

Baku Declaration

Toward a Better Future for Children In Urban Settings in the Islamic World

We, the Heads of Delegation of the Member States taking part in the Fourth Islamic Conference of Ministers in Charge of Childhood held, **under the high patronage of H.E. Mr Ilham Aliyev, President of the Republic of Azerbaijan**, in Baku, on 11-12 November 2013,

Guided by the teachings of Islam, which advocate that children should receive due care and be granted their full rights; and that all children, girls and boys alike, do have the right to live in dignity and thrive to reach their full potential;

Reaffirming the "Covenant on the Rights of the Child in Islam", the "Declaration on the Rights and Care of the Child in Islam", the international "Convention on the Rights of the Child", the "United Nations Millennium Declaration", and the goals of "A World Fit for Children" document; and the resolutions of the United Nations and other international organizations on conflict settlement, without which child rights protection would not be possible;

Recalling the commitments made respectively in the "Rabat Declaration", issued by the First Islamic Conference of Ministers in Charge of Childhood, held in Rabat, Kingdom of Morocco, in November 2005; the "Khartoum Declaration", issued by the Second Conference of Ministers in Charge of Childhood, held in Khartoum, Republic of Sudan, in February 2009; and the "Tripoli Declaration", adopted by the Third Conference of Ministers in Charge of Childhood, held in Tripoli, Libya, in February 2011;

Expressing deep concern over the situation of children who have been exposed to death or displaced and forced to migrate internally and externally because of occupation, terrorism, wars and natural disasters in a number of Member States such as Palestine, Iraq, Syria, Somalia, and Azerbaijan's occupied province of Nagorno-Karabakh, while **being aware** of the need for greater solidarity among these Member States and the international community to improve the unacceptable conditions and plight of these children;

Thanking the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, the Republic of Turkey, the Republic of Iraq and the Republic of Lebanon for hosting Syrian refugees and for delivering the necessary

educational, social and humanitarian services to them, particularly through ensuring care, protection and appropriate living conditions for children.

Commending the outstanding efforts made by ISESCO General Directorate and the OIC General Secretariat in terms of child rights protection in the Member States and their fruitful cooperation with the relevant regional and international partners, with a view to ensuring the welfare, well being, protection and development of children in the Islamic world;

Convinced that meeting the myriad of challenges children face in an urbanized environments and obliterating the unacceptable inequities in the situation of children living in urban areas in the Islamic world requires adopting binding comprehensive child-centered legislation and operational programmes, upheld by measures aimed at ensuring their effective enforcement, follow-up and assessment;

Noting with great concern that the progress made in addressing these challenges still falls far short of expectations, while acknowledging Member States' notable achievements in this regard;

Recognizing poor urban children's right to live in dignity and aspire for a bright future like their well-to-do peers; and

Aiming to improve equal access to decent living conditions for urban children in the Islamic world, resolve to take the following directions:

In terms of legal and social protection of marginalized children in urban areas:

1. **Upgrade** the relevant policies, laws and programmes to prevent violence and abuse against children through the creation of an integrated national system to address the challenges facing marginalized children in urban areas more efficiently and strengthen national child protection institutions.
2. **Set up** development plans to prevent economic crises along with their associated negative impacts on the efforts aimed at improving the situation of children in rural and urban areas;
3. **Devise** well-articulated plans for protection interventions targeting marginalized children in urban areas, while developing pre-emptive remedial responses suitable for them, identifying those among them who are in need of special protection measuresm coordinating the response of governmental and non-governmental service providers in this regard to ensure better social and educational services, and developing alternative care and rehabilitation day-care services for children with disabilities.
4. **Build** awareness among parents and religious, educational, youth and women leaders of the different risks associated with neglect, abuse, violence and exploitation suffered by children in unplanned settlements in urban areas.

5. **Enable** local authorities to devise strategies and programmes of partnership with civil society organizations for the benefit of urban children, **ensure** the involvement of children in developing such programmes, and **carry out** follow-up to their implementation.
6. **Monitor** the health and nutritional status of the most needy children and urban poor at the household and community levels; and **enable** local authorities and municipalities to devise the necessary plans and programmes to meet education demands and address the needy children's needs in terms of health and nutrition, particularly through the **safety net** needed for meeting such needs.
7. **Strive** to make quality education accessible, in informal settlements, including poor urban areas, for the marginalized children who have yet to gain access to education because of poverty, social exclusion, disability or gender-based discrimination, by making more schools available in poor urban areas and endowing them with better resources and qualified teachers, while encouraging poor families, through cash and food incentives and tuition-fee exemptions, to enroll their children in the education system, given education's role as the best vehicle to deliver children from poverty and marginalization.
8. **Organize** national campaigns against the marriage of young girls in the Member States to raise awareness about its health, social and psychological risks and ensure the enforcement of international conventions, covenants and instruments on discrimination against girls.
9. **Reiterate** commitment to the Tripoli **Declaration on early childhood development (ECD)**, through adoption of pre-school and parenting programmes targeting the most vulnerable urban infants and slum children, in a bid to curb infant and child mortality rates.
10. **Adopt** strategies aimed at providing social and income support to poor families in order to improve the living conditions of young children in such families.

In terms of addressing the street children phenomenon:

11. **Build** stronger partnerships/networks between local authorities, NGOs, the media, and organizations concerned with child issues to address the street children phenomenon in a holistic manner.
12. **Devise** programmes and plans tailored to the needs of street children to help them reconnect with their families, community-based services and society in general, while providing family counselling services to prevent children from leaving home to the street, ensuring registration of children born to street dwellers as well as identifying their paternal filiation; and establishing mechanisms for early monitoring of children at risk at local level.

13. **Ensure** the enforcement of national laws and legislation to punish perpetrators of violence against children, while tightening sanctions against exploiters of vulnerable children in crimes, and aligning such legislation with international laws to decriminalize such survival behaviours of street children as begging, loitering, vagrancy and running away.
14. **Place** street children in apprenticeships, formal and non-formal, and give them access to evening classes to prevent their illegal employment in street-work and enhance their skills and future employability.
15. **Offer** training to those working with street children to gain the necessary skills to deal with this phenomenon in a more adequate manner.

In terms of the child labour phenomenon and relevant response measures:

16. **Embrace** the "Roadmap for Achieving The Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labour by 2016", adopted at the Hague Global Child Labour Conference (2010), and create jobs for children over fifteen.
17. **Assess** the impact of relevant policies on the worst forms of child labour, taking into account gender and age, put in place preventive and time-bound measures and ensure adequate financial resources for fighting the worst forms of child labour.
18. **Ensure** that all children have access to a quality basic education and are learning, at least to the minimum age of employment; and **establish** national social protection floors that enable families, regardless of their circumstances, to send their children to school and to keep them there even in times of hardship.
19. **Take** the necessary measures to protect young domestic workers against abusive working and employment conditions and to promote decent work for all workers, including through:
 - a. Challenging assumptions that child domestic workers are "like one of the family" and as such undertake their tasks for free;
 - b. Promoting the ratification and implementation of conventions No. 138 and No. 182 on the worst forms of child labour and Convention No. 189 concerning decent work for domestic workers; and
 - c. Paying attention to child migrants' vulnerability to abusive domestic work.
20. **Take** firm measures against exploitative child labour and forced begging in urban areas, through preemptive actions and other measures including withdrawal of children from hazardous situations, and rehabilitation of exploited children with the benefits of educational opportunities and vocational training programmes.

In terms of urban slum area rehabilitation towards a comprehensive child-friendly urban development:

- 21. Take** into account the interests and wellbeing of children in implementing policies and programmes in slum areas and informal settlements, especially through the creation of spaces where children can safely play, socialize, and develop their skills.
- 22. Develop** urban planning and management policies for improving low-income families housing to ensure decent living conditions for their children and prevent the emergence of slums.
- 23. Upgrade** national policies on rural-to-urban migration reduction to prevent the mushrooming of unplanned settlements in urban areas.
- 24. Improve** environmental habitability in slums and promote economically productive activities through the provision of basic infrastructure, especially water, in order to make housing in upgraded slums affordable to the urban poor and support informal enterprises run by poor slum-dwellers.
- 25. Encourage** collaboration between local authorities, civil society organizations and voluntary groups to actively participate in setting measures to provide good housing and adequate services for the families and children in urban informal settlements.
- 26. Make** greater investment in water, sanitation and hygiene services in informal settlement areas, while undertaking all associated technical operations necessary for the rehabilitation of urban settlements to provide a better environmental milieu for the children of such areas, by incorporating water point provision, latrine construction, pit emptying and solid waste management into informal settlements rehabilitation plans, and encouraging community-managed models of service delivery through partnerships with NGOs.
- 27. Welcome** the 'Child-Friendly Cities Initiative' (CFCI), which aims to create child-friendly cities by raising awareness about child rights among young people and adults, encouraging children's participation in decision-making processes and developing local child-specific budgets.
- 28. Encourage** child participation through the formation of "children councils" to make children's voices heard in local councils and make such councils as a channel for communication with local decision-makers, service providers and NGOs.

In terms of coordination and follow-up:

29. **Entrust** ISESCO with the responsibility of ensuring the follow-up to the implementation of this Declaration with the competent parties in the Member States, in coordination with the OIC General Secretariat and the Chair of the Conference; and maintaining its support for the Member States' efforts to honour their obligations and commitments towards children.
30. **Invite** ISESCO to enhance its cooperation with UNICEF for monitoring the situation of marginalized urban children, and improving the situation of children in general, in coordination with the Member States and the relevant international, Islamic and regional partners.
31. **Welcome** the establishment of the Family Affairs Department at the OIC General Secretariat, whose mission is devoted to the development of family issues in light of Islamic values and principles, and **encourage** the OIC Member States to support the Department and its activities and programmes towards childhood development.
32. **Commend** the humanitarian actions and programmes undertaken by the OIC General Secretariat towards the advancement of children, particularly those affected by natural disasters, abuses and conflicts, and orphans, through providing food, shelter, education and other necessary services, and supporting orphans.
33. **Underline** the importance of the OIC's involvement and cooperation with relevant stakeholders in the field of health, particularly with regard to the fourth and fifth Millennium Development Goals, namely child mortality reduction and maternal health improvement.
34. **Call on** the Member States to strengthen and keep targeted their efforts in terms of implementing the OIC Ten-Year Programme of Action concerning children in the Member States and achieving the Millennium Development Goals, as regards childhood development in the Member States, in general, and the programmes targeting mothers and children and those on poliomyelitis, in particular; and **sensitize** the competent parties to the need for improving children's health and psychological conditions and developing child-oriented educational and social services in the Islamic world to ensure children's balanced and full development.
35. **Call on** Member States to be actively engaged in the formulation of the 'Post-2015 Development Agenda', especially as regards children in general, and those marginalized among them, in particular.
36. **Acclaim** the valuable efforts of ISESCO Director General in favour of childhood in the Islamic world, **laud** the programmes and activities the Organization

conducts for the benefit of children in the Member States, and **invite** it to sustain such efforts under its action plans and relevant specialized strategies, in accordance with the resolutions, recommendations, and reference documents adopted by the sessions of the Islamic Conference of Ministers in Charge of Childhood.

37. Call upon the OIC General Secretariat and ISESCO General Directorate to submit this Declaration along with the Conference's resolutions to the OIC Council of Foreign Ministers and to the Islamic Summit Conference and to transmit them to the relevant Arab, Islamic and international organizations.

38. Thank the Republic of Azerbaijan, as represented by the State Committee for Family, Women and Children Affairs, for hosting this Fourth Islamic Conference of Ministers in Charge of Childhood and for providing the means and facilitations necessary to organize it in the best of conditions; and **express** the participants' gratitude for the kind hospitality accorded to them.