj ritual.

The Secretary-General highly valued the generous care given by the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques and HRH Crown Prince Mo-

ammed bin Salman, for the management of the Two Holy Mosques and the holy sites, as well as the warm reception and generous hospitality extended to pilgrims and to visitors of the Prophet's Mosque. He hailed the excellent arrangements and generous efforts made by the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia to ensure a successful Hajj season each year.

The Secretary-General prayed to Almighty Allah to bless the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and its Leadership and people with continued prosperity, progress, security, and safety.

The Secretary-General expressed hope that this year's Eid al-Adha would serve as a renewed occasion for greater unity and brotherhood among Muslims all around the world and for increased solidarity among all OIC countries. He pointed out that Eid al-Adha comes this year at a time when Muslims are confronted with significant challenges, the most serious among which being the ongoing and relentless Israeli aggression against Gaza and the entire Palestinian territory. This aggression has been causing tens of thousands of martyrs and injured, most of whom being women and children, in addition to the continued barbaric bombardment targeting all

areas in Gaza, turning them into ruins and rubble. He reaffirmed the OIC's unwavering support for the Cause of Palestine and the blessed Al-Aqsa Mosque.

The Secretary-General also stressed the OIC's support for the people of Jammu and Kashmir in reclaiming their rights, as well as for the rights of Rohingya Muslims who are subjected to forced displacement. He reiterated the OIC's position in solidarity with refugees, IDPs, and all affected persons in camps all across the Islamic world, including the Sahel and Lake Chad region.

On July 21, 2024, the OIC Secretary-General participated in the Ka'aba-washing ceremony in Makkah Al-Mukarramah. The ceremony was held under the supervision of HRH Prince Saud Bin Mashal Bin Abdulaziz, Deputy Emir of Makkah Al-Mukarramah Region, on behalf of the Custodian of The Two Holy Mosques King Salman Bin Abdulaziz Al Saud.

The walls of the Holy Ka'aba are washed with a piece of cloth soaked in Zamzam water and mixed with rose water, prepared earlier by the General Authority for the Affairs of the Grand Mosque and the Prophet's Mosque.



## OIC Secretary-General Participates in Exhibition in Commemoration of “15 July National Unity and Democracy Day” in Türkiye

The OIC Secretary-General, H.E. Mr. Hissein Brahim Taha, participated in a commemorative photo exhibition organized by the Permanent Mission of the Republic of Türkiye to the OIC to pay tribute to the bravery of veterans and martyrs as a result of the failed coup attempt against Turkish democracy on 15 July 2016.

The inauguration ceremony of the exhibition was held at the Headquarters of the OIC General Secretariat in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia, on 10 July 2024. The exhibition continued until 15 July. The OIC Secretary-General chaired the event and delivered a statement in support of the victory of Democracy in Türkiye, a founding member of the OIC.

The Permanent Representative of the Republic of Türkiye to the OIC, H.E. Ambassador Cenk Uraz, and the Consul General of the Republic of Türkiye in Jeddah, H.E. Mr. Mustafa Ünal, participated in this event, which was also attended by OIC Member States' Permanent Representatives, Consul Generals, OIC Assistant Secretaries-General, the Director-General of the Cabinet, and other OIC Staff Members.



“15 July Democracy and National Unity Day”, a public holiday in Türkiye, is an occasion to pay tribute to the memory of the victims of the failed coup attempt perpetrated by the Fetullah Terrorist Organization (FETO) in 2016, and to memorialize the victory of democracy. In the 43rd session of the Council of Foreign

Ministers, held in Tashkent, Uzbekistan, on October 18-19, 2016, the OIC adopted a resolution condemning the violent coup attempt by FETO, and calling on Member States to take every necessary measure against this terrorist organization.

## OIC Hosts Photo Exhibition on Jammu and Kashmir

The OIC General Secretariat hosted, on August 8, 2024, at its headquarters, a photo exhibition organized by the Permanent Mission of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan to the OIC to mark the 5th anniversary of India's revocation of Jammu and Kashmir's special status.

In his statement on this occasion, the OIC Secretary-General, H.E. Mr. Hissein Brahim Taha, reaffirmed the OIC's support for the Kashmiri people's right to self-determination in accordance with relevant UN Security Council resolutions.

For his part, the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Jammu and Kashmir and Assistant Secretary-General for Political Affairs, Yousef Al-Dobeay, reviewed the OIC's efforts and initiatives in defense of the legitimate rights of the Kashmiri people.

Meanwhile, on August 7, 2024, the OIC Secretary-General, H.E. Mr. Hissein Brahim Taha, received in his office, H.E. Dr. Mohammad Ishaq Dar, Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of



Foreign Affairs of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan.

Both sides exchanged views on a number of

issues on the OIC agenda, in particular developments of the Palestinian Cause, Jammu and Kashmir, and Islamophobia.



## EU and Nigeria Boost Cooperation on Research and Learning Mobility

At the Global Gateway High-Level Event on Education in Brussels, European Commissioner Jutta Urpilainen showcased the European Union's strong commitment to education and health equity, signing with Didi Esther Walson-Jack, Permanent Secretary of Nigeria's Federal Ministry of Education, a cooperation agreement on €18 million EU support to enhance research and development capacities for implementing Nigeria's national plan for the pharmaceutical industry and local production of vaccines and medical technologies.

Commissioner Urpilainen said: "Economic growth is dependent on an educated, skilled workforce and healthy societies, and investing in strengthening education and health systems worldwide is an integral part of the European Union's Global Gateway strategy. Our investments in quality education, research, and training seek to empower future generations by equipping them with the knowledge, skills, and competencies they need in a changing world to tackle global challenges and build prosperity."

The European funding signed under the Team Europe Initiative on Manufacturing and Ac-

cess to Vaccines, Medicines and Health Technologies in Africa (MAV+) will support the wider enabling environment around Nigeria's pharmaceutical sector, notably by promoting skills development through education and training; research, and development (e.g. research in artificial intelligence and nanotechnology); the digitalization of essential dimensions of the ecosystem; a centralized system for forecasting, procurement and distribution of quality medical products; as well as trade, investment and customs facilitation, intellectual property rights frameworks and conditions, and an enabling environment for preferential trade and investment.

Commissioner Urpilainen also signed 15 Intra-Africa Mobility Scheme projects funded by the EU with €27 million under the flagship Youth Mobility for Africa. The projects will provide learning mobility opportunities for students, trainees, and staff across the continent to boost high-level green and digital skills.

Nigeria will benefit from six projects, including: Capacity-Building for Engineering Education Practice and Research (€1.8 million of EU funding in total, with the participation of the

University of Lagos-Unilag); Climate Research and Education to Advancing Green Development in Africa (€1.8 million of EU funding in total, with the participation of the University of Port-Harcourt); Mobility for Plant Genomics Scholars to Accelerate Climate-Smart Adaptation Options and Food Security in Africa (€1.8 million of EU funding in total, coordinated by the Ebonyi State University).

Additionally, Commissioner Urpilainen launched a key initiative of the Youth Action Plan in EU external relations, the Africa-Europe Youth Academy, which will provide opportunities for formal and informal learning and exchanges to young people looking to improve their leadership skills and create networks between Africa and Europe.

Nigeria can also benefit from the regional Team Europe Initiative on Opportunity-driven Skills and Vocational Education and Training in Africa, which will orient country-level vocational training initiatives towards concrete employment opportunities created by Global Gateway investments.





## Kazakhstan Holds Meeting of Coordination Council of Partners for the Development of the Water Sector

On September 30, 2024, the first meeting of the Coordination Council of Partners for the Development of the Water Sector was held in Astana, Kazakhstan.

Kazakhstan has established a Coordination Council of Partners for the Development of the Water Sector. It includes representatives from the Kazakh Ministry of Water Resources and Irrigation, the United Nations Development Program (UNDP), and other international organizations and financial institutions. According to the Ministry, the Coordination Council will coordinate the actions of government agencies, UNDP, international financial organizations, and donor communities according to national priorities in the water sector. The Council will mobilize and effectively distribute financial and technical resources to achieve the set goals.

The Council will support the development and implementation of strategic documents, including the Water Code, the Concept for the Development of the Water Resources Management System, and the Comprehensive Water Sector Development Plan, in addition to strengthening the legislative framework and institutional mechanisms for sustainable

water management.

By implementing best international practices and innovative solutions in water resources management, the Council will organize the sharing of knowledge and experience, increase the capacity of specialists, and inform citizens about sustainable water resources management principles.

Other key tasks for the Council include strengthening regional cooperation in water resources management, and increasing resilience to climate change and natural disasters such as droughts and floods.

Minister of Water Resources and Irrigation Nurzhan Nurzhigitov commented: "The establishment of the Coordination Council is an important step for the water sector in Kazakhstan. By coordinating the efforts of the Ministry, international organizations, and donor communities, the Council will play an important role in promoting the country's long-term environmental stability and economic development. The Coordination Council will help mobilize resources, strengthen governance, expand regional cooperation, and promote sustainable water resource management practices. These collective efforts will address

growing climate challenges and ensure a stable future for Kazakhstan and Central Asia."

Katarzyna Wawiernia, UNDP Resident Representative in Kazakhstan, offered welcoming remarks at the meeting of the Coordination Council. "We are deeply grateful", she said, "for the confidence shown in UNDP by entrusting us with the co-chairmanship of this Council. We remain fully committed to supporting the Council's work throughout the upcoming year, ensuring that our collaborative efforts lead to significant progress in the development of the water sector." She went on to assert that "today's Partners' Meeting marks a significant milestone in addressing the pressing challenges facing Kazakhstan's water sector and promoting sustainable water management practices across the country."

Katarzyna Wawiernia added that "Secretary-General Antonio Guterres stressed that 'water unites all of us' and 'must be at the center of global political agenda'. We know that 80 percent of the impacts of climate change are water-related. Global ecosystems are threatened by extreme floods, droughts, melting glaciers, and rising sea levels."



# WITEX 2025: A Platform to Promote Halal Tourism

Cambodia, Thailand, Brunei, Egypt, Singapore, Zambia, Indonesia, Malaysia, and Uzbekistan are seeking to boost the Global Travel Industry through Halal Tourism. Aware of the growing importance of Halal Tourism as a vital segment of the global travel market, these countries are committed to enhancing their offerings to attract Muslim travelers.

By participating in WITEX 2025, these countries aim to showcase their Halal-certified services, products, and travel experiences, positioning themselves as key players in the global Islamic tourism landscape. This collective effort is expected to drive significant growth in the Halal Tourism sector, fostering greater cultural exchange and economic development across regions. WITEX 2025 serves as a platform for these countries to collaborate, innovate, and shape the future of Halal Tourism, reinforcing their commitment to catering to the unique needs of Muslim travelers worldwide.

In a significant move that marks the evolution of Islamic tourism on the global stage, the decision to rebrand the Asia Islamic Tourism & Trade Expo (AITEK) as the World Islamic Tourism & Trade Expo (WITEX) was reached after extensive discussions among CEOs and key industry players.

This decision, supported by delegates from countries including Cambodia, the Philippines, Brunei, Thailand, Singapore, Zambia, Egypt, Indonesia, and Uzbekistan, highlights the growing recognition of Halal Tourism as a

vital segment of the global travel industry. The rebranding of AITEK to WITEX underscores the need for a comprehensive platform that can cater to the unique demands of Islamic travelers and businesses worldwide.

The transition from AITEK to WITEX was driven by the expo's expanding global reach and the increasing participation of countries from beyond Asia. WITEX aims to serve as a platform for stakeholders to explore new opportunities, address challenges, and shape the future of Islamic tourism.

The decision to rebrand the expo reflects the industry's evolution and the desire to create a platform that goes beyond regional boundaries. By transitioning to WITEX, the event will not only maintain its relevance but also expand its appeal to a broader audience, attracting participants from all corners of the globe. The rebranding of AITEK to WITEX has received overwhelming support from delegates representing the aforementioned countries. These countries have expressed their commitment to boosting Halal Tourism, and are eager to leverage WITEX as a platform to showcase their offerings to a global audience.

Cambodia, known for its rich cultural heritage and historical sites, is increasingly recognizing the potential of Halal Tourism. The country is investing in Halal-certified facilities and services to attract more Muslim travelers. WITEX 2025 provides Cambodia with the optimum platform to highlight its Halal Tourism offer-

ings and connect with key industry players.

The Philippines, with its diverse landscapes and vibrant culture, is also making strides in Halal Tourism. The country's participation in WITEX 2025 underscores its commitment to becoming a top destination for Muslim travelers. To that end, the Philippines is working to further enhance its Halal Tourism infrastructure and offerings.

Brunei, a nation with a strong Islamic heritage, is naturally positioned to be a key player in the Halal Tourism industry. Brunei's participation in WITEX 2025 will allow the country to showcase its extensive Halal-certified services and products, while also exploring new partnerships and opportunities for growth in the global Islamic tourism market.

Thailand, a popular tourist destination known for its hospitality and diverse attractions, is increasingly focusing on Halal Tourism to cater to the growing Muslim travel market. Thailand's involvement in WITEX 2025 reflects its commitment to expanding its Halal Tourism offerings and positioning itself as a leading destination for Muslim travelers.

Singapore, a multicultural hub with a strong emphasis on inclusivity, is also making significant strides in Halal Tourism. Zambia, a country with a rich natural heritage and a growing tourism industry, is keen to tap into the Halal Tourism market.





## Tourism in the Islamic World Provides Nearly 46 Million Job Opportunities

OIC Countries have witnessed a gradual recovery in the tourism sector, despite the significant challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic, with the number of incoming tourists reaching 96 million in 2021. This recovery gained further momentum in 2022, with a significant increase in the number of international tourist arrivals in OIC countries, reaching 224 million, which represents 77% of the levels recorded before the pandemic.

The number of intra-OIC tourist arrivals increased after a moderate recovery in 2021, reaching 78.8 million tourists in 2022, equivalent to 71% of the levels recorded before the pandemic. Additionally, the number of incoming tourists in proportion to the population in OIC countries saw a substantial rise, reaching 15 visitors per hundred inhabitants in 2022. This figure is 25% lower than the pre-pandemic level of 20 visitors per hundred inhabitants.

In terms of international tourism revenues, OIC countries collectively showed impressive performance, with revenues rising to \$257 billion in 2022, surpassing pre-pandemic levels and reaching the highest level ever recorded. It is worth noting that high-income Member States had the largest share of international tourism revenue in the OIC countries in 2022, totaling \$118 billion, as this income group re-

*Overall, international tourism has multifaceted impacts on the economy, benefiting both tourist destinations and tourism-exporting countries. In 2023, the international tourism sector contributed \$753.5 billion to the economy, representing 6.9% of the total GDP of OIC countries.*

corded the highest growth rates over the past three years.

OIC countries also recorded high revenue lev-

els per visitor throughout this period, initially slightly lower than those of developed countries before the pandemic. They quickly saw a significant increase, surpassing other groups of countries, including developing countries that are not members of the OIC, with a recorded average of \$1,148 in 2022.

Overall, international tourism has multifaceted impacts on the economy, benefiting both tourist destinations and tourism-exporting countries. In 2023, the international tourism sector contributed \$753.5 billion to the economy, representing 6.9% of the total GDP of OIC countries.

The number of job opportunities provided by tourism in OIC countries in 2023 reached 45.7 million, accounting for 6.8% of total employment. OIC countries have immense potential for development, particularly in Islamic tourism, heritage tourism, and sustainable tourism. They also possess a tourism advantage over non-OIC countries as they scored an average of 54 on the Global Muslim Travel Index, compared to the global average of 41. Additionally, 231 sites (19%) out of 1,199 World Heritage sites inscribed between 1978 and 2023 are located in OIC countries. Among these, 187 are classified as cultural heritage sites, 35 as natural heritage sites, and 9 as mixed (natural and cultural) sites.

# OIC Secretary-General: Artificial Intelligence is About to Revolutionize our Societies

The OIC Secretary-General, H.E. Mr. Hissein Brahim Taha, delivered a speech at the 23rd regular session of the OIC Independent Permanent Human Rights Commission (IPHRC). He took part in the thematic debate on the impact of artificial intelligence on human rights. He seized this opportunity to express his gratitude to the wise Leadership of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia for its continued support for the OIC and its institutions, as well as for the IPHRC.

The Secretary-General congratulated the Chairperson of the IPHRC on his election, and warmly welcomed the new members of the Commission's Board. He commended the role played by the IPHRC in upholding human rights, fundamental freedoms, and Islamic values, and hailed the efforts of the Executive Director, Dr. Nourah bint Zaid Mubarak Al-Rashoud, in this regard.

The Director-General stressed that artificial intelligence is about to revolutionize our societies, which will offer opportunities while also posing challenges to human rights. He noted that the roots of artificial intelligence could be traced back to contributions from Muslim scholars, underscoring the importance of reconciling modernity with Islamic values in its



evolution.

The Secretary-General indicated that the OIC encourages the use of AI by Member States, while emphasizing the need to observe ethics and responsibility considerations. He stressed that such initiatives as the International Center for AI Research and Ethics (ICAIRE) in Saudi Arabia demonstrate the Member States' commitment to promoting the ethical use of AI to address economic and social challenges. He underlined that protecting human rights

in the context of artificial intelligence requires strong legal frameworks that incorporate human rights principles, adding that the OIC advocates for a multidimensional approach to ensure the ethical governance of AI in a way aligned with Islamic values.

The Secretary-General expressed confidence that discussions in this session would yield meaningful recommendations to guide the use of AI while respecting human rights.

## In UNA Workshop: Secretary-General Stresses Need to Expose Israeli Crimes

The OIC Secretary-General, H.E. Mr. Hissein Brahim Taha, addressed the virtual workshop on "Media and the Palestinian Right: Practical Steps to Build on Initiatives to Recognize Palestine", organized on June 9, 2024, in collaboration between the Union of News Agencies (UNA) in the OIC Member States and the Muslim World League (MWL).

The Secretary-General noted that the workshop embodies the spirit of cooperation in serving the OIC's prime cause, the Cause of Palestine and Al-Quds Al-Sharif. The workshop, he added, is an extension of the OIC's

political and media efforts aligned with the relevant OIC resolutions, including the Resolution of the Joint Extraordinary Arab-Islamic Summit, convened in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, on November 11, 2023. In this Summit, it was decided to establish an OIC Media Observatory on the Israeli Crimes against Palestinians, to serve as a media monitoring unit within the OIC General Secretariat; thereby confirming the significant role of the media in documenting and exposing Israeli crimes and violations and mobilizing international solidarity with the Palestinian people,

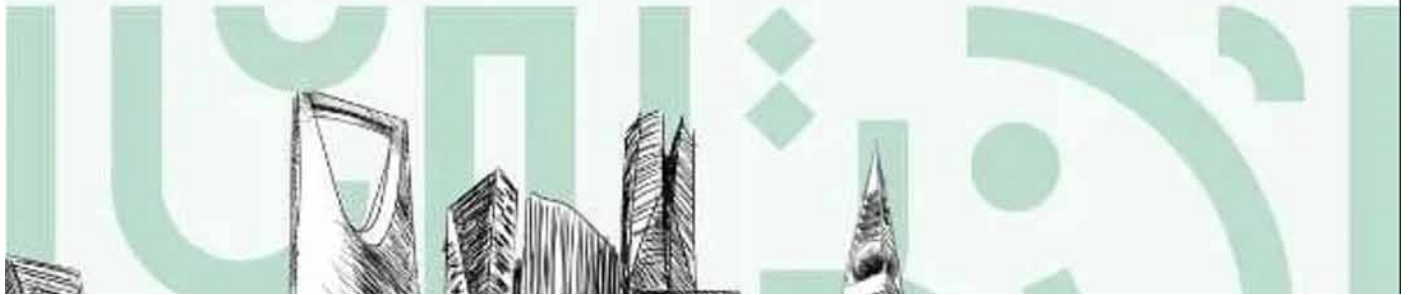
The virtual workshop on "Media and the Palestinian Right" was held at a time when the Palestinian territory, especially the Gaza Strip, was witnessing horrific massacres and organized terrorism, violence, and genocidal crimes committed by the Israeli occupation without any political, religious, human or legal deterrence. This requires that efforts be combined in all fields, including in the media, to expose these crimes, prosecute the Israeli occupation, and hold it accountable.



## OIC Stresses the Role of Sports in Achieving SDGs

# الرياض ٢٠٢٥ RIYADH 2025

النسخة السادسة من دورة ألعاب التضامن الإسلامي  
The 6th Edition of the Islamic Solidarity Games



The OIC General Secretariat took part in the 39th Meeting of the Board of Directors of the Islamic Solidarity Sports Association (ISSA) in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, on July 7-8, 2024.

During the meeting, HRH Prince Abdulaziz bin Turki Al-Faisal, Saudi Minister of Sports, signed an agreement with Prince Fahd bin Jalawi bin Abdulaziz bin Musa'ed, Deputy President of the Saudi Olympic and Paralympic Committee, confirming Saudi Arabia as host of the 6th Islamic Solidarity Games - Riyadh 2025.

Amb. Tarig Ali Bakheet, Assistant Secretary-General for Humanitarian, Cultural, and Social Affairs, conveyed the congratulations of H.E. Mr. Hissein Brahim Taha, OIC Secretary-General, to Saudi Arabia for agreeing to host the 6th edition of the Islamic Solidarity Games in Riyadh. He commended the excellent arrangements being undertaken to ensure the success of this sports event. He also expressed deep thanks to HRH Prince Abdulaziz bin Turki Al-Faisal and to ISSA for their

continued and dedicated efforts to empower youth and promote sports in the OIC countries.

Amb. Bakheet underscored the significant role of sports in fostering youth's social integration, countering extremism, and eradicating poverty. He urged Member States to enhance collaboration through their National Olympic Committees, ISSA, and the OIC General Secretariat to contribute to the success of this edition of the Games and advance the OIC goals in this domain.

The meeting featured a detailed presentation by HH Prince Fahd bin Jalawi bin Abdulaziz bin Musa'ed, Chairman of the Organizing Committee of the Islamic Solidarity Games, on the upcoming hosting of the event in Riyadh in 2025, which will bring together athletes from 57 Olympic committees across the Islamic world.

The "Riyadh 2025" presentation provided operational details about hosting the Games in Riyadh, including facilities prepared for

athletes, officials, technical staff, and spectators, in addition to the venues that will host the competitions. These preparations aim to organize an unprecedented edition in the history of these Games, which were first held in Saudi Arabia in 2005 in Mecca, Jeddah, Taif, and Medina. Twenty years later, the Games return to Riyadh, another in the series of major competitions hosted by Saudi Arabia, making it a global destination for the largest sporting events worldwide.

It is worth recalling that the ISSA General Assembly meeting, held last year, had unanimously approved the decision that Riyadh hosts the 6th edition of the Islamic Solidarity Games, which will be an opportunity to celebrate the bonds of brotherhood and solidarity among athletes from Islamic countries. This decision was taken following the Inspection Committee's second visit to Riyadh, during which the readiness of the venues and training facilities for the 2025 edition of the Games was confirmed.

## IOFS Empowers Farmers in Earthquake-Affected Afghanistan



The Islamic Organization for Food Security (IOFS), with the generous support of the Government of Kazakhstan and in collaboration with the Turkish Cooperation and Coordination Agency (TIKA), has officially launched the Advancing Wheat Cultivation for Sustainable Development in West Afghanistan project.

This significant initiative, focused on Zindejan Province—a region heavily affected by last year's earthquake—targets 300 farmers, including 45 women. The project aims to boost wheat production and strengthen food security in the region through the distribution of 15 metric tons of improved wheat seed with Chont local variety, 15 metric tons of DAP fertilizer, and 30 metric tons of Urea fertilizer. Furthermore, essential agricultural machinery, including 2 tractors, 4 plows, 2 trailers, 2 threshers, and 2 harvesters, has been provided to enhance mechanization and optimize wheat cultivation ahead of the 2024 sowing season.

This intervention forms part of the broader Afghanistan Food Security Program (AFSP), launched as a key outcome of the 17th Extraordinary Council of Foreign Ministers (CFM) on the Humanitarian Situation in Afghanistan, held on 18-19 December 2021 in Islamabad, Pakistan. The Resolution adopted at this extraordinary CFM session entrusted IOFS with undertaking the necessary efforts for the implementation of this Programme. The CFM also encouraged OIC Member States, international donors, the UN Funds and Programs, and other international actors to generously contribute to the

Afghanistan Food Security Programme.

As an important milestone of AFSP, the project inauguration ceremony in Herat was attended by several high-profile guests, including the Consul General of Türkiye in Herat, Dr. Sinan İlhan; TIKA Herat Program Coordinator, Mr. Arafat Deniz, and the Head of the Kazakhstan Chamber of Commerce in Afghanistan, Mr. Arman Yessentayev, along with senior officials from the Herat Governor's Office and the Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock, and Irrigation. Representatives from Kabul were also present, including Mr. Emre Yüksek, the Humanitarian Operations Manager of IOFS.

The project beneficiaries expressed their gratitude just ahead of the sowing season. Dr. İlhan emphasized the importance of the joint initiative between Kazakhstan, TIKA, and IOFS. He called for further collaboration from other Muslim countries to foster solidarity and sustainable development across the region.

Mr. Deniz highlighted TIKA's dedication to responding to the genuine needs of local farming communities through direct engagement and continuous follow-up to ensure the long-term sustainability of the project.

Mr. Yüksek noted that this initiative is a crucial milestone in replicating the wheat value chain model across other provinces of Afghanistan. He stressed that reducing dependency on imports and bolstering local production are central to the AFSP program, and IOFS is committed to encouraging partnerships to expand these efforts.

### Sustainability and Capacity-Building

The IOFS project is designed with sustainability at its core, incorporating a clear exit strategy that emphasizes local ownership and self-reliance. Capacity-building initiatives are a cornerstone of the project, ensuring that farmers receive the necessary training to sustain their productivity in the long term.

Training programs will cover essential topics such as the correct use of fertilizers like DAP and Urea to optimize soil fertility and wheat growth, seed treatment techniques to protect against pests and diseases, and best practices for sowing to ensure optimal germination. Looking forward to 2025, the project will expand to focus on reducing post-harvest losses and implementing seed-saving practices, with input from both local and international experts, ensuring long-term agricultural sustainability.

### Previous IOFS Interventions in Afghanistan

In 2022, IOFS played a pivotal role in improving access to clean drinking water through the introduction of "The Oasis Box", an innovative solar-powered water extraction and filtration system. In collaboration with "Bond-e Shams", a social enterprise from Pakistan, six Oasis Boxes were delivered to rural communities across Afghanistan in April 2022. Additionally, IOFS's "Flour for Humanity" program in 2023 sent two humanitarian convoys, delivering 335 metric tons of wheat flour to 2,700 households in need, in partnership with the Afghanistan Red Crescent Society.



## Intensifying Cooperation between OIC and ICESCO



The OIC Secretary-General, H.E. Mr. Hissein Brahim Taha, met, on June 2, 2024, with H.E. Mr. Salem Al-Malik, Director-General of ICESCO, on the sidelines of the 12th session of the Islamic Conference of Tourism Ministers, held in Khiva, Uzbekistan.

The OIC Secretary-General highlighted the significant role undertaken by ICESCO, especially in the cultural fields, and the prospects for further bilateral cooperation. For his part, the ICESCO Director-General expressed ICESCO's aspiration for further collaboration between the two sides.

The meeting discussed aspects of cooperation between the OIC and ICESCO on issues of common interest, and explored avenues for further strengthening it.

On July 17, 2024, Amb. Tarig Ali Bakheet, Assistant Secretary-General for Humanitarian, Cultural, Social and Family Affairs, and his accompanying delegation, met with the Director-General of ICESCO, at ICESCO headquarters, at the conclusion of a coordination meeting between the OIC General Secretariat and ICESCO.

The meeting, attended by officials from both organizations, was characterized by a positive spirit and a shared vision with regard to the

future of bilateral cooperation and the need to scale it up to higher levels in pursuit of common goals.

Both parties commended the dynamic spirit that characterized the second coordination meeting, and the shared desire to work towards greater and better coordination of joint cultural and scientific activities and programs in areas of mutual interest, reflecting their legitimate aspirations to enhance their value and grant them the status they deserve.

The meeting offered an adequate opportunity to strengthen mutual trust and create a space for cooperation covering all areas of mutual interest, in line with the resolutions issued by the Islamic Summit, the Council of Foreign Ministers, and relevant sectoral conferences.

On July 16, 2024, a delegation of the OIC General Secretariat, led by Assistant Secretary-General for Humanitarian, Cultural, Social and Family Affairs, Amb. Tarig Ali Bakheet, held a Coordination Meeting with a delegation of ICESCO, at ICESCO headquarters in Rabat.

In his opening remarks, the Director-General of ICESCO, Dr. Salim Mohamed Al-Malik, welcomed the OIC General Secretariat's delegation, and commended the fruitful cooperation that has always characterized relations be-

tween the two organizations, and their shared aspiration to meet the objectives of joint Islamic action in relevant fields. He highlighted the importance of coordinating efforts to ensure the optimal implementation of programs and projects that serve sustainable development goals in the Member States and bolster solidarity among them.

For his part, Amb. Bakheet thanked the Director-General of ICESCO for the warm welcome and generous hospitality and conveyed to him the greetings of the OIC Secretary-General, H.E. Mr. Hissein Brahim Taha. He hailed the spirit of cooperation and the mutual desire to advance joint collaboration in all fields, especially in culture, science, technology, youth, sports, and social affairs, as well as in issues related to Palestine and Al-Quds.

Amb. Bakheet highlighted the importance of removing all obstacles to cooperation, in order to create a positive environment that enables the realization of the ambitions and objectives of both organizations, within their respective mandates and areas of competence, and in line with the resolutions of the Islamic Summit, the Council of Foreign Ministers, and relevant sectorial meetings.

## IsDB Institute Completes Pilot Exercise of Strategic Mapping

The Islamic Development Bank Institute (IsDBI) announced the successful completion of its flagship Islamic Finance Strategic Mapping Framework (IF-MAP, formerly IF-CAF) pilot exercise in the Republic of Kazakhstan. This comprehensive assessment, conducted in collaboration with the Astana International Financial Center (AIFC), aimed to identify key opportunities and challenges in the Islamic finance sector in Kazakhstan.

The pilot initiative of IF-MAP was launched in June 2023, and involved extensive consultations with key stakeholders, including government agencies, financial institutions, and industry experts. The resulting tailored policy recommendations report, which outlines the sector's progress and provides recommendations for future development, has been submitted to the AIFC.

As one of the key outcomes of the exercise, IsDBI and AIFC jointly developed the Kazakhstan Islamic Finance Country Report 2024, which the Governor of AIFC, Mr. Renat Bekturov, launched on 6 September during the Astana Finance Days. The report highlights the immense potential of Islamic finance in supporting Kazakhstan's economic growth and development. In his welcome address, Mr. Renat Bekturov



noted: "This report not only provides a comprehensive overview of the Islamic finance industry, but also highlights the shared vision for the future. AIFC's commitment to promoting Islamic finance is evident through favorable conditions offered to Islamic financial companies to operate in both the retail and corporate sectors. The report is an invaluable guide for investors, policymakers, and stakeholders." Commenting on the successful completion of the pilot exercise, Dr. Sami Al-Suwailem, Act-

ing Director-General of IsDBI, stated, "We are delighted to have collaborated with the AIFC on this important initiative. The Kazakhstan Islamic Finance Country Report offers a valuable analysis of the sector's current state and future prospects. We believe that the report, together with the IF-MAP policy recommendations submitted to the AIFC, will be instrumental in guiding policymakers, investors, and financial institutions as they work to harness the full potential of Islamic finance in Kazakhstan."

## Cooperation Program between Algeria's Supreme Youth Council and IsDB



The Supreme Youth Council of Algeria and the Islamic Development Bank (IsDB) have agreed to establish a multi-faceted cooperation program, which will involve drafting an agreement focusing on youth capacity-building in various fields. According to a statement from the Council, both parties have agreed to organize joint activities and to explore ways to finance qualitative youth projects in Algeria.

As part of the Council's efforts to share expertise with regional and international bodies and institutions concerned with youth, Mr. Mustapha Hidaoui, President of the Supreme Youth Council, met with a delegation from the IsDB Group. The meeting explored potential avenues for cooperation, through the specific strategies of each institution, and considering the needs and challenges it faces in achieving its goals, which the IsDB could assist with.



## IRCICA Holds “Mostar 2024 Workshop and Symposium”



The Research Center for Islamic History, Art and Culture (IRCICA), Mostar City Council, and the Islamic Community Council of Mostar, with the contribution of Konya Municipality, jointly organized the “Mostar 2024 Workshop and Symposium” on July 15-22, 2024. The program was part of commemorating the 20th anniversary of the reconstruction of Mostar Old City and the famous Mostar Old Bridge.

The workshop featured lectures on the history and cultural heritage of Mostar and Bosnia and Herzegovina, field visits to sites and monuments in and around Mostar, and presentations about the restoration and conservation of architectural heritage in general and in the local context. The urban heritage of Mostar, particularly the Old Bridge and the Old City, was highlighted from various viewpoints, including infrastructural and architectural interventions and tourism management. Professors and students from universities in Europe, USA and Türkiye participated in the program.

The program culminated in the Symposium, which kicked off on July 22, 2024, with statements by IRCICA Director-General Prof. Mahmud Erol Kılıç, Mostar City Council President Mr. Salem Mari, and Islamic Community Council President Mr. Dzafer Ali. An overview of the workshop was then given by four professors, followed by students’ presentations about

*The workshop featured lectures on the history and cultural heritage of Mostar and Bosnia and Herzegovina, field visits to sites and monuments in and around Mostar, and presentations about the restoration and conservation of architectural heritage*

the studies conducted during the Workshop on specific structures and monuments.

The Symposium also featured lectures by international scholars on reconstruction processes in Mostar and Bosnia and Herzegovina. The

speakers were professors Attilio Petruccioli, Luca Orlandi, Emily Makaš, Adis Zilic, Haris Desrvicevic, Mehmet Zeki Ibrahimgil, Amra Hadzimuhamedovic. In his remarks at the close of the Symposium and the Workshop, the Chief of IRCICA’s Architectural Heritage Section, Dr. Alidost Ertucrul, summarized the main outcomes of the program.

Similarly, on September 24, 2024, a book launch ceremony for IRCICA’s new publication titled *Shah Tahmasci Album* from the Royal Ottoman Treasury was held in the Centre’s Conference Hall, in the presence of the authors, Lâle Uluç and Bora Keskiner. A large audience interested in Islamic arts and members of cultural media were also in attendance.

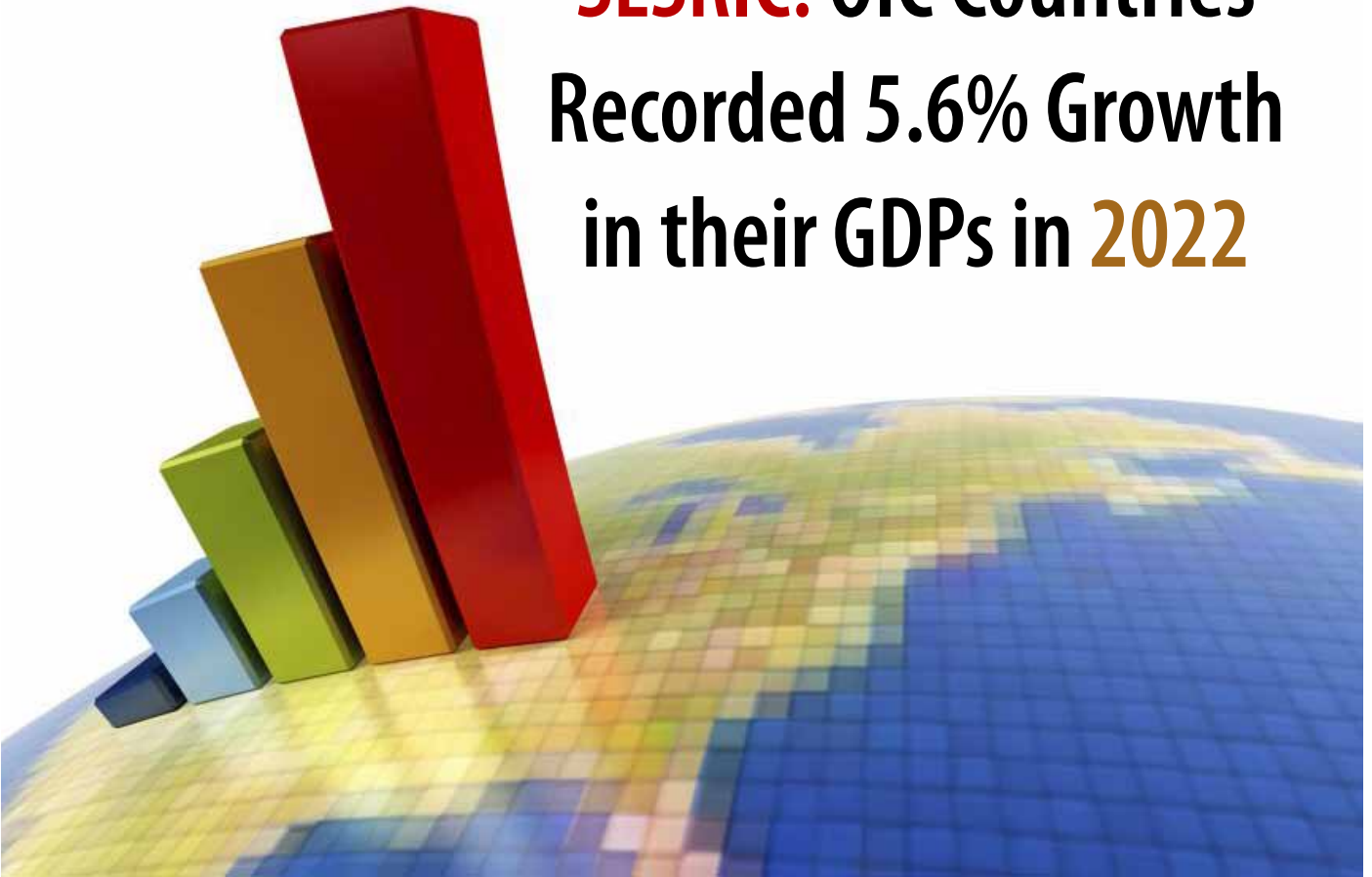
Addressing the ceremony, IRCICA Director-General pointed out that extensive cultural exchanges had taken place between Iran and the Ottoman state which resulted in a close relationship between the arts of the two milieus. He added that one of the two main artistic influences into Anatolia came from Iran and the other from Central Asia, and that exchanges of gifts between states was a tradition. The Iranian delegation sent to Istanbul to congratulate Sultan Murad III after his accession to the Ottoman throne carried gifts loaded on seven camels, among them the album which had been prepared under the Safavid ruler Shah Tahmasp (r. 1524-1576).

The album contains excerpts from the Shahnâme, verses from the Holy Qur’an, hadith, poetry, as well as samples of calligraphy and miniature painting. These are compiled without any thematic or chronological arrangement, thus forming an “album”. Prof. Kılıç added that the benefit of such a compilation is that its contents could serve as examples to calligraphers, illuminators and miniature painters.

Sample pages were shown on screen by Prof. Lâle Uluç, who explained that albums, such as this one, assembled in palace libraries during the 15th and 16th centuries were formed by cutting pieces from valuable works and sticking them on pages.

The contents are not works related to one another, but are rather selections used as examples or imitated at their times. We find in them dates, names of calligraphers, dedications, and other historical information.

## SESRIC: OIC Countries Recorded 5.6% Growth in their GDPs in 2022



The Statistical, Economic and Social Research and Training Center for Islamic Countries (SESRIC), based in Ankara, Türkiye, launched the 2023 edition of the OIC Economic Outlook Report during the 39th Ministerial Session of the COMCEC, held on December 2-5, 2023, in İstanbul, Türkiye. Ms. Zehra Zümrüt SELÇUK, Director-General of SESRIC, presented the main highlights of the Report during the Conference.

This flagship Report of SESRIC explores global macroeconomic trends, with a focus on the OIC countries as a group, and provides a wide range of useful statistics and analyses, including the comparison of OIC countries' economic performance with developed countries, non-OIC developing countries, and the world average. It pays special attention to the rise of the digital economy and explores opportunities to benefit from this transformation by bridging the digital divide.

Following the COVID-19 pandemic, the world economy showed a strong recovery in 2021, with an average growth rate of 6.3%. In 2022, the real GDP growth rate reached back to its pre-pandemic level, and the global economy is expected to maintain a growth rate of around 3% in 2023 and 2024.

However, the ongoing geopolitical conflicts and inflationary pressures seem to have a substantial impact on the process of post-pandemic global economic recovery, which poses significant uncertainties in the outlook. Experiencing a lower contraction during the pandemic, OIC countries demonstrated a stronger recovery during the post-pandemic period. In 2022, OIC countries recorded an average of 5.6% growth in their GDPs, the highest growth rate observed over the last decade.

According to the report, OIC countries are performing better overall in terms of trade and investment during the post-pandemic period,

but more actions are needed to make them sustainable. This requires strategic investment in productive capacities in OIC countries to foster innovation and competitiveness, and achieve economic diversification. On the other hand, despite recording a noticeable recovery, OIC countries continue to struggle to reduce unemployment and inflation rates, further diverging from global averages.

The world economy is also witnessing a new form of transformation, mainly characterized by rising digitalization, automation, and artificial intelligence. These transformative technologies are reshaping industries, supply chains, and the very nature of work itself. In this connection, the report discusses issues and challenges associated with digital transformation. It offers a set of comprehensive policy options under seven steps for OIC countries to adapt to the growing digitalization of economic activities and benefit from its mounting importance.



## ICESCO Launches “Read it, to Understand it” Initiative



The Islamic World Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (ICESCO) launched, on July 9, 2024, its “Read it... to Understand It” initiative, as a positive response to the desperate attempts at desecrating the Holy Quran, and as a means of bringing to light Western stances that provide positive views of the Quran, so that non-believers can discover the mercy and guidance of the Holy Book of Allah. The initiative was announced by Dr. Salim Al-Malik, ICESCO Director-General, at the close of the International Seminar on “The Quran and the West: Towards a Rational Approach”, held at ICESCO’s headquarters, in Rabat. Dr. AlMalik stressed that this step is the outcome of a thorough consideration of how the Holy Quran is currently dealt with all over the world, by believers who follow its teachings and are keen to preserve its sanctity, by non-believers who respect it, and by others who have been manifesting their extremism and hatred of the Quran in behaviors that contradict the spirit of civilization, without even bothering themselves to read it and learn about its content.

Dr. AlMalik indicated that the details of the initiative are drawn from proposals received from a number of ICESCO Member States’ National Commissions, and inspired by the constructive scientific discussions put forth during the Seminar. He reviewed the broad lines of the initiative, which provides for establishing partner-

ships with Western think-tanks and scientific research centers to highlight the richness of the Quran and expose the flimsy grounds of the wrongful claims about its teachings. It also involves urging governments in the Islamic world to use their cultural diplomacy to accord special attention to addressing Quran-related matters. In this regard, ICESCO will provide the Member States with an annual report monitoring trends in dealing with the Holy Quran.

The initiative involves urging Muslim communities in the West, through their parliamentary and legislative institutions, to respect national legislations, with the emphasis that ICESCO supports developing a vision to give more attention to the Holy Quran and present it in a tolerant, convincing and easy way. It also provides for exchanging visits between intellectuals in the West and the Islamic world, especially from among young people, to further promote dialogue, with ICESCO standing ready to support the translation of the meanings of the Holy Quran, coordinate between Quran translation institutions, and hold “the Quran and the West” Seminar on a periodical basis.

The initiative includes organizing travelling exhibitions equipped with the latest display technologies in major capitals, in addition to advertising campaigns in public squares and means of transport to highlight the humanitarian and cultural aspects of the Holy Quran, cooperating

with relevant parties to provide introductory brochures in several languages, and announcing the ICESCO annual Prize for the best applications and proposals presented in the context of urging the Other to read and understand the Holy Quran.

The initiative commended the positions of European countries regarding the extremist desecration of the sanctity of the Holy Quran, and affirmed ICESCO’s willingness to strengthen its ties with various Western legislative institutions to counter fanaticism and racism.

The Seminar, organized by ICESCO in collaboration with the German Institute for Dialogue and Understanding (Mouatana), was attended by high-profile international figures, several ambassadors accredited to the Kingdom of Morocco, and experts in Islamic studies and Inter-religious dialogue.

The Seminar, held in a hybrid format, opened with the recitation of verses from the Holy Quran, followed by opening remarks by Ambassador Khaled Fatahrahman, Head of ICESCO Center for Civilizational Dialogue, who emphasized the significance of the Seminar’s theme for Muslims worldwide. He noted that the Seminar’s diverse sessions would feature rich contributions from a select group of thinkers, scholars and experts in Arabic and Islamic studies as well as in Inter-religious dialogue.

## Muscat Hosts Workshop on Islamic World AI Charter



The "Islamic World AI Charter for Asia and Middle East Regions Workshop" concluded on July 3rd, 2024. The workshop featured rich discussions and an exchange of ideas among a select group of officials, experts, and representatives of ICESCO Member States. Participants presented the results of their discussions on the ethical principles of artificial intelligence to be included in the Charter, as well as their proposals for oversight and governance mechanisms to ensure the proper application of these principles.

Participants in the Workshop, organized by ICESCO in partnership with the University of Technology and Applied Sciences (UTAS) and the Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology of Oman, and in collaboration with the Oman National Commission for Education, Culture and Science, emphasized the necessity of drafting legal texts and ethical frameworks to govern artificial intelligence. They also underlined the need to build human capacities to use AI and the importance of aligning the Islamic World AI Charter with international charters, while taking into consideration the specificities and values of the Islamic world. Moreover, they called for balancing innovation and scientific research with the protection of individual rights, with emphasis on the importance of awareness-raising and capacity-building in this regard.

At the beginning of the second day of the Workshop, held as part of the activities of the ICESCO Chair for AI Ethics at UTAS in Oman and in preparation for the Islamic World AI Charter, Dr. Salim M. AlMalik, ICESCO Director-General, stressed, in his remarks prior to the start of working group discussions, the necessity of integrating an ethical value system into the Charter to achieve its intended purpose, with focus on creativity, individual freedom, and equity. He noted that though the application of AI in various fields yields substantial advantages, its unethical use poses significant risks, including the use of AI in preparing research and studies for academic degrees, which represents a form of plagiarism. For his part, Dr. Kais Hammami, Head of ICESCO's Center for Foresight and Artificial Intelligence, reviewed the Center's efforts and methodology in promoting the culture of foresight, the foundational principles of methodological analysis, dynamic scenario-building, and the use of the Arabic language in this field.

Speaking next, Dr. Said Bin Salem Jabooob, Deputy Vice-Chancellor of UTAS for Postgraduate Studies, Research, and Innovation, stated that preparing the initial draft of the Charter is a significant step towards establishing a solid framework for AI ethics and governance in Asia and the Middle East.

The second day's agenda included brainstorming sessions to develop a comprehensive vision for the Islamic World AI Charter. Experts and researchers were divided into four groups, each discussing multiple scenarios to derive several ethical principles necessary for better drafting of the Charter.

On another note, Dr. Salim M. AlMalik, Director-General of ICESCO, held a meeting with Dr. Madiha Ahmed Al-Shaibani, Minister of Education of Oman and President of the Omani National Commission for Education, Culture, and Science, at the Ministry's headquarters in Muscat.

The meeting saw the signing of the Agreement for Oman's hosting of the 3rd Conference of Education Ministers of ICESCO Member States, scheduled for October 2-3, 2024. The Agreement was signed by Ms. Amna bint Salem Al Balushi, Secretary-General of the Omani National Commission for Education, Culture, and Science, and Dr. Salim Al Habsi, Director of the General Secretariat of National Commissions and Conferences at ICESCO.

During the meeting, attended by several Ministry officials, Dr. AlMalik expressed his thanks and appreciation to the Sultanate of Oman, represented by the Ministry of Education and the National Commission, for the initiative to host the Conference and for the preparations made so far to ensure its success.



## ICESCO Launches Book on the Legacy of Arabic Language along the Silk Roads



The headquarters of the Islamic World Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (ICESCO) in Rabat hosted, on June 24, 2024, the launch event for UNESCO's publication: "Underlining the Role and Legacy of the Arabic Language in Cultural, Scientific, and Commercial Exchanges along the Silk Roads". This publication is the fruit of a collaborative effort between UNESCO's Prince Sultan Bin Abdulaziz Al Saud Program for the Arabic Language, and the Silk Roads Program.

The event, organized by UNESCO and the Sultan Bin Abdulaziz Al-Saud Foundation, was attended by a distinguished audience. In a recorded statement, Dr. Salim M. AlMalik, ICESCO Director-General, commended the centrality of the Arabic language as highlighted in the UNESCO publication, emphasizing its role in enriching the Silk Road. He noted that Arabic, originating from the Arabian Peninsula, the cradle of Islam's message, reached as far as China and Central Asia, and extended to Türkiye and the borders of Europe. He added that translation to and from Arabic was then one of the most lucrative trades.

Ms. Gabriela Ramos, Assistant Director-General for Social and Human Sciences of UNESCO, expressed her gratitude to the organizers for their efforts in promoting cultural diversity and highlighting the importance of the Arabic language as a bridge between civilizations.

Dr. Saleh Ibrahim Al-Khulaifi, Director-General of the Sultan Bin Abdulaziz Al Saud Foundation, expressed his delight at the collaborative efforts that yielded the publication of the book,

and emphasized its importance in fostering intercultural dialogue through the Arabic language.

Mr. Eric Falt, Director of the UNESCO Regional Office in Rabat, praised the book launch, stressing its vital importance in preserving the legacy of the Arabic language, which, he added, cultivated a distinctive community along the Silk Roads, transcending barriers between diverse peoples.

Dr. Li Ruohong, President of the Beijing International Peace Culture Foundation, underscored the global significance of the Arabic language in enhancing heritage, and urged youth to engage in preserving the cultural and social legacy of the Silk Roads.

Dr. Hani Al Balawi and Dr. Sidra Tariq Jamil, experts at ICESCO's Center of Civilizational Dialogue, commended the contributions of the partners and organizers. They underscored the crucial role of the Arabic language in taking up the torch of culture along the Silk Roads, and highlighted ICESCO's diligent efforts in preserving and promoting this legacy.

The launch event featured two panel discussions on the legacy of the Arabic language along the Silk Roads. Dr. Omar Halli, advisor to ICESCO Director-General for the Federation of the Universities of the Islamic World, moderated the first session, while the second was moderated by Dr. Mehrdad Shabahang, Head of the UNESCO Silk Road Programme.

Dr. Abdulaziz Almagushi, Deputy Director-General of the Sultan Bin Abdulaziz Al Saud Foundation, highlighted the importance of Arabic

culture, which traversed continents to impart values, principles, and concepts that positively influenced various societies.

In his concluding remarks, Dr. Abdelilah Benarafa, ICESCO Deputy Director-General, emphasized the profound importance of the Silk Road and the scholarly wealth of the UNESCO publication. He added that addressing the Arabic language in this event reflects a strategic vision for languages, particularly Arabic, as a primary conduit for transmitting humanity's scientific, cultural, and civilizational heritage, stressing, in this regard, the necessity of prioritizing its preservation and development.

On another note, ICESCO announced the launch of the "ICESCO Young Anchor Competition", as part of the attention it accords to the new generations and the youth of the future. The competition is targeted at non-Arabic-speaking children, and seeks to encourage them to practice, master and use the Arabic language on an international scale. It also aims to boost their self-confidence, develop their communication skills, and improve their linguistic and expressive competencies.

This competition, organized by ICESCO's Arabic Language Center for non-Arabic Speakers, aims to promote intercultural understanding and the sharing of expertise among different cultures. It is also designed to encourage children to express their ideas and opinions in innovative and diverse ways, which would help to build a generation capable of positively impacting their communities, and thus create a better world through the power of words.

## SESRIC Releases Annual Statistical Yearbook on OIC Countries



The Statistical, Economic and Social Research and Training Center for Islamic Countries (SESRIC) hosted a special event, at its headquarters in Ankara, to officially launch the 2023 edition of the “Statistical Yearbook on OIC Member Countries” and the new version of the OIC Statistics Database (OICStat). The event was attended by the Ambassadors of Bangladesh, Palestine, Mauritania, Sudan, and Saudi Arabia, along with representatives from several embassies and international organizations, researchers, and officials from relevant Turkish national institutions, notably the Turkish Statistical Institute (TurkStat).

The opening session featured remarks by Ms. Zehra Zümrüt SELÇUK, Director-General of SESRIC, Dr. Ahmad Kawesa SENGENDO, OIC Assistant Secretary General for Economic Affairs, Dr. Erhan ÇETİNKAYA, President of the Turkish Statistical Institute (TurkStat), and Mr. Faed Khaled Abed MUSTAFA, Ambassador of the State of Palestine to Türkiye.

In her opening remarks, Ms. SELÇUK stressed that accurate information is crucial not only for evidence-based policymaking, but also for revealing the stark reality of the world beyond

the mere presentation of figures and data. Some figures, she added, are not just statistics; they rather represent lives stolen, families torn apart, cities demolished, and futures destroyed. She took this opportunity to highlight the tragic ongoing genocide in Gaza, with over 40,000 Palestinians martyred, over 100,000 injured, and nearly 2 million displaced, since October 7, 2023. Moreover, due to the ongoing blockade, 9 out of 10 children in Gaza suffer from malnutrition.

Dr. Ahmad Kawesa SENGENDO delivered a video message in which he underlined the importance of data and statistics in all social and economic fields, being vital for measuring and monitoring OIC countries’ development progress. He congratulated SESRIC on the successful launch of the 2023 Statistical Yearbook and the new version of the OICStat Database, and commended SESRIC’s pivotal role as the main source of data and information for evidence-based policymaking in OIC countries.

Dr. Erhan ÇETİNKAYA hailed SESRIC’s commitment to enhancing statistical capacity and promoting evidence-based policymaking for

sustainable development and socio-economic progress across OIC countries. This event, he noted, marks a significant advancement in enhancing data-driven insights for Member States. He also highlighted the strong and decades-long partnership between TurkStat and SESRIC, indicating that this collaboration has played a pivotal role in advancing data-based insights and fostering cooperation among OIC countries.

Ambassador Faed Khaled Abed MUSTAFA, a Special Guest at this event, reaffirmed that Palestine remains the beating heart of the Islamic Ummah, urging the global community to act to end all forms of Israeli aggression and the consequent suffering endured by the Palestinian people. He highlighted the dire situation in Gaza where families are exposed to various forms of violence, destruction of homes, and displacement, with even hospitals and schools being under attack. He commended the strong steadfastness shown by the Palestinian people, despite these immense hardships, and called for unifying efforts in support of Palestine’s legitimate right to enjoy the status of an independent State, with Al-Quds as its capital.



## Israel and Daesh: Aren't they the same?!!!

Amid the ongoing brutal Israeli aggression against Gaza and the peoples of Palestine and Lebanon, and with Israel having crossed all the red lines set by the post-World War II world in its oppressive policies against the Palestinians, a comparison between Daesh (ISIS) and Israel inevitably arises.

Below, we highlight some similarities between the two projects, which can be further explored by researchers. The first similarity is that the two projects draw upon a heavy religious-political background. In fact, the policies of the ruling Likud party and its far-right allies are grounded on a religious background burdened with Biblical and Talmudic texts that are detached from their historical contexts and repurposed to meet current events. It is the same approach adopted by Daesh whose religious rhetoric is based on invoking religious texts and hadiths on Fitnas (seditions), removed from their original contexts, on the basis of which it developed a new reading of the reality of the Islamic Ummah. Just as Daesh invoked apocalyptic prophecies and the battles of Dabiq and the Levant, Israel invokes narratives of the Battle of Armageddon, the Divine Promise, and the Return of the Messiah. The second similarity lies in the utopian detachment from reality characterizing the two projects. Daesh adopted a superficial political interpretation of events in the Middle East, ascribing all the ills of the region to the absence of the Caliphate institution. It rushed to declare its establishment in its first official sermon, in total disconnection from political realities. The same applies to the Israeli far-right narrative, which now openly proclaims the nearing fulfillment of biblical prophecies and the establishment of "Greater Israel" from the Nile River to the Euphrates River, where Jews would enjoy full security. It is a narrative that totally loses sight of the unrealistic character of this dream, with Israel having been incapable of wiping out the Palestinian people over the past century, let alone the other peoples of the region it dreams of expanding into.

The third similarity is the killing machine and brutal savagery. It is undeniable that both Daesh and Israel operate, in their military policy, under the law of savagery. Daesh adopted the reign of terror and killing, even enshrining it in its manifesto, "The Management of Savagery". Similarly, Israel has repeatedly expressed this same doctrine through its ministers and military and religious leaders, especially former Chief of Staff Dan Halutz who publicly endorsed the doctrine of overwhelming military force, sending a message to the enemy that Israel can sometimes "go crazy".

The fourth similarity is the disrespect for international norms and instruments. Daesh did not recognize any generally accepted international conventions and humanitarian norms that would curb its expansionist greed. Worldwide, only Israel, whose closest ally has become deeply embarrassed by its disrespect for all international norms, has taken this same road. More than that, it has even gone as far as launching a violent diatribe against international organizations that dare to remind it of its duty to comply with agreements it has itself signed.

The fifth similarity is the adoption of the logic of elimination. Both Daesh and Israel operate on a philosophy of total elimination of the other.

The sixth similarity is the victimhood and existential threat narrative. Daesh built its propaganda on the narrative of sectarian injustice against Sunnis in the region, using it extensively to justify its military expansion and horrific massacres. Similarly, Israel uses the Holocaust as its *raison d'être* and as a justification for the extremist policies it adopts to prevent another Holocaust.

The seventh similarity is the reliance on media imagery and its impact on perception. The entire Israeli project rests on building and controlling the narrative, with the aim of justifying the Zionist project and 'marketing' it - in the global perception - as a humane project that flows smoothly in international politics and in the course of the history of peoples and nations. It's as if this project had nothing to do with colonialism and with the wiping out of an entire people and confiscation of all their legitimate rights. In this, there is a striking resemblance with Daesh which, if ever it 'succeeded' in anything during its period of activity, it would be nothing but its propaganda campaigns that captivated the imagination of thousands of young people worldwide. It succeeded in pulling the rug out from under Al-Qaeda, and in creating an idyllic media image of its political entity whose followers enjoy justice and security, and the ability to achieve self-fulfillment, in addition, of course, to plenty of Jawari(bondswomen).

Given these similarities, indeed, these parallels between the two entities, one might ask: Are there any differences between Daesh and Israel? There seems to be no clear answer other than the following paradox: while the entire world rushed to fight and eradicate Daesh, and to hunt down its leaders one by one, the Israeli Prime Minister is now received at the U.S. Congress, Western countries, and the United Nations to showcase his country's achievements and existential genius. Moreover, Daesh's crimes received extensive media coverage worldwide; yet the same media outlets remain deafeningly silent today on Israel's ongoing crimes in Gaza and throughout Palestine.

In the end, is Daesh nothing but another face of Israel, or is Israel nothing but another face of Daesh? Or are they simply two sides of the same coin?!!!



**Dr. Tarek Ladjal**

*Professional Officer at  
the Cabinet of Secretary-  
General*

*The third similarity is the killing machine and brutal savagery. It is undeniable that both Daesh and Israel operate, in their military policy, under the law of savagery*

## A platform combining AI with Human Expertise for Content Creation

In the fast-paced world of content creation, artificial intelligence is reshaping industries and how individuals and businesses communicate. Yet, while AI excels in speed and scale, human insight is still critical for capturing cultural context and linguistic nuance — especially in regions like the Middle East, where dialects and cultural subtleties matter.

This is where STUCK?, a groundbreaking platform created by Asmaa Naga, comes into play, combining the raw power of AI-driven large language models with the nuanced understanding of human experts to create accurate, high-quality content in English and Arabic.

“During COVID, I began to see how my experience in language and my awareness of corporate linguistic needs could help me create a solution to bridge a gap,” said Naga.

Established in 2022, STUCK? employs a group of language models, each specializing in different aspects of language processing.

“One model is designed to handle large contexts, another excels in translation, while another has exceptional proficiency in understanding Arabic,” explained Naga.

AI’s ability to quickly analyze massive datasets and generate content has already revolution-

ized whole sectors. However, there is still a catch. While AI is excellent at processing language, it often lacks the emotional intelligence and cultural depth that only humans can provide.

Arabic language models require specialized development to handle dialects, cultural contexts, and industry-specific terminology. This is especially crucial in regions where subtle differences in dialect, phrasing, or cultural references can dramatically change the meaning or tone of a message.

STUCK? was designed with these challenges in mind. The platform combines multiple AI models, each specialized in different areas such as translation or contextual understanding, to offer a comprehensive solution for creating and localizing content.

But what truly sets STUCK? apart is its ability to handle not just Modern Standard Arabic but also local and regional dialects, including Levantine, Egyptian, and those spoken within Saudi Arabia such as Najdi and Hijazi.

AI-generated content in English or any other widely spoken language has become more advanced over the years, but Arabic — especially its regional dialects — presents unique chal-

lenges. It has numerous dialects that vary not only by country but even within regions of a single nation.

For instance, the Arabic spoken in Riyadh differs from that spoken in Jeddah, which makes it difficult for standard language models to capture differences accurately. For industries operating in the Middle East, from healthcare and cultural heritage to oil and gas, accurate communication in the correct dialect can be the difference between success and failure.

But despite the technology’s sophistication, the team behind STUCK? recognize that AI alone cannot fully meet the demands of complex content creation. This is why the platform offers three service tiers — fully human, fully AI, and a blended approach that combines the two.

For routine tasks, AI or the blended model offers quick and efficient solutions. But for high-stakes projects that require a more refined touch — such as marketing campaigns or culturally sensitive communications — the human approach ensures that the content resonates with the target audience.





## Lebanon

**Capital:** Beirut

**Area:** 10,452 km<sup>2</sup>

**Official Language:** Arabic

**Currency:** Lebanese Pound (also known as Lebanese Lira)



Lebanon (officially: the Lebanese Republic) is an Arab country located in the Middle East, in western Asia. It is bordered by Syria to the north and east, occupied Palestine to the south, and the Mediterranean Sea to the west. The Lebanese pound (also known as Lebanese Lira) is the official currency of the country.

Historically, Lebanon has known a rich tapestry of civilizations that have traversed or occupied its lands, due to the country's central location between northern Europe, southern Arabia, eastern Asia, and Northern Africa. This geographical position is one of the main factors behind Lebanon's cultural diversity, but at the same time one of the causes that led to wars and conflicts during different periods of the country's history. The oldest evidence of human settlement and the emergence of civilization in Lebanon dates back more than 7,000 years.

In ancient times, the Phoenicians inhabited what is now Lebanon, along with parts of Syria and Palestine. They were Semitic people engaged primarily in navigation and trade, whose civilization flourished for nearly 2,500 years (from around 3000 to 539 BC). Several civilizations and peoples settled in Lebanon following the Phoenician era, including ancient Egyptians, Assyrians, Persians, Greeks, Romans, Byzantines, Arabs, Crusaders, Ottoman Turks, and French.

Lebanon's mountainous terrain, similar to much of the Levant, has shaped its climate and natural beauty, attracting tourists from neighboring countries, which has invigorated its economy. The Lebanese economy relies heavily on tourism and banking services, which together account for over 65% of the total GDP. Lebanon is known as being a Middle Eastern tourist hub.

As of July 2008, the estimated population of Lebanon was around 3,971,941. Phoenician was the first language spoken by the inhabitants of the regions that now constitute the Lebanese state. This was followed by the spread of Aramaic and Syriac, before Greek became widespread during the Hellenistic period that is at the time of Alexander the Great's conquest. Greek remained in use among the population for a relatively long time until the Islamic conquest of the Levant, when Arabic replaced it.

Most of Lebanon's territory is mountainous, except for the coastline and the Bekaa Valley. Two mountain ranges run through Lebanon from north to south: the Eastern Lebanon Mountain Range, which forms the eastern border with

Syria, and the Western Lebanon Mountain Range, which overlooks the Mediterranean Sea. "Qurnat as-Sawd", the summit of Jabal al Makmel, is the highest mountain peak in Western Asia. The Bekaa Valley separates these two mountain ranges. Lebanon is also home to rivers formed from melting snow, the most famous of which are the Litani River and the Orontes River.

The climate is cold, rainy, and Mediterranean in winter, and hot and humid in summer. In the mountains, winters are cold, with snowfall and temperatures dropping below zero, while summers are mild and low in humidity. Rainfall levels are high compared to the surrounding regions, except in the northeastern part, due to the western mountain range blocking rain from reaching that area.

Lebanon is famous for its cedar forests, a national symbol, which were once vast but have diminished over the ages due to logging and a lack of reforestation efforts, in addition to disease.

The Lebanese gained their independence in 1943, and all foreign troops were withdrawn in 1946.



## Enhancing Partnerships to Advance the OIC's Media Work

The General Secretariat of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) is keen on strengthening partnerships with OIC Member States and Institutions for the implementation of various programs and projects in vital fields of action that are of interest to the Organization. It aims to speed up the implementation of the resolutions issued by sectoral conferences, CFM meetings, and Islamic Summits.

The media projects and programs that the General Secretariat seeks to execute in partnership with Member States as well as with joint Islamic media work institutions are only examples of a vast array of projects, programs, conferences, and specialized forums that the OIC is working to implement in partnership with various States and Institutions. This is part of the OIC's efforts to follow up on the implementation of the OIC's decisions and resolutions in all its fields of action.

By concluding memorandums of understanding on media cooperation with media institutions, including news agencies in the Member States and other media outlets, the OIC is seeking to further publicize its work and efforts in addressing political, cultural, and humanitarian questions, women, youth, and elderly issues, economic affairs, science & technology, and media-related issues, among others.

In its efforts to contribute to the capacity-building of media institutions and journalists from Member States, the OIC sees a pressing need to organize training programs and workshops to implement the programs set out in the OIC Media Strategy to Combat Islamophobia. There is also a need to train journalists, especially young ones, on how to cover terrorist incidents through modern media, particularly social media platforms, based on the guidebook entitled: "Reporting Terrorist Incidents: Guidelines for Journalists", adopted by the Islamic Conference of Information Ministers and the OIC Council of Foreign Ministers.

The media, in fact, undertake a pivotal and leading role in making Muslim communities aware of the OIC's efforts and programs in the field, in the implementation of its ministerial resolutions aimed at serving the vital causes of the Ummah, first and foremost among which is the Palestinian Cause. The OIC is indeed striving to raise international awareness of the scale of the tragedy, crimes, and massive destruction that the Israeli occupation authorities continue to inflict on the Palestinian people.

In this context, the OIC is diligently working to publicize its efforts with regard to the Palestinian Cause through the "OIC Media Observatory on Israeli Crimes Against the Palestinians". This Observatory launched its work in January 2024 in the Information Department, in coordination with the Department of Palestine and Al-Quds Affairs. It was established in the implementation of Paragraph 10 of the Resolution issued by the Emergency Joint Arab-Islamic Summit, held in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, on November 11, 2023, to discuss the Israeli aggression against the Palestinian people. The Resolution called for the creation of a Media Monitoring Unit to document the Israeli occupation authorities' crimes against the Palestinian people and expose their illegal and inhumane practices through digital media platforms.

The OIC Media Observatory issues weekly reports exposing the crimes and massacres committed by Israel against the Palestinian people in Gaza, the West Bank, and Al-Quds. It also produces videos, infographics, and other illustrative materials about these crimes. All this media content is published on the Observatory's online platform, as well as on the OIC's website and social media platforms.

The OIC has already taken significant steps to develop the Observatory's work in light of the budget allocated to it. This will involve launching a mobile application for the Observatory, as well as enhancing media promotion for the Observatory's work and outputs on social media platforms in order to reach a larger audience; the ultimate aim being to raise international awareness and awaken global consciousness of the need to put an end to the Israeli occupation's ongoing crimes against the Palestinian people.

To further emphasize and highlight the OIC's efforts on social media platforms, the 15th Islamic Summit, held on May 4-5, 2024 in Banjul, The Gambia, called for directing attention, effort, and funds towards social media and supporting efforts in this regard. It also called for promoting the OIC's public diplomacy through the media, and implementing the aforementioned OIC media strategies.

Additionally, all of the OIC's initiatives and projects across various sectors are published in the OIC Journal, which is issued in the three official languages of the OIC. This significant and regular publication provides a comprehensive coverage of the OIC's activities, programs, initiatives, and partnerships. It serves as a reference document for the OIC personnel as well as for diplomats, researchers, and all those interested in the OIC's work.

The OIC's media work is a key and indispensable pillar to highlight the purposeful partnerships forged by the OIC. It also plays a crucial role in promoting effective initiatives and enhancing Islamic solidarity among Member States. Strengthening the OIC's media work actually requires strong and promising partnerships that need to be valued in order to further enhance the OIC's visibility in local and international media.



**Dr. Abdelhamid Salhi**

Editor-in-Chief of OIC  
Journal,  
Acting Director of Informa-  
tion Department

*The OIC's media work is a key and indispensable pillar to highlight the purposeful partnerships forged by the OIC. It also plays a crucial role in promoting effective initiatives and enhancing Islamic solidarity among Member States*



# About OIC

The Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) is the second largest inter-governmental organization after the United Nations with a membership of 57 states spread over four continents. The Organization is the collective voice of the Muslim world. It endeavors to safeguard and protect the interests of the Muslim world in the spirit of promoting international peace and harmony among various people of the world.

The Organization was established upon a decision of the historical summit which took place in Rabat, Kingdom of Morocco on 12th Rajab 1389 Hijra (25 September 1969) following the criminal arson of Al-Aqsa Mosque in occupied Jerusalem. In 1970 the first ever meeting of Islamic Conference of Foreign Minister (ICFM) was held in Jeddah which decided to establish a permanent secretariat in Jeddah headed by the organization's secretary general. H.E. Hissein Brahim Taha is the 12th Secretary General of the Organization. He assumed the position in November 2021.

The first OIC Charter was adopted by the 3rd ICFM Session held in 1972. The Charter laid down the objectives and principles of the organization and fundamental purposes to strengthen the solidarity and cooperation among the Member States. Over the last 40 years, the membership has grown from its founding members of 30 to 57 states. The Charter was amended to keep pace with the developments that have unraveled across the world. The present Charter of the OIC was adopted by the Eleventh Islamic Summit held in Dakar on 13-14 March 2008 to become the pillar of the OIC future Islamic action in line with the requirements of the 21st century.

The Organization has the singular honor to galvanize the Ummah into a unified body and have actively represented the Muslims by espousing all causes close to the hearts of over 1.5 billion Muslims of the world. The Organization has consultative and cooperative relations with the UN and other inter-governmental organizations to protect the vital interests of the Muslims and to work for the settlement of conflicts and disputes involving Member States. In safeguarding the true values of Islam and the Muslims, the organization has taken various steps to remove misperceptions and have strongly advocated elimination of discrimination against the Muslims in all forms and manifestations.

The Member States of the OIC face many challenges in the 21st century and to address those challenges, the third extraordinary session of the Islamic Summit held in Makkah in December 2005, laid down the blue print called the Ten-Year Program of Action. It has successfully concluded with the close of 2015. A successor programme for the next decade (2016-2025) has been adopted.

The new programme OIC-2025 is anchored in the provisions of the OIC Charter and focuses on 18 priority areas with 107 goals. The priority areas include issues of Peace and Security, Palestine and Al-Quds, Poverty Alleviation, Counter-terrorism, Investment and Finance, Food Security, Science and Technology, Climate Change and Sustainability, Moderation, Culture and Interfaith Harmony, Empowerment of Women, Joint Islamic Humanitarian Action, Human Rights and Good Governance, among others.

Among the OIC's key bodies: the Islamic Summit, the Council of Foreign Ministers (CFM), the General Secretariat, in addition to the Al-Quds Committee and three permanent committees concerned with science and technology, economy and trade, and information and culture. There are also specialized organs under the banner of the OIC including the Islamic Development Bank and the Islamic Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, as well as subsidiary and affiliate organs that play a vital role in boosting cooperation in various fields among the OIC member states.

*For more details, visit the OIC website at*  
**[www.oic-oci.org](http://www.oic-oci.org)**



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 Protecting the rights of Muslim minorities • Promoting science and Technology  
 Preserving Islamic heritage • Joint Islamic solidarity  
 Strengthening International relations • Achieving economic and trade development  
 Combating terrorism • Encouraging dialogue among cultures and religions  
 Boosting Economic and Trade cooperation



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