



Under the Patronage of the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques,
King Abdullah Bin Abdulaziz Al Saud,

**Extraordinary Session
of the Islamic Conference of Ministers
of Higher Education and Scientific Research**

Final Report

Riyadh, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia
6-7 Zulqidah 1432 A.H./ 4-5 October 2011 A.D.

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1. With the help of Allah, the Islamic Conference of Ministers of Higher Education and Scientific Research held its Extraordinary Session, under the patronage of the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques, King Abdullah Bin Abdulaziz Al Saud, in Riyadh, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, from 6 through 7 Zulqidah 1432 A.H., corresponding to 4-5 October 2011 A.D, with the participation of the Member States of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) and with the presence of a number of representatives of Islamic organizations.
2. The opening session of the Conference was presided over by HE Dr Khalid Al Ankary, the Minister of Higher Education in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, with the presence of HE Dr Abdulaziz Othman Altwaijri, the Director General of the Islamic Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (ISESCO), HE Dato' Seri Mohamed Khaled Nordin, the Minister of Higher Education in Malaysia and Chairman of the Conference's 5th Session, HE Ambassador Moez Bukhari, Assistant Secretary General of the OIC.
3. The opening session started with an address by the Ministry of Higher Education in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, HE Dr Khaled Al Ankary, wherein he conveyed to the participants the greetings of the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques, King Abdullah Bin Abdulaziz Al Saud, welcoming them to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. He stated that the conference presents an ample opportunity to find new mechanisms likely to help upgrade higher education institutions to global standards and contribute to speed up progress, which requires the Islamic world's countries to step up their efforts aimed at developing their universities, boosting enrolment rates, supporting their research centres and improving their output quality.

His Excellency explained that promoting knowledge and translating it into economic development are likely to transform society into a knowledge-based one that communicates easily and shares experiences and expertise with the rest of the world, thus acceding to the community of developed societies. He also stressed the Kingdom of Arabia's keen interest in contributing to the world's scientific output in all areas, through enhancing cooperation and developing partnerships between Saudi higher education

institutions and their peers around the world. This, he said, is particularly epitomized by King Abdullah Scholarship Programme which benefits more than 120,000 students who pursue their studies, under the Programme, in the universities of developed countries, in a bid to take advantage of the scientific progress of such countries.

4. Thereafter, HE Dr Abdulaziz Othman Altwaijri, the Director General of ISESCO, made an address which he started by expressing his gratitude and appreciation to the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques and to the government of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia for the generous support it extends to ISESCO and to all institutions operating in joint Islamic action, paying tribute to the Kingdom's unstinting efforts to entrench the foundations of the knowledge society and achieve comprehensive educational and scientific development, through the enhancement of the outstanding and crucial role of Saudi universities.

Similarly, Dr Altwaijri said that the document on **“Key Performance Indicators: Guidelines for Assessment, and Quality Enhancement for Universities in the Islamic World”**, which was submitted to this extraordinary session of the conference, is a unique reference document designed to achieve such a strategic goal, and invited the participants to devote due attention and consideration to it. The document, he added, needs to be utilized as a roadmap for advancing higher education and scientific research and developing universities at all levels to turn them into pools and incubators of the creative talents necessary for leading the struggle for development in the present and in the future. In the same vein, the Director General of ISESCO explained that the document, which is the fruit of a comprehensive rational diagnosis of the situation of universities in the Member States, has pointed out a set of facts which require that effective solutions be found to the complex problems faced by many university institutions. He also stressed that the revival of the Islamic world is conditional upon access to the knowledge society, and that the process of consolidating the foundations of the knowledge society starts from a genuine development of universities and improvement of their quality to international standards.

5. Afterwards, HE Dato' Seri Mohamed Khaled Nordin, Minister of Higher Education in Malaysia, Chairman of the 5th Session of the Islamic Conference of the Ministers of Higher Education and Scientific Research, made an address in which he reminded the participants of the good and encouraging outcome of the Conference's 5th session, held in Kuala Lumpur, in 2010, arguing that the said session provided an ample opportunity for the Member States to discuss the ways, visions and projects likely to foster the various roles of their higher education institutions, and expressing his confidence that the ministers of higher education and

scientific research will carry on, with the same resolve, their efforts to develop their countries respective higher education systems .

His Excellency then pointed out that the Malaysian experience in KPIs is clearly illustrated by the National Higher Education Strategic Plan, announced in 2007, which is centred on rating research universities, creating a higher education excellence centre and rating universities. He similarly stressed that the KPIs provided in the document are crucially important for materializing the OIC vision to contribute to at least 14% of the world's scientific output by 1441 A.H.

6. Then, HE Ambassador Moiz Bukhari, OIC Assistant Secretary General for Science and Technology, delivered the address of HE the OIC Secretary General, Prof. Ekmeleddin Ihsanoglu, wherein he pointed out the critical impact of higher education on socio-economic development of the OIC Member States, and its role in qualifying the Muslim youth to address the challenges of the 21st Century. He also stressed that achieving excellence in knowledge, research and innovation is imperative for the Islamic world to reclaim its rightful place in the international arena, arguing that improved living standards and direct socio-economic benefits for Muslim peoples will lead to greater awareness of the importance of learning, research and innovation, and will thus contribute to the promotion of a culture of knowledge, research and innovation.

The OIC Assistant Secretary General noted that the experts who prepared the KPIs document have sought to avoid the pitfalls of the already available mechanisms which focus narrowly on the mere ranking of universities.

He also emphasized that the effective utilization of the KPIs document for quality enhancement is the responsibility of every individual university, adding that enhanced cooperation, linkages and networking between higher education institutions in the Member States and the relevant OIC bodies will play a crucial role in the effective implementation of the KPIs.

7. After the official opening session, a procedural session was held during which the conference adopted its draft agenda and draft programme, and elected the Bureau of its extraordinary session as follows:
 - **Chairman:** Kingdom of Saudi Arabia
 - **Vice-chairmen:**
 - ❖ Sultanate of Brunei Darussalam,
 - ❖ Kingdom of Morocco,
 - ❖ Republic of Chad.
 - **Rapporteur:** Islamic Republic of Pakistan
8. The Director General of ISESCO made a brief presentation on the document on “**Key Performance Indicators: Guidelines for Assessment, and**

Quality Enhancement for Universities in the Islamic World". In his presentation, he made an overview of the different stages the document has gone through since 2005 when the 3rd Islamic Summit Conference, held in Makkah Al-Mukarramah, adopted a resolution on the OIC Ten-Year Programme of Action; through the sessions of the Islamic Conference of Ministers of Higher Education and Scientific Research, held in Kuwait (2006), Baku (2008) and Kuala Lumpur (2010); the 36th session of the OIC Council of Foreign Ministers, held in Damascus in 2009; and the two specialized experts meetings, held in Tehran (2007) and Riyadh (2010) to propose and discuss criteria, procedures and mechanisms for ranking universities in the Islamic world. ISESCO Director General then explained that the efforts deployed over such a cycle of conferences and meetings resulted in the drafting of the document submitted to this conference, which was prepared by higher education experts in their meeting held in Riyadh, in June 2011. He said that the document provides an adequate framework for evaluating higher education institutions in the Member States and improving their performance, and that improved quality and performance in higher education would help the Member States in the process of national building and securing the conditions of economic success.

9. In their discussions and observations, the Member States stated that the document's vision, objectives and content fits within their aspiration for a comprehensive practical guide for rating their universities. They also stressed that the KPIs, presented in the document, provide a balanced framework for evaluating and developing higher education systems and institutions in the Islamic countries, and that the document's approach to KPIs application constitutes a roadmap that is compatible with the process adopted by a great majority of countries for developing their higher education systems. They underlined that the majority of the mechanisms proposed for the follow-up of the implementation of the document's content are already being applied at national levels, and called for strengthening the special status of ethics in the Muslim communities and for incorporating observance of ethical principles in science and scientific research as an indicator of quality. Furthermore, they stressed the necessity of promoting partnerships and solidarity among the universities of the Islamic world through the provision of scholarships for students and faculty members of the less developed Member States at the universities of academically and financially advanced Member States, in such a way as to cope with the brain drain, and called for enhancing exchange at national, domestic, regional and international levels between universities, civil society institutions and international organizations, governmental and non-governmental alike. They also suggested the addition of some indicators, including those on the new ICT-based patterns of education such as e-learning, open learning, and virtual learning, and those concerning the

materialization of the social responsibility of universities, which should turn into an unwavering obligation towards the community; for establishing joint funds for financing scientific research projects involving more than one Member State; and for fostering the role of translation to give it a greater place in the universities of the Islamic world and to use it in internationally disseminating research works conducted in the Member States languages.

The Member States underscored the need to include in the KPIs document an explicit criterion on innovation, and to strengthen the role of technology faculties in such a criterion, and called for developing a mechanism to benefit from the Islamic world's experts working in Western institutions in the rating of universities. They also underlined the importance of providing comprehensive databases and utilizing them in measurement and evaluation, provided that internal assessment of university institutions be paralleled with external assessment through the establishment of an independent body to be entrusted with this mission. Furthermore, they requested that such criteria take account of gender equality in universities in terms of access to learning, scientific research and staff promotion.

Moreover, the Member States recommended that their university institutions implement a number of the proposed measures under each category of the KPIs, and called for establishing a governmental mechanism in each Member State to ensure the follow-up of universities' implementation of the criteria laid out in the document. They also proposed new measures in light of their own experiences, which may be highly beneficial if implemented with due consideration of the regional and Islamic specificities of the universities of the Islamic world. The Member States stressed the importance of the system of benchmarking as compared with the controversial approach of global ranking of universities, and recommended proposing indicators on the national systems of higher education as a whole instead of the mere focus on such indicators pertaining to individual universities. They also called for enhancing support for the Federation of the Universities of the Islamic World (FUIW), as well as for using the Federation's platform to strengthen networking and coordination among the universities of the Islamic World, and publishing guides to the best implementation practices.

- 10. The conference adopted the document on “Key Performance Indicators: Guidelines for Assessment, and Quality Enhancement for Universities in the Islamic World”**, decided to organize seminars and workshops to generate awareness about the KPIs document, and called upon the Member States to accord due priority to KPIs, urging them to facilitate their higher education quality assurance systems to bring excellence in university education and establish academic linkages to capitalize on scientific and technological innovation, quality and accreditation drivers in

attaining global educational excellence. The conference requested ISESCO and the OIC to organize regularly a high level Quality and Accreditation Experts Meeting consisting of Member States and the Islamic Organizations concerned to set up an appropriate mechanism for the follow up of the implementation of KPIs for valorizing scientific and technological innovation, global quality and accreditation in the universities of the Islamic world. The conference thanked the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia for hosting this extraordinary session, for the lavish hospitality and warm reception and for the support extended by the Ministry of Higher Education in the Kingdom in order to convene the Conference in the best conditions and to ensure its success. The conference also commended the contribution of the OIC and ISESCO to the preparation of the KPIs document and to the organization of the extraordinary session of the conference.

11. On the second day of the Conference, a Round Table on “**Strengthening Linkages in Higher Education Sector for Quality Assurance**”, chaired by HE Khaled Al-Sultan, President of King Fahd University for Petroleum and Minerals, was held in the morning to discuss the best practices and strategies for enhancing quality in the higher education institutions and universities of the Islamic world, the importance of accreditation and international recognition, together with their role in the overall development of higher education in the Islamic world, as well as to examine the vital linkage of higher education to the promotion of science, technology and innovation in the Islamic countries. The first speaker in this round table, Dr Javaid Laghari, Federal Minister and Chairperson of the Higher Education Commission in Pakistan, tackled the issue of developing linkages between academia for harnessing fruits of innovation in the Islamic world. He focused on the key economic indicators of some Islamic countries and their impact on higher education and scientific research. He also talked about the shifting role of higher education and scientific research, pointing out to the new challenges facing the Islamic countries in this area. At the close of his paper, Dr Laghari called for improving national innovation policies, developing curricula and learning facilities, promoting the use of ICTs, upgrading professional development centres, encouraging university-industry linkages, developing regional and international partnerships and the role of academia, transforming lab-scale research into commercial projects, providing the necessary funding through grants, contracts and venture capital, and promoting knowledge transfer through incubators, centers of innovation and entrepreneurship, and technology and science parks.

In his paper, Prof. Dr. Abdelaziz Berghout, Deputy Rector of the International Islamic University Malaysia, focused on global quality and higher education in the Islamic world, and called for enhancing cooperation between the universities of the Islamic world through memoranda of understanding and agreements on areas of exchanging quality assurance

models and best practices, based on specific systems of quality assessment. He recommended creating international institutional awards for the best universities proving respect of global quality standards, while taking interest in developing action plans and strategies to improve quality in the Islamic world.

For his part, Dr Ahmad Sengendo, Rector of the Islamic University in Uganda, presented a paper on accreditation and international recognition and education excellence in the Islamic world. In his paper, he addressed mainly the relationship between higher education and development and the need for closer linkages between higher education institutions at the national, regional and international levels, without compromising the Islamic civilizational and cultural values. He concluded to the need to formulate a definition of quality that fits within the Islamic world view, to provide sufficient financial resources for making the teaching-learning process effective, efficient and accessible to all social groups within the Muslim society, to establish regional centres of excellence and create synergies among them in terms of curricula development and strategic planning, and to encourage cooperation and exchange, while paying special attention to capacity building.

At the close of the round table, the participants called for developing policies oriented towards achieving scientific and technological innovation, total quality and accreditation in the Islamic world, and recommended paying due attention to such concepts in the universities of the Islamic world and setting the necessary steps for enhancing linkages in higher education in the Islamic world.

- 12.** At the close of the conference proceedings, the conference members expressed their thanks and appreciation to the King, government and people of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia for the Kingdom's hosting of this conference, for the lavish hospitality and warm reception, and for the facilities and support extended by the Ministry of Higher Education in the Kingdom in order to convene the Conference in the best conditions and to ensure its success. The Conference also decided to address a message of thanks and gratitude on this occasion to the Custodian of two Holy Mosques, King Abdullah Bin Abdulaziz Al Saud.