Address by

Dr Abdulaziz Othman Altwaijri
Director General of the Islamic, Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (ISESCO)

At the opening of the
Extraordinary Session of the Islamic Conference of Culture Ministers

Under the theme:

“Together for Safeguarding Human Heritage and Countering Extremism”

Manama, Kingdom of Bahrain: 28-29 November 2018
Praise be to Allah and peace and blessings be upon Prophet Muhammad,  
his kith and kin

Excellency Sheikha Mai bint Mohammed Al Khalifa, President of the Bahrain Authority for Culture and Antiquities,  
Excellency Dr Yousef bin Ahmad Al-Othaimeen, Secretary General of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation,  
Excellency Mr Omer Suleiman Adam, Minister of Culture, Tourism and Antiquities of the Republic of the Sudan, President of the Tenth Islamic Conference of Culture Ministers,  
Excellencies heads of delegation,  
Excellencies heads of diplomatic missions and international and regional organizations,  
Ladies and gentlemen,

Assalamu alaikum warahmatu Allah wabarakatuh,

I am pleased to welcome you all and address you at the opening of this extraordinary session of the Islamic Conference of Culture Ministers, being held under the patronage of His Majesty King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa, King of the Kingdom of Bahrain, on the occasion of celebrating Muharraq as the Arab region’s Capital of Islamic Culture for 2018 in cooperation with the Bahrain Authority for Culture and Antiquities, and coordination with the OIC.

First, I am honored to express my heartfelt thanks and gratitude to His Majesty, may Allah preserve him, for extending his kind patronage to our Conference, in appreciation of ISESCO of which the Islamic Culture Capitals Programme is part of its civilizational programmes.
I am pleased to welcome H.E. Dr Yousef bin Ahmad Al Othaimeen, OIC Secretary General, and would like to thank him for attending this conference despite his many preoccupations and laud the cooperation between ISESCO and the OIC General Secretariat with His Excellency's support and interest. My thanks are also due to H.E. Sheikha Mai bint Mohammed Al Khalifa, President of Bahrain Authority for Culture and Antiquities, for the good preparation and organization of the conference and for the success of the Celebration.

*Excellencies,*

*Ladies and gentlemen,*

Our choice of the theme of this extraordinary session of the Conference reflects, on the one hand, the great interest we have in the protection of world heritage which belongs to the entire humanity, and on the other hand, our preoccupation with fighting all forms and degrees of extremism which is an individual and collective behavioral aberration and intellectual zealotry owed to corrupt beliefs which compromise the stability of societies and threaten their identity of which heritage is one of its components. Therefore, it is necessary to closely and systematically link between the protection of heritage and the fight against extremism, given that extremism, a gateway to terrorism, targets both tangible and intangible heritage as it is the case in many parts of the Islamic world, namely in Al-Quds Al-Sharif. Against this backdrop, extremism should be battled with all security, intellectual means and curricula to eliminate it so as to ensure protection for our heritage, which is an asset preserved throughout history and passed on to us, seek inspiration and benefit from it, give it a value and ensure protection to it, pursuant to the contents and guidelines of the Islamic Declaration on the Protection of Heritage in the Islamic World, adopted by your Conference in its 10th Session.
It indeed is a pillar of our national identity and a source of pride which reflects the belonging to human identity which binds the entire humanity together. Based on this deep meaning, national and Arab heritage is a global human heritage.

Building on these foundations, the intellectual and practical contents of the project of "Manama Process for the Activation of Joint Islamic Cultural Action to Face Extremism, Sectarianism and Terrorism" and the project of the “Action Programme on the Promotion of Islamic and International Support for Safeguarding Civilizational and Cultural Heritage in Al-Quds Al-Sharif” which are submitted to the Conference for decision. Both projects are complementary since they combine theory and practice. Being strongly interrelated, these two projects will serve as a basis for the “Bahrain Declaration on the Safeguarding of Human Heritage and Countering Extremism” which will be issued by the Conference as a founding document that will boost the system of relevant reference documents adopted by ISESCO’s specialized ministerial conferences.

Excellencies,
Ladies and gentlemen,

Striving to raise awareness of the international public opinion to address the continued Israeli assaults against Al Aqsa Mosque, in particular, and on Al-Quds Al-Sharif in general, for seven decades now, can bolster the efforts we make within the framework of ISESCO, ALECSO and UNESCO to protect our Arab-Islamic heritage in the Holy City, which is also a heritage shared by humanity at large.

Drawing on these well-established rules and taking into account these meaningful considerations, protecting human heritage through fighting extremism in all its forms is a collective responsibility that should jointly be assumed by the international community, the United Nations, its Security
Council and all parties concerned with global peace to save the world from the scourge of wars and the exacerbating disastrous crises.

On this occasion and through this Conference, I appeal to the international community to carry its responsibility to protect human heritage in Al-Quds Al-Sharif in particular and all over the world in general and confront extremism, sectarianism and terrorism which place at stake global security and peace at all levels. Indeed, the protection of human heritage is not the exclusive responsibility of a state or a people but rather a common global human mission that should be assumed, as an ethical duty, a legal responsibility and a political commitment on the first place.

I thank you all and wish success for this Conference to contribute to achieving prosperity, peace and harmony for our Ummah and the entire humanity.

Wassalamu alaikum warahmatu Allah wabarakatuh.