

Final Report of ISESCO's 8th General Conference

- 1- At the invitation of the Islamic Republic of Iran, and thanks to the generous hospitality of its esteemed government, the 8th General Conference of the Islamic Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization -ISESCO- convened, by the grace of Allah the Almighty, in Tehran, capital of the Islamic Republic of Iran, on 3-5 Zhul Qi'da 1424 A.H. (27-29 December 2003 A.D.). The proceedings of the Conference were attended by All Member States, with the exception of the representatives of the Republic of Indonesia, the Republic of Suriname, the Republic of Kyrgyzstan and the Federal Republic of Nigeria and by officials from Islamic, Arab and international organizations.
- 2- The Conference opened with the recitation of verses from the Holy Qur'an, followed by a reading of the Fatiha in memory of all the victims of the earthquake that struck at the town of Bam in the Islamic Republic of Iran.

The opening ceremony of the Conference was presided over by His Excellency Mohammad Khatami, President of the Islamic Republic of Iran, who delivered a profound and highly significant address. At the outset of this address, the President welcomed the convening of the 8th General Conference in the capital of his country, hailed the Islamic Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, and paid tribute to its Director General. His Excellency also highlighted the importance of future joint Islamic action in reviving the Islamic Ummah at the levels of civilization and knowledge and stressed the vital nature of the civilizational mission of ISESCO pointing out that the reliance and the emphasis on science is the new path Muslims should follow. His Excellency also pointed out that the Islamic world is going through a critical historical era and that we should, as the true holders of our own destiny, overcome our long-lasting underdevelopment. He also said that the extent of our (might) in this endeavor depends on the scope of our cognizance and called for promoting and advancing the level of knowledge and science in Islamic societies.

His Excellency the Iranian President underscored that being merely aware of the existence of sciences does not necessarily lead to scientific development. What is of more importance is paying greater heed to thought and raising the standard of theoretical background. He also said that scientific production originates from cultural vitality and creativity, which cannot be acquired from our forced submission to the obligations of the everyday life.

His Excellency added that in order to rebuild the Islamic world we need to reconstruct the cultural and educational edifice in such a way as to evolve on the appropriate grounds for the acquisition, production and creation of scientific knowledge. He said that for the cultural and educational reconstruction, we need to

heed the course of scientific development and to stress self revival, adding that the Islamic States can follow their own courses while preserving religious unity. He also stressed the need to create the proper environment for cultural and scientific fertility.

His Excellency the President, Mr. Mohammad Khatami, said that the Islamic world has presently become one of the main centers of international developments, and is consequently facing more than anyone else new complex questions and challenges.

The Iranian President expressed his confidence that ISESCO, in the light of its experience during two decades, is in a position to be one of the active institutions in this field, and to adopt appropriate policies and take relevant decisions in this connection, in such a way as to open new vistas before the Islamic States.

The Iranian President called upon ISESCO to channel its action in three effective directions in the Islamic world, namely increased interest in Internet-assisted distance education, promotion of education for all everywhere and in remote areas, consolidation of the bases of the Islamic world written culture, development of libraries and spreading the culture of reading for all, further interest in the civilizational heritage of the Islamic world and endeavors to ensure an active presence in the culture of sciences.

The Iranian President also invited ISESCO to grant importance to the Persian language which he described as the historical language of scientific and cultural creations and is broadly spoken in large parts of the Islamic world.

The address of His Excellency the President of the Republic of Iran left an excellent impression and had a strong impact on the Conference members and guests. That is why the Conference adopted his address as a working document and a beacon guiding its proceedings.

- 3- The floor was then taken by His Excellency Mr Khalid Alioua, Minister of Higher Education, Executive Staff Training and Scientific Research of the Kingdom of Morocco, and President of the 7th session of the General Conference. He described as a great honour for the participants His Excellency President Mohamed Khatami's decision to preside over the opening session of the General Conference in its 8th session. He also expressed heartfelt thanks and gratitude to His Excellency the President and to the government and brotherly people of the Islamic Republic of Iran for their lavish hospitality and warm welcome.

His Excellency pointed out that the fields of competence of the Islamic Organization, namely education, sciences, culture and communication, are the bridges to the future and the means of elevating our Islamic Ummah to a standing that befits the historical role it played in edifying the human civilization. He affirmed that the Islamic reference was strongly present in all the planning made by the Islamic Organization, this presence being part of the opening to and

interaction with modern reality without any deracination or alienation and without yielding to the standardization resulting from a bad and biased interpretation of globalization, and reducing mankind's human and cultural dimension to serve the Capital. This reference was well integrated in the Organization's plans being the extension, today, of our civilization roots towards the scientific and technological reference that represents our means of preparing the Ummah to take the place we aspire to in the future, and towards the human reference that the extension of the divine values and principles of righteous Islam in the human thought, to which we were among the outstanding contributors over history.

His Excellency indicated that the efficient way followed by the Islamic Organization to meet the challenges, particularly those that came to light with the dawn of the new millennium, is not strange for an Organization that is seeking to achieve the renaissance of the Islamic Ummah as an objective, the positive interaction with its Member States as a goal and blending Islamic authenticity with today's novelties as a tradition and rational management and administration as a methodology. This choice has conferred on it an elevated stature and gave it great credibility at the Islamic and international levels. He commended the Director General of the Islamic Organization, Dr. Abdulaziz Othman Altwaijri, for his successful endeavors and for the efforts exerted by his assistants to promote our Islamic Organization and consolidate its presence in the international arena, wishing him every success in attaining the ultimate objectives of the Islamic Organization.

- 4- The floor was then taken by Dr Abdelouahed Belakziz, Secretary General of the Organization of the Islamic Conference, who said that the political context in which the Conference is convened is completely different from the juncture during which the 7th General Conference was held, in Rabat, three years ago. Indeed, the fierce aggression which the Muslim world has been witnessing, since then, against the Islamic civilization is such that it is not similar, in any way, even to the Crusades which the world history witnessed in its darkest ages, or to the Western European invasion of the Muslim world during the past couple of centuries during which the colonial forces took hold of the majority of its parts and occupied almost all its lands.

In the same vein, Dr. Belakziz said that three years after the holding of the 7th General Conference of the Islamic Educational, it is possible for us to evaluate, in an objective and impartial way, the great achievements of this period and the major steps the Islamic Organization has been taking during the three-year interval between the 7th and 8th Sessions of the General Conference. He pointed out that these achievements are such that they have had a positive impact on the performance of the Islamic Organization, enabling it to open up to and maintain a fruitful contact with the educational, scientific and cultural organizations the world over, such as UNESCO. OIC Secretary General further said, in this regard, that it

would suffice to consider the joint projects between ISESCO and UNESCO for us to come to this realization. He also said that, given its experience and high expertise, ISESCO has certainly become a genuine mirror of the Islamic personality and identity of the Muslim world and, indeed, an indispensable reference for international institutions and for everyone interested in the Islamic civilization and culture.

The OIC Secretary General also commended the tremendous efforts exerted by the Director General of the Islamic Organization. These efforts are such that ISESCO, has now become a towering cultural edifice that firmly established the Islamic Arab culture as a main component in world's culture, reviving its heritage and disentangling it from backwardness and stagnation. He also called upon the General Conference to elect Dr. Abdulaziz Othman Altwaijri for another term of office as Director General to carry on his noble mission for the benefit of the Islamic Organization and its lofty civilizational mission.

- 5- The floor was taken then by His Excellency Dr. Abdulaziz Othman Altwaijri, Director General of the Islamic Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. He expressed his thanks, esteem and gratitude to His Excellency Mr. Mohammad Khatami, President of the Islamic Republic of Iran, for chairing the opening ceremony of the Conference, for the solicitous care and hospitality provided by his government and for guaranteeing all the conditions of success to this Conference. He prayed Allah the Almighty to bestow on His Excellency and his brothers the leaders of the Islamic world success in order to achieve progress and prosperity to our States, to our glorious Ummah and to humanity at large.

He added that if this Conference represented the Islamic world in terms of the fields of competence, duties and responsibilities entrusted to the Islamic Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, the nature of this historical period through which humanity was going placed on our shoulders new responsibilities that could only be appropriately discharged within the framework of cooperation and complementarity, coordination and exchange of interests and benefits.

His Excellency went on to say that the Islamic world was facing, today, a true historical turning point. In fact, it is struggling with development problems and their repercussions, facing globalization challenges and complications, rejecting false accusations and warding off tendentious campaigns. At the same time, it is endeavouring to improve its conditions and build up its entity amidst adverse international and regional circumstances, and within a global atmosphere mobilized against its vital interests, the stability of its societies, as well as against the security, sovereignty and territorial safety of its countries. The Islamic world cannot aspire to a high status in this atmosphere without efficient solidarity, beneficial cooperation, well-devised integration and precise coordination within the framework of joint Islamic action embodied in the Islamic Educational,

Scientific and Cultural Organization and in the other organizations and institutions of the Organization of the Islamic Conference.

His Excellency pointed out that the Islamic Organization managed, thanks to the policy of rationalized management of resources it follows, to implement during the three elapsed years and within the framework of its Three-Year Action Plan a large number of activities, programmes and projects. These covered the fields of education, science, culture, communication, cooperation, documentation, planning and information. They were carried out through organizing many training sessions and workshops, granting scholarships to male and female students from Member States and Muslim communities and minorities, extending financial and technical support to governmental and non-governmental educational, scientific and cultural institutions, and publishing books and studies dealing with its various fields of action. In the same vein, the Organization pursued the assigning of lecturers and experts to the universities and institutes of Member States and within Muslim communities and minorities.

As a conclusion, His Excellency expressed the General Directorate's resolve to pursue efforts to achieve the sought educational, scientific and cultural renaissance in the Member States in the framework of its 2004-2006 Three-Year Action Plan, reiterating his thanks and gratefulness to the President, government and People of the Islamic Republic of Iran.

- 6- The floor was then taken by Mr. Mohamed Abdallah Fares, Chairman of the Executive Council who expressed, on behalf of the Council members, deep grief and sorrow at the tragic catastrophe that hit the Iranian city of Bam, affirming the solidarity of the Executive Council with the families of the victims and beseeching Allah to pour down His mercy on them.

He reviewed the great achievements of the Islamic Organization during the elapsing three years, praising Dr Abdulaziz Othman Altwaijri, Director General of the Islamic Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization for his wisdom, knowledge, extensive experience and determination to move forward towards the implementation of the Organization's objectives. He expressed his happiness about the decision of the Executive Council to recommend to the General Conference the re-election of Dr Abdulaziz Othman Altwaijri at the head of the Islamic Organization for two new terms of office, in response to the resolution of the 10th Islamic Summit in this regard.

- 7- Then, in recognition by the Islamic Organization of the significant contributions of His Excellency Mr. Mohamed Khatami, President of the Islamic Republic of Iran, to step up joint Islamic action and promote dialogue among cultures and civilizations, Dr. Abdulaziz Othman Altwaijri offered ISESCO Shield to His Excellency. Likewise, and in a ceremonious atmosphere brimful with sentiments of friendliness, fraternity and gratitude, ISESCO Distinction Medals were awarded to

His Excellency Dr. Abdelouahed Belakziz, Secretary General of the Organization of the Islamic Conference, and His Excellency Mr. Khalid Alioua, Minister of Higher Education, Executive Staff Training and Scientific Research in the Kingdom of Morocco and President of the 7th session of the General Conference. Furthermore, and in recognition of their contributions to serve the educational, scientific and cultural issues in the Islamic world, ISESCO awarded its Medals to Mr. Mohammed Abdullah Fares, Chairman of the Executive Council of the Organization, Mr. Iba Der Thiam, Representative of the Republic of Senegal in the Council, Dr. Aboubacar Doukouré, Representative of the Republic of Burkina Faso in the Council, Dr. Abbas Sadri, Representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran in the Council, Mr. Jihad Ismael Qurrah Shouli, Representative of the State of Palestine in the Council, and Mr. Qadi Raqibuddine, delegate of the Republic of Bangladesh and former Chairman of the Executive Council.

Furthermore, ISESCO Prize to non-governmental institutions working in the field of literacy for the year 2003 was awarded to the Literacy Organization '*Mukafahat Al Umiyya*' in the Islamic Republic of Iran in recognition of its efforts in the fields of girls' education. ISESCO also presented merit awards to many artists, intellectuals and talented students from the Islamic Republic of Iran.

Thereafter, children from the Islamic world residing in the Islamic Republic of Iran presented a brilliant musical performance.

- 8- The Bureau of the General Conference convened within the framework of a procedural session during which the credentials and delegations' list were examined and adopted.
- 9- At the start of the first working session, and in a bid to enlarge the scope of cooperation with organizations and institutions working in the fields of competence of the Islamic Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, Dr Abdulaziz Othman Altwaijri, ISESCO's Director General, and Sheikh Mahmoud Iraqi, Chairman of the League of Islamic Culture and Relations in the Islamic Republic of Iran, signed a cooperation agreement between the two organizations and providing for a number of activities which will be implemented in the fields of education, science, culture and communication during the three-year period of 2004-2006. Dr Altwaijri also signed with Dr Khalid Al Ankary, Minister of Higher Education of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia a memorandum of understanding regarding the grant extended by the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia in support of the educational, scientific and Cultural institutions in the Republic of Iraq. By virtue of this memorandum, the Islamic Organization will allocate a number of activities and programmes within its 2004-2006 Three-Year Action Plan for the re-opening of educational, scientific and cultural institutions in the Republic of Iraq.

- 10- The Conference discussed the draft Agenda and the draft Programme. Following the deliberations, the two draft documents were adopted with the appended version.

The Conference constituted its Bureau as follows:

- **President of the Conference:** The Islamic Republic of Iran
- **Vice-Presidents:**
 - 1- The Syrian Arab Republic
 - 2- The Republic of Cote d'Ivoire
 - 3- The People's Republic of Bangladesh
- **General Rapporteur:** The Kingdom of Morocco.
- **Chairman of the Programmes Committee:** Sultanate of Brunei Darussalam
- **Chairman of the Administrative, Financial and Legal Affairs Committee:** The State of Qatar.

- 11- Then, the floor was taken by His Excellency Dr. Morteza Haji, Minister of Education in the Islamic Republic of Iran and President of the 8th General Conference of the Islamic Organization. He thanked the Conference members for their trust and for choosing him president of the 8th General Conference of the Islamic Organization, committing himself to carry on action to fulfill the Organization's objectives. He also underlined the need to enlarge knowledge in the Member-States by developing curricula and generalize schooling so that Islamic societies are empowered to enter the age of information and communication. He also urged for consolidating the relations of cooperation and exchange of experiences among Member States.

- 12- After that, a number of heads of delegations delivered addresses wherein they offered their condolences and expressed their sympathy with His Excellency President Mohamed Khatami, the Iranian government and people following the earthquake that jolted the city of Bam. They also prayed the Almighty to bless the soul of victims and grant prompt recovery to those injured. In their addresses, they also praised the achievements of the Islamic Organization and underscored its civilizational role and the responsibility it will carry in the educational, scientific, cultural and communication fields in the coming phase. They praised the outstanding role of its Director General Abdulaziz Othman Altwaijri, and voiced their support for the re-election of Dr. Altwaijri as Director General of the Organization for a six-year term of office. The addresses of the heads of delegations comprised wise orientations and important recommendations and proposals likely to enhance the capabilities of the Islamic Organization and provide it with more working means to achieve its sought objectives.

The Conference called upon the Islamic Organization to take account of these orientations and recommendations, as much as possible, when devising its

programmes and activities in accordance with the adopted plans and within the limit of the available resources.

- 13-** In the beginning of the second working session, Mr. Mohamed Abdullah Fares, Chairman of the Executive Council, presented the Council's report on its activities in the period running between the 7th and 8th sessions of the General Conference. In his presentation, Mr. Fares reviewed the major themes addressed by the Executive Council in the last three-years. In this connection, he referred to the Director General's reports on the implemented programmes and activities, the related Financial Reports, the reports on Member States' Contributions to the Organization's Budget, the Financial Control Committee and the audit company reports, the amended Internal Regulations, the Procedure of the Executive Council Activities and establishment of ISESCO's regional offices in Sharjah and Tehran. Other documents reviewed by Mr. Fares included the programme for the consolidation of culture of peace in Africa, ISESCO's Perception of the Ways of Interacting with the World Changes in its 2001-2003 Action Plan, as well as the draft three-year Action Plan and Budget for 2004-2006. He also reviewed the reports on ISESCO's efforts to support the educational, scientific and cultural institutions in Al-Quds Al-Sharif, in Palestine, in Bosnia-Herzegovina and in Somalia for the years 2001-2003, and the Director General's report on the construction of the Organization's permanent headquarters. The Chairman of the Executive Council praised the General Directorate for its efforts in carrying out the largest possible number of activities of varying contents and methodology, expanding the fields of cooperation with international organizations and with Arab and Islamic institutions and collecting the financial arrears of Member States. He also underscored the Member States' unanimity in commending the high competence and excellent performance of Dr. Abdulaziz Othman Altwaijri in the management of the Organization and in spreading its radiance at the Islamic and international arena. He also recalled the decision adopted by the 10th Islamic Summit Conference (Putrajaya, Malaysia, 16-18 October 2003) calling upon the General Conference to re-elect Dr. Abdulaziz Othman Altwaijri Director General for a six-year term of office, and the Executive Council's recommendation to the General Conference to re-elect Dr. Abdulaziz Othman Altwaijri, Director General of the Organization for two terms of three years each.
- 14-** The Conference took note of the report of the Executive Council on the activities of the Council between the 7th and 8th sessions of the General Conference, praising the Chairman and members of the Executive Council for their efforts and for the sustained support provided to the Organization during the implementation of the Three-Year Action Plan for 2001-2003.
- 15-** Then, the Director General presented his report on the Islamic Organization's activities between the 7th and 8th sessions of the General Conference where he stated that consideration was taken of the decisions and recommendations

adopted by the General Conference and the Executive Council, related to the identification of priorities in the Organization's action in order to achieve the sought development in the educational, scientific and cultural fields in favour of Member States and Islamic communities. Inspiration was also taken from the strategic orientations of the 2001-2009 Medium-Term Plan and the objectives of the 2001-2003 Three-Year Action Plan.

Given the international events and challenges that marked the period covered by the 2001-2003 Action Plan and that sought to undermine Islam and Muslims as a faith and a culture, the Director General pointed out that out of 1.235 activities scheduled, 994 were implemented, being a rate of 80.5%. These activities covered the fields of education, culture, science, communication, documentation, planning and information, along with the fields of external relations and cooperation, and in areas of action for the benefit of Al-Quds Al-Sharif and Sarajevo as well as support to the National Commissions.

His Excellency stressed that the education activities covered the fields of Islamic education, teaching Arabic and the languages of Muslim peoples, literacy programmes meant to immunize the Islamic identity, human resource training, modernizing curricula in order to keep abreast with requirements of comprehensive development, with technological innovations and international events and incorporating the concepts of justice, peace, environment, health and population from an Islamic perspective into the curricula.

The Director General went on to say that as part of its increased interest in the scientific field, the Organization sought through these activities to contribute to efforts meant to bridge the scientific gap existing between Islamic societies and the scientifically and technologically-advanced ones and keep abreast with scientific and technological evolutions. These activities focused on developing human resources from a scientific and technological points of view, improve their productivity effectiveness, modernize education curricula, benefit from the results of scientific research and technological evolutions in the preservation of environment and rational management of natural resources, prepare and translate studies and guidebooks in the fields of environment protection and optimal utilization of natural resources and extend scholarships to students from the Member States to continue their studies in different scientific subjects.

As far as culture and communication are concerned, the Director General underlined that activities in these fields were geared to preserve the Islamic civilizational heritage, highlight its values and development and civilizational dimensions as well as the human and civilizational leaderships of the Islamic faith and culture, rectify the negative stereotypes about Islam and Muslims, consolidate the values of dialogue and peace, develop the cultural administrations and industries, improve the productivity of Islamic women, address children issues, activate cultural exchange mechanisms among Muslims and develop

Islamic cultural action in the West by devising executive plans and creating representative councils to carry out the objectives and outlines spelled out in the Strategy of Islamic Cultural Action in the West and the Strategy for Benefiting from Migrant Muslim Brains in the West.

He underlined that the Organization had been furthermore keen on developing the quality and quantity of cooperation programmes with Islamic, Arab and international organizations, with the aim of consolidating cooperation, rationalizing expenditures and benefiting from expertise, in the respect of its constant principles. Thus, ISESCO expanded its base of cooperation with Arab, Islamic and international bodies and donor institutions and concluded in this regard 127 agreements, which confirms the cooperating parties' trust, interest and respect of its commitments.

- 16-** The General Conference then adopted the Director General's report on the Organization's activities between the 7th and 8th sessions of the General Conference, expressing satisfaction about the excellent performance of ISESCO, and calling upon Member States to support it by settling their contributions and arrears to the Organization's budget, and commending the initiatives taken by the Director General to hold specialized Islamic Conferences and partake in sponsoring and organizing regional and international conferences pertaining to the Organization's fields of action. It also conveyed thanks to the Director General and his assistants for their efforts in implementing the largest number of the programmes contained in the Plan and budget of the years 2001-2003, while keeping in mind the need to rationalize expenses.
- 17-** At the beginning of the third working session, the Director General presented a report on the programmes and activities carried out in the 2001-2003 period for the benefit of the city of Al-Quds Al-Sharif to preserve its Islamic identity against obliteration and Judaization, highlighting the keen interest taken by the Islamic Organization in the education of categories with special needs and the protection of Islamic manuscripts and historical landmarks in this city. In this context, several training sessions and workshops were held for education staff and technical and material support was extended to educational, scientific and cultural institutions in Al-Quds Al-Sharif for the publication of books and documentary films to publicize the civilizational heritage of Al-Quds Al-Sharif. In the same vein, ISESCO held several conferences to denounce the Israeli tyranny and raise awareness on the dangers that these practices entail on the Palestinian people and on its Islamic and human heritage. The Director General furthermore pointed out to the Islamic Organization's attempts to involve Arab, Islamic and international organizations in financing these activities and programmes, given the limited annual funds available.

- 18-** The General Conference adopted the report presented by the Director General on the Islamic Organization's efforts to safeguard the Islamic identity of Al-Quds Al-Sharif against obliteration and Judaization, and approved the decision of the Executive Council in its 24th Session in this regard. It condemned Israel's aggressions, desecration of Islamic sanctities and destruction of the educational, scientific and cultural institutions in Al-Quds Al-Sharif, and reaffirmed that Al Quds Al Sharif is the capital of the independent State of Palestine. It also appealed to the Director General to continue the implementation of programmes and activities geared to preserve the cultural identity of the city and its civilizational landmarks. The Conference reiterated its previous resolutions related to the status of the city of Al-Quds Al-Sharif. It called upon the Member States to grant Al Quds Al Sharif extreme priority status in international fora in a bid to safeguard its identity and lend support to its national Palestinian institutions. The Conference thanked the Director General for the good implementation of its resolutions related to Al-Quds Al-Sharif and for his efforts and initiatives in this connection.
- 19-** The Director General then proceeded to present his report on ISESCO's role in supporting the educational, scientific and cultural institutions in Palestine during the period running between 2001 and 2003. He pointed out that the Islamic Organization has carried out, in close coordination with the Palestinian National Commission for Education, Culture and Sciences and based on the priorities set by the educational, cultural and social institutions in Palestine, a series of training sessions and workshops. It also extended to these institutions material and technical support to consolidate their technical capacities, and convened in 2003, an international symposium to document Israel's war crimes, a symposium that called for setting up an international observatory to document the Israeli war crimes. It also published a book entitled: "*Jenin Camp: a testimony to Israeli war crimes*" in the Organization's three working languages, and granted 21 scholarships for Palestinian students in various scientific subjects.
- 20-** The General Conference adopted the document on ISESCO's role in supporting the educational, scientific and cultural institutions in Palestine taking into account the Conference members' observations and remarks and approved the relevant decision of the Executive Council in its 24th Session. The Conference condemned the ruthless Israeli aggressions against the educational, scientific and cultural institutions, cities and villages in Palestine and the siege and vexation of its innocent citizens and issued a statement thereon. It also urged for putting an end to the settlement activities, the building of the isolation wall, and to the Israeli practices and measures that run counter to the international legitimacy. An appeal was also launched for banning these measures and for dismantling the Israeli settlements in accordance with the relevant Security Council resolutions. The General Conference appealed to the General Directorate to intensify its efforts to support the educational, scientific and cultural institutions in Palestine

and give them the priority in the 2004-2006 Action Plan programmes, recalling the previous resolutions taken by the General Conference and the Executive Council in this connection. It also thanked the Director General for his sustained efforts to back up the educational, scientific and cultural institutions in Palestine.

- 21- The Director General further presented a report on ISESCO's role in supporting the educational, scientific and cultural institutions in Bosnia-Herzegovina during the 2001-2003 period, stressing that the Islamic Organization has focused its efforts on the city of Sarajevo within the framework of the special Sarajevo Unit and has been granting utmost importance to the preservation of the Islamic heritage, the teaching of Islamic education and of Arabic language and the education of categories with special needs. In this context, reference books and school manuals were devised, translated and published and the meanings of the Holy Qur'an were translated into Bosnian and published in Braille. Furthermore, several information institutions were extended support, teachers of Islamic education and Arabic language continued to be assigned to Islamic educational institutions in Sarajevo and Bosnian students received scholarships to carry on their studies in various scientific subjects.

The Director General expressed thanks to the World Islamic Call Society and to the World Islamic Charitable Association for their distinguished cooperation with the Islamic Organization in carrying out these activities.

- 22- The General Conference adopted the document on the role of ISESCO in supporting the educational, scientific and cultural institutions in Bosnia and Herzegovina during the years 2001-2003. The Conference approved the decision of the Executive Council in this regard. It reaffirmed the resolutions taken by the previous sessions of the Conference in this regard and thanked the Director General for the efficient implementation of these resolutions.
- 23- The Director General then presented his report on the role of ISESCO in supporting the educational, scientific and cultural institutions in Somalia between 2001 and 2003. He underscored the programmes and activities implemented in the fields of training, enhancement of skills, education and administration as well as technical and financial assistance provided to the Somali National Commission and to the Ministry of Higher Education of Somalia and relating to the assigning of Arabic and Islamic Education teachers to Mogadishu University, Somalian schools and to Somalian refugees in Djibouti.
- 24- The General Conference adopted the document on the role of ISESCO in supporting the educational, scientific and cultural institutions in Somalia during the years 2001-2003. It adopted the decision of the Executive Council in its 24th Session and reaffirmed the resolutions and decisions adopted by the previous

sessions of the Conference and the Council in this regard and thanked the Director General for the efficient implementation of these resolutions.

- 25- The Director General presented a document on ISESCO's Perception of the Ways of Interacting with the World Changes within the framework of its 2001-2003 Action Plan, pointing out that in drafting this document, the General Directorate strove to adhere to the general orientations of the Cultural Strategy of the Islamic World, the Strategy of Islamic Cultural Action in the West and the Strategy of Benefiting from Migrant Brains, pointing out that the general bases of the Islamic Organization's way of interacting with the world changes may be considered as a continuity of these elements of reference and even as the extension of their contents and orientations. This applies most particularly to the issue of the image of Islam and Muslims in the West, the means of redressing this image and the means of fending off the vicious assault waged against the Islamic world at all fronts.

The document focused on the impact and repercussions of the current international juncture on Islamic societies, on the importance of the identity dimension and its role in dealing with their repercussions, and the need to use more efficient and modern methods that are compatible with the western institutional system, and to ensure the positive exploitation of the Islamic presence and the demographic and societal weight of Muslim communities outside the Islamic world. The Director General underlined that interacting with the world changes requires rigorous planning and an all-encompassing conception, as well as the combination of all fields of action of the Organization's strategies and plans, and the enhancement of cooperation and partnership with international and regional organizations. He indicated that the Organization will carry on its endeavors during the coming three year Action Plan for 2004-2006 and its programmes aimed at redressing the image of Islam, encouraging the dialogue of cultures, and consolidating the culture of justice and peace.

- 26- The General Conference adopted the document on ISESCO's Perception of the Ways of Interacting with International Changes, within its Action Plan for 2001-2003, taking into account the observations and proposals put forward by the Conference members. It invited the Director General to implement annual activities related to ways of interacting with the world changes, as part of the 2004-2006 Action Plan and thanked the Director General and his assistants for preparing the document.
- 27- The Director General presented his report on the evaluation of the action of the Islamic Organization between the years 2001-2003. He pointed out that notwithstanding the great number of activities scheduled within the three previous years, which reached 1,235 activities; this number did not reflect all the programmes and activities contained in the 2001-2003 Three-Year Action Plan.

He attributed this fact to the great ambition of this Plan on the one hand, and to the non-disbursement of the full contributions of Member States on the other. The activities implemented within the current Action Plan totaled 849 activities from the overall activities scheduled. He pointed out that the rate of implementation could have been higher if sufficient financial resources were available, if the cooperating and hosting parties abided by their commitments, and if some activities were not suspended on account of circumstances on the site of implementation.

Regarding the qualitative evaluation, the General Directorate endeavored to consolidate the evaluation approach with the aim of improving performance, and achieving the sought objectives. The Organization pursued the study of the actual impact of its field activities to gauge the judiciousness of its choices, the relevance of these activities' contents to the needs and novelties, and the appropriateness of implementation methods. Evaluation was conducted on the basis of the data obtained from the questionnaires sent to the beneficiaries and to the National Commissions on the one hand, and of reports drawn-up by the supervising experts on the other.

After reviewing the results of the evaluation of the activities and programmes implemented within the foregoing action plan, he touched on the activities that the Organization could not implement and the problems it encountered.

- 28-** The Conference decided to adopt the evaluation of the Organization's action contained in the document relating to the report of the Director General on the evaluation of the action of the Islamic Organization between 2001 and 2003, taking into account the observations made at the esteemed Conference. The Council also commended the efforts exerted by the Director General and his assistants with a view to developing the evaluation methods of the Organization's action and invited him to continue in improving the internal and external evaluation mechanisms, in such a way as to enhance the Organization's performance. It also called upon Member States to be more responsive to the external evaluation operations conducted by the Organization as part of the implementation of the Action Plan's programmes and activities and invited the Director General to submit to all the General Conference sessions a report on the evaluation of the Organization's action on a periodical basis.
- 29-** Regarding the role of the Islamic Organization in supporting the educational, scientific and cultural institutions in Afghanistan, the Conference followed a presentation made by the representative of the Transitional Islamic State of Afghanistan on the educational, scientific and cultural needs and priorities in Afghanistan following years of war and hardships.
- 30-** After deliberations, the Conference adopted the decision of the Executive Council in its 24th Session pertaining to the support of the educational, scientific and

cultural institutions in Afghanistan, and tasked the General Directorate with the preparation of a special programme of comprehensive support to these institutions in Afghanistan in the fields of competence of ISECO and within the framework of the 2004-2006 Action Plan and budget, in cooperation with the Islamic Transitional State of Afghanistan. It invited the General Directorate to allocate further support to the Government of Afghanistan, in the fields of competence of the Organization and within the framework of the ISESCO's Three-Year Action Plan and Budget for 2004-2006. It urged the Member States in the Islamic Organization and governmental and non-governmental organizations in the Islamic world to contribute to providing urgent assistance to educational, scientific, cultural, communication and information institutions in Afghanistan, requesting, by the same token, the General Directorate to submit a report in this connection to the General Conference.

- 31-** Regarding the project of setting up an Islamic Youth Parliament, Dr. Morteza Haji, Minister of Education in the government of the Islamic Republic of Iran, and President of the 8th General Conference, brought to the attention of the Conference Members the proposal of the Islamic Republic of Iran on the creation of an Islamic Youth Parliament. He stated that the project seeks to foster deep understanding and acquaintance among youth in the Islamic world and contribute to laying down the foundations of democracy in their countries. He likewise pointed out that the competent authority in the Islamic Republic of Iran will undertake to prepare documents pertaining to the project in collaboration with the Islamic Organization.
- 32-** After deliberations, the Conference invited the Director General to examine the issue with the competent authorities in the Islamic Republic of Iran and with Member States and also adopted the decision taken in this connection by the 24th session of the Executive Council.
- 33-** Regarding ISESCO's role in supporting the educational, scientific and cultural institutions in Iraq, the General Conference followed to a report presented by the delegate of the Republic of Iraq, where he gave an overview on the educational situation in Iraq and needed educational plans, based on enlightened Islamic education. He welcomed the Islamic Organization as a partner in supporting the educational system in Iraq and dealing with its current cultural difficult conditions.
- 34-** After discussions, the General Conference invited the General Directorate to draw up a special plan for a comprehensive support to the educational, scientific and cultural institutions in Iraq within ISESCO's fields of competence, and within the framework of its 2004-2006 three-year Action Plan and Budget, particularly with regards to educational, scientific and cultural institutions. It also urged ISESCO's Member-States and the Islamic world governmental and non-governmental

organizations to extend urgent support to the institutions of education, science, culture, information and communication in Iraq. It further invited the Director General to present a report on the implementation of programmes and activities allocated to Iraq to the forthcoming sessions of the Executive Council and the General Conference and decided to exempt Iraq from paying its contribution to the Budget for year 2004, due to the difficult conditions experienced by the people of Iraq.

- 35- Regarding the role of ISESCO in preserving the cultural and national identity of the occupied Arab Syrian Golan Heights, the General Conference condemned Israel's occupation thereof. It also underlined the need to endeavor to put an end to this colonization in accordance with international legitimacy. It also condemned the Israeli aggressive threats leveled against the Syrian Arab Republic and the U.S. Accountability Act targetting Syria. The Conference further called the General Directorate to allocate, within its 2004-2006 Plan, programmes geared to preserve the cultural and national identity of the population of the occupied Syrian Golan Heights. The General Conference also invited the General Directorate to pursue its efforts to include this issue in the various coordination meetings held by the Organization as part of its fields of competence, the latest of which was the 5th coordination meeting of the heads of delegation of the OIC Member States taking part in UNESCO's 32nd General Conference in Paris in October 2003.
- 36- Subsequent to the earthquake which devastated the city of Bam, and considering the cultural and historic importance of this city, and also having heard the addresses of the Heads of delegation along with the addresses of the representatives of the invited organizations, the General Conference expressed its appreciation for the contents of the addresses delivered by the Heads of the participating delegations with regard to the earthquake which struck the city of Bam, and appealed to all Member States and international organizations to contribute urgently to the relief operations and to the programme of rebuilding the city of Bam, as well as to extend assistance for the restoration and maintenance of historic sites in the city. Furthermore, the Conference approved the proposal of the Director General to exempt the Islamic Republic of Iran from paying US\$ 500,000 of its arrears, provided they be allocated to the reconstruction of educational, scientific and cultural institutions in the city of Bam.
- 37- During the presentation of the Director General's report on the construction of the permanent headquarters of ISESCO, a documentary film prepared by the Islamic Organization was shown to inform the Members of the Executive Council and the General Conference on the progress achieved in the construction of the headquarters.

- 38-** The General Conference adopted the Report of the Director General on the construction of ISESCO's Permanent Headquarters, and mandated the Director General to borrow from the Organization's Reserve Fund as and when necessary in order to complete the construction of the permanent headquarters of the Organization. The Conference also thanked the eminent personalities who pledged donations for the construction of the headquarters and thanked the government of the Kingdom of Morocco for facilitating procedures for the Organization to start the construction works. It commended the steady efforts exerted by the Director General and his contacts to secure financial support for the construction of the permanent headquarters, hailing by the same token the Director General and his assistants for the works achieved and inviting the Director General to carry on endeavors to collect additional funds to complete the construction of the Permanent Headquarters of the Organization.
- 39-** In the outset of the fourth working session, the General Conference moved to the agenda item on the setting up of an ISESCO Office in Tehran in the Islamic Republic of Iran. The Director General presented a report in this connection and recalled the steps taken by the General Directorate to open the Regional Office in Tehran and the talks held with the relevant Iranian authorities ending up in the signing of the Seat Agreement and the opening of the Office on 18 January 2003. The Director General commended the Islamic Republic of Iran for honoring its administrative, financial and technical obligations as stipulated in the Seat Agreement, and for providing working means and facilities for the Office. He indicated that the Office became officially operational and carried out a series of activities falling under the scope of competence of the educational, scientific and cultural Organization, in addition to its contribution in coordinating the preliminary organizational steps of the 8th General Conference and the 24th Session of the Executive Council.
- 40-** The General Conference approved the opening of ISESCO Regional Office in Tehran and the Seat Agreement signed with the competent authorities in the Islamic Republic of Iran. It thanked the Islamic Republic of Iran for providing fully equipped premises to host the Regional Office, earmarking a generous budget to it and securing local staff to assume the office administrative and technical responsibilities.
- 41-** Then, the Director General made a presentation on the project of setting up an Islamic Satellite Channel. He reviewed the progress achieved in the project since the 7th session of the General Conference in 2000 in Rabat, the steps taken by the Islamic Organization on the conduct of a detailed study on the Channel, its installation and operating costs, as well as the proposed shares of Member States in the funding of the project. In this connection, the Director General stated that contacts were made with two international audio-visual consulting firms to prepare the requested technical study and financial estimates. He said that in the

meantime, the General Directorate received several responses from Member States, which were in the overall diverse but almost all urged for further patience in the launching of the project. This led the General Directorate to exercise patience and decide to postpone the conduct of such a study, and to submit the subject to the Executive Council. The said Council took a decision to postpone the creation of the Channel and to refer the project to the General Conference to take the appropriate decision thereon.

- 42- The General Conference decided to exercise patience with respect to launching the project of an Islamic satellite channel, in view of diverse difficulties to collect adequate funding for effective operating and urged for cooperation with the existing satellite channels in some Member States and coordinate with them to have them dedicate programmes to Islam in widely spoken languages, such as English, French, Spanish and other languages.
- 43- The Director General submitted to the General Conference the document containing the list of the Executive Council members. Then, Mr. Mohamed Abdullah Fares, the outgoing Chairman of the Executive Council, delivered an address in which he thanked the Council members for their support to him during his chairmanship.
- 44- The Conference adopted the annexed document on accreditation of the Executive Council members, and invited the Member States to nominate their representative in the Executive Council in compliance with the provisions of Article 12-I, paragraphs 1 and 2 of the Charter and to supply the Director General with a résumé of each representative. The Conference invited the Director General to follow up the subject with the Member States and amend this list following the response of competent authorities in Member States.
- 45- After taking cognizance of the document on the date and venue of the 9th Session of the General Conference, the Conference decided to convene its 9th session in the second half of December 2006 at the Organization's permanent headquarters in Rabat, the Kingdom of Morocco.
- 46- As part of interaction with the issues of Muslims all over the world, and in response to the draft law due to be passed by the French government to ban the bearing of headscarves at schools, institutes and on the premises of public administration, the Eighth General Conference Session issued a statement in which it condemned this approach which violates the principles of human rights.
- 47- Regarding the agenda item on the re-election of the Director General of the Islamic Organization, pursuant to the nomination by the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia of Dr. Abdulaziz Othman Altwaijri for reelection as Director General, in response to the decision of the Standing Committee for Information and Cultural Affairs in its 7th Session held in Dakar in December 2002, bearing in mind the outstanding

achievements of the Islamic Organization under his sound direction, given the consensus of all the Member States to commend his successful and pioneering efforts to develop the Organization in all fields to a point it has become an apex center at the level of the Islamic world and a towering civilizational lighthouse radiating on all Muslims around the world, given the appreciation expressed by the General Conference of the steady efforts of Dr. Abdulaziz Othman Altwaijri to bring reforms, consolidate and develop the fields of education, science, culture, communication and information, likely to achieve the renaissance of the Islamic world, and in response to the resolution of the Islamic Summit Conference (Putrajaya, Malaysia 16-18 October 2003), inviting the General Conference to reelect Dr. Abdulaziz Othman Altwaijri as Director General for two new terms, the General Conference decided to elect Dr. Abdulaziz Othman Altwaijri as Director General for a six-year term of office and invited him to carry on his efforts in order to further develop the Organization's action and enhance it at all levels. It commended the achievements and assets accomplished by the Director General in the fields of action of the Organization and in affirming its presence in the Islamic and international scenes, reinforcing its capacities and improve the administrative and financial structures. The General Conference approved to increase the basic salary of the Director General by 20% as from 1st January 2004. It invited the Director General to pursue his efforts with a view to develop the Organization in all fields.

- 48- Following that, the Director General expressed his deep thanks and sincere gratefulness for the trust placed in him by the Member States so that he can pursue the weighty responsibilities and contribute to achieving the Islamic world revival in the educational, scientific and cultural fields.
- 49- Then, representatives of Arab, Islamic, regional and international organizations delivered addresses wherein they praised the leading achievements of the Islamic Organization, the development of cooperation relations therewith, which conferred on it a prominent status at the Arab, Islamic and international levels.
- 50- At the beginning of the closing session, the results adopted by the Programmes Committee in its meeting dedicated to the examination of the draft Three-Year Action Plan and Budget for 2004-2006 were presented.

These results contained the Committee's decision to adopt the draft Three-Year Action Plan and Budget for 2004-2006.

- 51- In its plenary session, the Conference adopted the draft Three-Year Action Plan for 2004-2006 and approved its budget standing at US\$ 41.100.453, taking into consideration the observations and proposals of the Executive Council and the General Conference members, and the priorities and needs of Member States upon implementation. The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and the Sultanate of Oman showed reserve as to the increase in the Organization's budget, while the State of

Qatar showed reserve as to the rate of increase. The Conference thanked the Executive Council for its efforts and follow-up and the committees it set up to lay the general bases of the Three-Year Action Plan for 2004-2006. It also called upon Member States to settle their full contributions under this Plan. The conference urged the Director General to persevere in his efforts to secure off-budget financial resources in order to implement the major part of the Three-Year Action Plan for 2004-2006. It commended the General Directorate for adopting a methodology based on a strategic and global vision that encompasses all fields of competence, and characterized by cohesion, harmony and innovation. It likewise thanked the Director General and his assistants for their distinguished contribution in the elaboration of the draft Three-Year Action Plan for the years 2004-2006.

- 52- The results of the proceedings of the Administrative, Financial and Legal Affairs Committee which were adopted during its meeting were presented. The meeting was dedicated to the examination of the Director General's Financial Report, the Closing Accounts for 2000-2002, the report of the Audit Company, the report of the Financial Control Committee for 2002-2003, the two parts of the General Statements of Accounts and Expenditures up to the end of September 2003, and the Director General's report on the Member States contributions to the Organization's budget and Redressing the Financial Situation of the Organization, the draft amendment to the Personnel Regulations and the draft amendment to the Internal Regulations of the End-of-Service Allowance Fund, and draft amendment to the Internal Regulations of the Medical Insurance Fund.
- 53- The General Conference adopted the Financial Report of the Director General, the Closing Accounts for the period for 2000-2002, the report of the Audit Company, the report of the Financial Control for 2000-2002, the two parts of the General Statements of Accounts and Expenditures up to the end of September 2003, taking into consideration the observations made by the Committee members. It also thanked and for the efforts they exerted to enhance the Organization action. It extended thanks to all persons and parties that donated funds to support the Organization, to the Audit Company and the Financial Control Committee for their efforts in developing the work of the Organization. It also commended the efforts made by the Director General and his assistants in pursuing the implementation of programmes, and managing the operating items, rationalizing expenditures, ensuring the efficient application of the Executive Council and the General Conference's decisions and resolutions, as well as the recommendations of the Financial Control Committee.
- 54- The General Conference adopted the first and second parts of the Director General's report on the Member-States contributions to the Organization's budget and redressing the financial situation of the Organization, taking into account the observations of the Committee members. It further adopted the Executive

Council's decision on resolving the problem of arrears and classifying Member States and on their eligibility to benefit from easy conditions to settle their arrears. Special emphasis was placed on previous resolutions made in this connection by the General Conference. The Director General was commended for his efforts to intensify contacts with Member-States to collect contributions and to promote cooperation with Islamic, regional and international organizations. He was further invited to pursue his special visits to Member-States with arrears with a view to meeting with their heads of state in coordination with the National Commissions and the representatives of those States in the General Conference to ensure fair preparation of these visits, and to submit a report in this connection to the 9th General Conference.

- 55- Regarding the draft amendment to the Personnel Regulations, the General Conference adopted the proposed amendments as contained in the annexed document and agreed to raise the salaries of all the categories of the personnel of the Islamic Organization by 10% of the base salary, with effect from 1 January 2004. It also invited the Director General to review the salaries and allowances of all the categories of the personnel of the Islamic Organization every three years and submit the review thereof to the Executive Council and the General Conference for adoption.
- 56- Concerning the project to amend the Internal Regulations of the End-of-Service Allowance fund, the General Conference adopted the proposed amendments as contained in the document annexed.
- 57- The Conference further adopted the proposed amendments as they are contained in the annexed document on the Internal Regulations of the Medical Insurance Fund.
- 58- The General Conference discussed the draft Final Report of the proceedings of the 8th session of the Conference and the draft resolutions passed. After deliberations, the General Conference adopted the Final Report of the proceedings and the resolutions taken.
- 59- In the address she made, Dr. Khadija Aryan, the Secretary General of the Iranian National Commission for ISESCO, praised the Islamic Organization and commended the efforts of its Director General. She also congratulated all the participants on the great success which crowned the proceedings of the 8th Session of the General Conference.
- 60- A short documentary was subsequently shown, featuring a record of some salient aspects of the proceedings of the 8th General Conference, as well as activities and meetings held alongside the Conference.

- 61-** Then, H.E. Dr. Abdulaziz Othman Altwaijri, Director General of the Organization, delivered an address, whereby he expressed his gratitude to H.E. Mr. Mohammed Khatami, President of the Islamic Republic of Iran, and to the Iranian Government and people for the warm welcome and hospitality they offered to the participants in the Eighth General Conference. He also extended his heartfelt thanks to Their Majesties, Excellencies, and Highnesses the Kings, Presidents and Emirs of Member States for renewing their trust in his person. He again pledged to pursue the mission entrusted to him, and thanked all those who contributed to the success of the Conference.
- 62-** On the occasion of the closing of the proceedings of the 8th session of the General Conference, the Conference addressed a message of thanks and gratitude to His Excellency Mr. Mohammad Khatami, President of the Islamic Republic of Iran, whereby the Members expressed their sincere thanks, deep gratitude and appreciation for His Excellency and his honorable government as well as the noble Iranian people for their warm welcome and hospitality as well as for the support and assistance provided to them, which have eased their work and allowed them to carry out their proceedings in the best conditions.
- 63-** The sixth procedural session of the Executive Council was convened to elect the bureau. Accordingly, the new bureau of the Executive Council is now composed of the following members:
- **Chairman:** Great Socialist People's Libyan Arab Jamahiriyah
 - **Vice Chairman:**
 - Islamic Republic of Pakistan
 - Republic of Sierra Leone
 - Republic of Yemen
 - **Rapporteur:** State of the United Arab Emirates