



**Address by**

**His Excellency Dr. Salim M. AlMalik**

Director General of the Islamic, Educational,  
Scientific and Cultural Organization  
(ISESCO)

At the opening of

**The 11<sup>th</sup> Islamic Conference of Culture Ministers**

“Toward the Development of Current Cultural Policies in the Islamic World”

**17-18 December 2019**

**Tunis, Republic of Tunisia**

*Praise be to Allah and peace and blessings be upon Prophet Muhammad,  
his kith and kin*

**Excellencies, distinguished guests,**

**Assalamu alaikum wa rahmatu Allah wa barakatuhu,**

It is a great privilege for the 11<sup>th</sup> Islamic Conference of Culture Ministers to be held under the high patronage of His Excellency Mr. Kaïs Saïed, President of the Republic of Tunisia. I would also like to express my thanks to the Government of the Republic of Tunisia, represented by the Ministry of Cultural Affairs, and to Dr. Mohamed Zine El Abidine for his great support to hold this conference.

**Distinguished guests,**

In a number of Member States, cultural institutions and cultural heritage are subject to degradation, disappearance, destruction, and looting. Suffice to say, with utter distress, that the List of World Heritage in Danger includes thirty-seven (37) sites in Muslim countries out of fifty-four (54) sites, accounting to almost 70% of the sites in danger.

Even though Member States agreed to create the Islamic World Heritage Committee (IWHC) in 2007, the Committee had a shaky start as only five (5) sites were inscribed. However, with the new General Directorate, this situation has changed as ISESCO committed itself to inscribing one hundred (100) sites on the Islamic World Heritage List before the end of this year. We were not very sure that this goal is fully attainable, but we managed to exceed said number, praise be to Allah. Through concerted efforts with the IWHC and Member States, we were able to inscribe 132 sites.

This is a major achievement and a real gain that reflects the engagement of Member States in this major project to document, preserve and rehabilitate our heritage. Thus, I can comfortably say that we have entered the era of the documentation of our cultural and civilizational heritage.

From this rostrum, I call on Their Excellencies the Ministers and competent parties in Member States to continue the submission of their technical files for the inscription of all the tangible, intangible, natural and industrial heritage sites in their countries on the Islamic World Heritage List. To this end, we have set a special unit at ISESCO to work according to strict scientific and international standards. We will strive, Allah willing, to render ISESCO a house for inscribing all forms of heritage in the Islamic world.

In addition, translating our cultural unity and solidarity regarding the preservation of our cultural heritage into a programme to be supervised by ISESCO is a highly important measure that the Organization adopted as part of its new vision. Such programme aims to jointly inscribe a number of exemplary historical and civilizational routes (Hajj route, routes of trade caravans, and the routes of travelers, scholars, students and manuscript, etc.) on the Islamic World Heritage List, similar to the date palm file submitted by fourteen (14) Arab countries for inscription UNESCO's Intangible Cultural Heritage List.

**Distinguished guests,**

Access to development through culture has today become one of our strategic priority choices. As such, we should stop considering culture as a secondary sector or parallel activities that adorn the general scene of public policies. Rather, we should:

**First: Employ cultural diplomacy and capital** in serving cultural development in our countries, defending our strategic interests, and exporting our Islamic enlightening culture. The Islamic world indeed abounds with a unique, rich and diverse cultural heritage and civilizational assets, likely to serve peace and cooperation with the rest of the world peoples and states.

**Second: keep up with digital changes** to promote culture and encourage creativity and innovation among all social groups, in order to highlight our societies' rich cultural diversity, a goal tightly linked to providing new and diverse funding sources for cultural projects.

**Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen,**

Let us raise the following question together: What is the cultural project that we want in the Islamic world to address the new future challenges?

The answer to this central question lies in the following:

**First**, render culture a strategic priority and the locomotive for development of education on the values of peace, beauty, enlightenment, love, mercy, and respect for diversity and difference, which are all represented in ISESCO Programme of the Capitals of Culture in the Islamic World.

**Second**, draw on the views and suggestions of cultural leaders, a goal we have sought to achieve through launching the initiative of **ISESCO International Cultural Forum** whose first gathering was on future cultural challenges. A documentary booklet on this event was printed and distributed to the participants of this conference.

**Third**, we must export our culture in a proper way that enables us to keep up with future cultural challenges.

**To conclude**, I wish every success to this Conference in reaching tangible outcomes and resolutions likely to achieve cultural development in the Islamic world.

**Wassalamu alaikum wa rahmatu Allah, wa barakatuhuh.**