



The 3rd ISLAMIC CONFERENCE OF ENVIRONMENT MINISTERS

FINAL COMMUNIQUE

ISESCO headquarters, Rabat, Kingdom of Morocco,

29-30 October 2008

Final Communiqué

of the 3rd Islamic Conference of Environment Ministers

1. With the help of Allah, the Islamic Conference of Environment Ministers held its third session at ISESCO headquarters in Rabat, under the high patronage of His Majesty King Mohammed VI, Sovereign of the Kingdom of Morocco, over the period of 29th - 30th Shawal 1429 A.H., corresponding to 29th - 30th October 2008. The Conference was held under the slogan: **(Towards Mitigating the Impact of Climate Change in Islamic States)**.
2. The opening of the Conference was presided over by His Royal Highness Prince Turki bin Nasser bin Abdulaziz, the General President of Meteorology and Environment in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, President of the Second Islamic Conference of Environment Ministers and Chairman of the Islamic Executive Bureau for the Environment, in the presence of His Excellency Mr. Abdelaziz Meziane Belfkih, Advisor to His Majesty King Mohammed VI, His Excellency Dr. Abdulaziz Othman Altwaijri, the Director General of the Islamic Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization -ISESCO-, His Excellency Dr. Razley Mohamed Nordin, the Director General of the Department of Science and Technology at the Organization of the Islamic Conference, representing the OIC Secretary General, a host of Ministers in the government of the Kingdom of Morocco, representatives of Islamic, Arab and international organizations, Ambassadors of the Member States accredited to the Kingdom of Morocco, and a number of eminent personalities.
3. At the beginning of the opening session, verses from the Holy Quran were recited. Then, the Conference participants heard the royal message which His Majesty King Mohammed VI, the Sovereign of the Kingdom of Morocco, addressed to the Conference members and which was read out by His Excellency Mr. Abdelaziz Meziane Belfkih, Advisor to His Majesty the king. In this message, His Majesty expressed the pride of the Kingdom of Morocco in hosting ISESCO permanent headquarters. He also commended the Organization's achievements in the areas of its competence, as well as the efforts it has been exerting in the field of environment protection within the Islamic world, and in a global environment where ecosystems are undergoing major disruptions that seriously affect their balance and sustainability; which

this requires concerted efforts to address the serious environmental risks which constitute a considerable threat to the future of human existence.

His Majesty underscored the necessity to rise to these environmental challenges, particularly the phenomenon of climate change and its adverse effects on the future of development in Islamic countries and their food security. This calls for adopting a common position among these countries and joining in international efforts to effectively address global warming. In this regard, His Majesty pointed to Morocco's experience in water resources management which can inspire other Islamic countries.

Furthermore, the Moroccan Sovereign praised the role of the Islamic Conference of Environment Ministers in strengthening cooperation among Islamic countries in the area of the environment and sustainable development, while pointing out that the current session provides an opportunity to take stock of the progress made in the implementation of the Islamic action programme for sustainable development which was adopted by the first conference and agree on a common position regarding the various environmental issues placed on the agenda of this session. In this connection, His Majesty referred to the major issues that need to be addressed via joint Islamic action in the area of the environment, in particular water scarcity, and underlined the necessity to make a rational use of water resources. He also praised ISESCO's efforts in this connection and commended the fruitful cooperation between ISESCO and the Mohammed VI Foundation for the Protection of the Environment in various environmental areas.

In this respect, His Majesty underscored that the project of setting up the Islamic Environment Information Center is a positive initiative which will provide a technical and information instrument for monitoring and assessing environmental changes in the Islamic world and for defining the developmental priorities of Islamic countries.

His Majesty concluded his message by putting emphasis on the importance of harnessing technology transfer to encourage the use of renewable energy and achieve sustainable development, while expressing the hope that the resolutions and recommendations issued by this Conference would enhance joint Islamic action in the area of the environment.

4. Then, His Royal Highness Prince Turki bin Nasser bin Abdulaziz, the General President of Meteorology and Environment in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, President of the Second Islamic Conference of the Environment Ministers and Chairman of the Islamic Executive Bureau for the

Environment, delivered an address wherein he warned against the fact that humankind is now at an important, historic turning point in terms of its relations with its surrounding natural environment, stressing the necessity to accurately and profoundly examine Man's intervention in nature to define methods that would be safer for sustaining a good relationship between human societies and environmental and natural systems. In this regard, he called for drawing on the principles of our immaculate Islamic religion in the field of the environment as they constitute an inspiring framework for the civilizational values that can be easily integrated into effective and practical environment policies. Besides, he stated that the achievements made in the first and second sessions would establish the bases of cooperation among Member States in this field which has become now one of the vital areas that capture the attention of the international community. He also added that the world has grown aware of the danger lying in the degradation of the world environment and its adverse impact on human life on earth.

Moreover, His Royal Highness commended the achievements made in the 2nd Islamic Conference of Environment Ministers which was held in Jeddah in December 2006, notably the (**Jeddah Commitments for Sustainable Development**) which clearly defines the responsibilities of Member States regarding cooperation to protect the environment, as well as face up to natural disasters and address such problems resulting from climate change, desertification, and environment contamination which represents an imminent threat to humanity.

At the close of his address, Prince Turki bin Nasser called upon the Conference members to work towards consolidating the achievements made since the convening of the 1st Islamic Conference of Environment Ministers and strengthening cooperation ties between the Member States and ISESCO. He also praised ISESCO Director General, Dr. Abdulaziz Othman Altwaijri, who, together with his assistants have exerted relentless efforts "to raise ISESCO to the status of leading and credible organizations". Besides, he reaffirmed the continuing commitment of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia to support this Conference in its forthcoming sessions and to bolster ISESCO's efforts towards firmly establishing the structures adopted in the previous session as mechanisms to implement the resolutions made.

5. Afterwards, Dr. Abdulaziz Othman Altwaijri, the Director General of the Islamic Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization -ISESCO-, gave an address which he began by conveying his sincerest thanks and gratitude to His Majesty King Mohammed VI, the Sovereign of the Kingdom of Morocco,

for having honoured this Conference with his Royal patronage and addressed a message to the participants, and to the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques, King Abdullah bin Abdulaziz Al Saud, Sovereign of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, for devoting a generous financial support to ISESCO for the convening of this Conference.

His Excellency the Director General referred to the extremely important documents and resolutions issued by the two previous sessions of the Islamic Conference of Environment Ministers, particularly the **(Islamic Declaration on Sustainable Development)** and the **(Jeddah Commitments for Sustainable Development)** which institutes cooperation and partnership among the Member States in this vital field and, thus, translated accurately the Islamic Declaration on Sustainable Development into action. In addition, he emphasized ISESCO keenness to improve these attainments by drafting the **“General Framework for Sustainable Development in the Islamic World”** which is submitted to this Conference for discussion and adoption in order to serve as a sound action plan reinforcing the strategies ISESCO has already devised in other vital fields.

By the same token, the Director General underscored the necessity to deal with the issues of the environment with an all-inclusive, scientific approach that builds on the large international expertise, while pointing out that ISESCO’s orientations in this regard demonstrate its resolve to keep abreast of the latest international developments in environmental issues as well as its awareness about the organic relation between the environment, sustainable development and renewable energy as they complement each other in terms of science and technology and all of them have a direct impact on the life of human communities. This is further mirrored by the fact that the environment degradation automatically exacerbates the global food crisis. Building on these premises, the Conference is being held under the theme of “Towards Mitigating the Impact of Climate Change in Islamic States” along with the concurrent roundtable on Climate Change and its Impact on Islamic States.

At the close of his address, the Director General invited the Conference members **to consider the message of His Majesty King Mohammed VI as a reference document for their proceedings.** He also expressed his hope that the current session of the Islamic Conference of Environment Ministers would herald a new stage of the Islamic joint action towards the protection of the environment and the achievement of sustainable development in the Islamic world.

6. Then, His Excellency Dr. Razley Mohamed Nordin, Director General of the OIC Department of Science and Technology, read out the OIC Secretary General's address in which he stated that environmental degradation is now one of the most serious challenges for mankind and a real threat to Man's existence, especially with the exacerbated warming of the climate system and its attendant global average air and ocean temperature increases, and the widespread ice melting and sea level rise which result in the inundation of large land areas. He also pointed to the growing fears fuelled by the persistence of some governments of the world's wealthiest and most developed countries in pursuing policies that undermine the efforts of the international community to reduce the CO₂ emissions to the levels recommended by the Kyoto Protocol.

The Secretary General's address also mentioned that a number of OIC Member States are among the countries most vulnerable to global warming and environmental degradation. The fact that the large majority of the peoples of the Islamic world live in dire poverty has led to an overexploitation of natural resources, causing depletion of forestry, fisheries, water bodies and vegetation. The resulting effect is evident from incidence of heavy annual flooding, droughts and desertification, food shortage and natural disasters.

At the close of his address, the Secretary General expressed his firm belief that the current session of the Islamic Conference of Environment Ministers will give a fresh momentum to the endeavours made to address the environmental problems threatening the OIC Member States and will reflect, via its resolutions, the unified Islamic stance in this field.

7. Afterwards, the Conference members visited the exhibition on the environment issues in the Islamic world which was organized at the main hall of ISESCO permanent headquarters, and attended the reception given by ISESCO in their honour.
8. During the procedural session of the Conference adopted the Message of His Majesty King Mohammed VI as a reference document for its proceedings. Then, the draft agenda and the draft programme were adopted, and the Bureau of the third session was composed as follows:
 - **Chairman:** Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, His Royal Highness Prince Turki bin Nasser bin Abdulaziz, General President of Meteorology and Environment, President of the Second Islamic Conference of Environment Ministers.

- **Vice-chairmen:**
 - Sultanate of Brunei Darussalam
 - Kingdom of Morocco
 - Republic of Guinea
- **Rapporteur:** State of Qatar

9. During plenary sessions, the heads of participating delegations presented their reports on the efforts their governments exerted, under the Conference's fields of competence, in environmental systems protection and management to support sustainable development projects in their countries, and in harnessing available natural, material and technical resources as well as human and scientific potential to reduce climate change impacts on their countries, in line with the national policies and the vision of each state.

Taking note of the reports and statements of the heads of participating delegations, with regard to the environment and sustainable development, the conference called upon the competent authorities in the Member States to continue their efforts to implement the resolutions of the Islamic Conference of the Environment Ministers, in line with their priority needs and national policies.

10. The Director General of ISESCO presented his reports on the Organization's efforts in the fields of environmental protection, health and population education, as well as water resources management and renewable energies. In his presentation, he recounted some of the major achievements ISESCO made or contributed to making in these fields at the national, regional and international levels. He also highlighted a number of programmes and activities undertaken by the Organization between the second and third sessions of the conference. In this sense, the Director General explained that ISESCO has, for more than a quarter-century of existence, displayed deep awareness about the grave challenges posed in the field of the environment and how they adversely affect sustainable development in the Member States. He further noted that ISESCO, in its reference material, literature, sector-based strategies as well as specialised ministerial conferences and relevant activities, has been intent on strengthening mid and long-term strategic planning, with the view to produce common orientations and integrated policies as well as develop cooperative initiatives, and contribute consultative and exchange projects and programmes towards addressing environmental,

health and population problems that have for long affected the sustainability of national developmental projects in a large number of Member States. The aim has also been to strengthen water resources management and renewable energy development.

Inspired by the constructive nature of the Islamic perspective, ISESCO has been directly engaged in the global action on such issues, the Director General explained. He underlined that ISESCO, through appropriate counsel and necessary expertise, provides assistance to the Member States in achieving the sought objectives of development in an undamaged environment and favourable health and population conditions, as well as through effective management of water resources and optimal utilization of renewable energies. ISESCO builds its efforts in this area on key documents released in the previous two sessions of the conference, such as the (**Islamic Declaration on Sustainable Development**) and the (**Jeddah Commitments for Sustainable Development**), bringing its cooperative and coordination relations with Member States' competent authorities, parallel international organizations, as well as relevant NGOs and civil society institutions, to bear in implementing a variant number of programmes and activities on the environment for the benefit of the Member States.

The Director General underlined that thanks to the support of its Member States, and in line with the resolutions and documents issued by the two previous sessions of the conference as well as those that will be issued by the current session, ISESCO will seek to reinforce the achievements made in such fields as the promotion of sustainable use and management of natural resources; the investment of renewable energy; addressing natural disasters; fulfilling the roles of education for the service of sustainable development issues in the Member States, contribution to resolving the concerns related to the environment, health and population, in addition to awareness-raising about these issues for the development of society. He pointed to the ambitious orientations of the draft medium-term action plan for the years 2010-2018, which prioritizes the issues of the environment, health, population and sustainable development, among the subjects, issues and axes falling within ISESCO's scope of competence and interest.

11. The Conference adopted the report of the Director General on ISESCO efforts in the fields of Environment Protection, Health and Population Education, taking into consideration the observations made by the Conference members. It called upon the Director General to maintain the efforts exerted by the Organization in the fields of environment protection,

health and population education, in coordination and consultation with Member States and national, regional and international specialized bodies. Likewise, it laid emphasis on environmental awareness raising and participation of local community organizations and bodies active in the field of the environment, in view of their effective role in the preservation of the environment. Besides, the Conference invited the Director General to present a report on the efforts of ISESCO in the fields of environment protection, health and population education, to the forthcoming sessions of the Conference.

12. The Conference adopted the report of the Director General on ISESCO efforts in the field of Water Resources Management, taking into consideration the observations made by the Conference members. It called upon the Member States to further cooperation with the Organization so as to develop mechanisms for the management and preservation of water resources which constitute a human capital, improve the action of the relevant institutions and bodies, and facilitate the exchange of expertise and projects in that regard, in accordance with the contents and guidelines of the Strategy for Water Resources Management in Islamic countries and in line with the Member States' needs, priorities and general policies. Likewise, it called for expanding the scope of research on water resources and drought, in view of its importance for Islamic countries to which these two issues remain of major concern.

By the same token, the Conference invited the Director General to present a report on the Organization's efforts in the field of water resources management to the forthcoming sessions of the Conference.

13. The Conference adopted the report of the Director General on ISESCO efforts in the field of renewable energy, taking into consideration the observations made by the Conference members. It stressed the need to devote further attention to the issues of renewable energies, and to foster their utilization in the Member States in the vital fields and for development purposes. Furthermore, it encouraged wider use of alternative energies, with an emphasis on the natural energy of solar power, wind power and water power. The Conference also called for developing special awareness-raising programmes to reduce consumption of energy and to rationalize its industrial applications. Moreover, it invited the Director General to present a report on the Organization's efforts in the field of renewable energy to the forthcoming sessions of the Conference.

- 14. The Conference adopted the General Framework of Sustainable Development in the Islamic World**, taking into consideration the observations made by the Conference members. It called upon Member States to draw on the guidelines and contents of the General Framework of Sustainable Development in the Islamic World in shaping national policies and plans and in implementing relevant field projects and programmes. It also invited international and regional specialized institutions to cooperate with ISESCO in implementing the General Framework of Sustainable Development in the Islamic World in line with Member States' needs and priorities. Likewise, the Conference re-commissioned ISESCO with the implementation of the projects and programmes on sustainable development in the OIC Member States, as part of its plans and strategies, in its capacity as the Islamic body competent in the issues of the environment, water resources and renewable energy, as well as exploring the fields of cooperation and exchange of development-related information and programmes through the Islamic Environment Information Center.
- 15.** After the presentation made by ISESCO Director General on the Draft Programme on "Promotion of Renewable Energy in the Islamic Countries and its Implementation Mechanisms", the Conference made many observations concerning the situation of the renewable energy resources in the Islamic world and the methods of their use. It also floated a set of proposals to address the challenges facing the Member States in that field, and invited the Director General of ISESCO to implement them through programmes, activities and projects under ISESCO's action plan. In addition, the Conference members, in their interventions, expressed the need for the promotion of cooperation among Islamic countries to exert more pressure on the countries that produce CO₂ and those that cut the trees to refrain from doing that and to respect the relative multilateral agreement and conventions. Furthermore, the conference stressed the necessity to give special attention to the environment issues in the areas under occupation, as well as to the unjust control of energy sources and water resources and the grave encroachments on agricultural and forest areas, and natural vegetation in the occupied areas.

The Conference adopted the Draft Programme on "Promotion of Renewable Energy Resources in the Islamic Countries and its Implementation Mechanisms", taking into consideration the observations made by the Conference members. It called upon the Member States to develop national and regional strategies for the development of renewable energy as well as energy efficiency (EE) and preservation, in line with an all-inclusive approach integrating various sustainable development issues in the

implementation of relevant programmes and projects. Likewise, it urged the promotion of the setting up of institutional and regulatory points of reference; possibly leading to the adoption of a legal framework on renewable energies that will provide guidelines for relevant strategies and action plans and ensure coordination among concerned sectors. By the same token, the Conference proposed to establish incentive packages to encourage the development and widespread use of renewable energy sources, as well as provide relevant information, enhance education and communication on optimal utilization of renewable energy, and involve all segments of society in decision-making for effective prioritization of renewable energy development, while taking into account local needs and potential towards optimal utilization of resources in rural and remote areas.

It also called on the international community to monitor the uses of biofuel given their potential harm to food security, and recommended the establishment of relevant national and regional capacity building mechanisms, through developing training and R & D programmes and setting up centres of excellence as well as promoting networking and exchange of experiences and best practices. Furthermore, it urged to promote transfer of technology, knowledge and expertise at regional and sub-regional levels; as well as encourage utilization of research results and their adaptation to local needs. The Conference also called for devoting further attention to the issues related to chemical safety and renewable energy indicators system. Similarly, it encouraged the processing of solid waste, benefiting therefrom and development of waste recycling plants, while stressing the necessity to bury harmful waste in a secure and safe manner, and to ensure control of waste disposal methods, in accordance with the Basel Convention and the other relevant international conventions. In addition, the Conference called upon Member States to conclude bilateral agreements among the specialised parties concerned with the environment issues and promote their cooperation and partnership, as well as examine the establishment of an Islamic fund to support renewable energy researches and projects, and support the efforts of needy African states in the fields of renewable energy. It also invited the Director General to present a report in this regard to the forthcoming session of the conference.

16. The Conference adopted the report on the project of the Establishment of the Islamic Environment Information Center, taking into consideration the observations made by the Conference members. It extended thanks to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, represented by the General Presidency of Meteorology and Environment, for creating and hosting the Center and

providing the necessary working means to enable it to discharge its mission in the best conditions. Likewise, it called upon the relevant institutions to cooperate with the Center and provide it with necessary information, data and statistics in order to facilitate exchange of expertise and experience in this field. The Conference also invited the Director General to present a report in this regard to the forthcoming session of the Conference.

17. During discussion of the document on the Rules of Procedure of the Islamic Executive Bureau for Environment, the Conference members made a number of observations regarding the procedural and legal provisions in the document which will be taken into consideration in preparing the final version of the said document and submitting it to the forthcoming session of the Conference.

The Conference adopted the Draft Rules of Procedure of the Islamic Executive Bureau for Environment, taking into consideration the observations made by the Conference members.

18. **The Conference decided to compose the Islamic Executive Bureau for Environment, for a two-year term, as follows:**

- a. **Chairman:** His Royal Highness Prince Turki bin Nasser bin Abdulaziz.
- b. **Secretariat:** the Islamic Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization -ISESCO-.
- c. **Members:**

Arab Region:

- i. Tunisian Republic
- ii. Arab Republic of Egypt
- iii. Kingdom of Morocco

African Region:

- iv. Republic of Gabon
- v. Republic the Gambia
- vi. Republic of Mali

Asian Region:

- vii. Islamic Republic of Iran
- viii. Republic of Kazakhstan
- ix. Malaysia

19. The Conference decided to entrust the President of the Third Islamic Conference of Environment Ministers, Chairman of the Islamic Executive Bureau for Environment, and ISESCO Director General to coordinate with Member States and the OIC General Secretariat to fix the venue of the Fourth Session of the Islamic Conference of Environment Ministers, due in the second half of October 2010. It also extended thanks to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia for allocating a budget with an amount of US\$ 1.000.000 (one million US dollars) for the convening of each of the sessions of the Islamic Conference of Environment Ministers and the Islamic Executive Bureau for Environment.
20. The conference adopted the recommendations issued by the round-table held as part of the Conference on climate change and its impact on Islamic States.
21. At the close of its proceedings, the Conference decided to address message of thanks and gratitude to **His Majesty King Mohammed VI**, the Sovereign of the Kingdom of Morocco, as well as **to the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques, King Abdullah bin Abdulaziz Al Saud**, and **to His Royal Highness Crown Prince Sultan bin Abdulaziz Al Saud**, Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Defence and Aviation, and Inspector-General of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.