

## The Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC) – One Page Summary

The Organization of the Islamic Conference (Arabic: منظمة المؤتمر الإسلامي) was set up in Rabat, Morocco, on September 25, **1969** in reaction to an arson attack against the Al-Aqsa Mosque on August 21, 1969. The Secretariat's work gradually expanded during the 1970s, and the Mecca Declaration of 1981, which focused on strengthening economic and commercial cooperation among the Member States, constituted a turning point. With **57 Member States** the OIC is today the second largest organisation after the UN. The OIC is made up of countries whose peoples are mainly followers of the Islamic religion. OIC countries represent a substantial portion of the world's developing countries, 21% of world's population, possess significant human and material resources, and have a considerable potential for production and trade. However, today many member countries lag far behind the industrialised countries and even average developing countries in terms of socio-economic development.

**The OIC consists of:** The Islamic Summit; The Islamic Conference of Foreign Ministers; The General Secretariat; Standing Committees; Subsidiary Organs; Specialized Institutions; and Affiliated institutions. The **mandate** of the OIC is to promote all-round political, economic, social, cultural, and scientific cooperation among its member states, to safeguard Islamic holy places, and to work towards eradicating racial discrimination and colonialism. **Influential governments** in terms of political, religious, economic weight and activity in the OIC include: Saudi Arabia, Pakistan, Malaysia, Turkey, and Iran. Other members that have a significant influence because of their budgetary contributions include: Kuwait, the United Arab Emirates, and Libya. The OIC's **budget** comes from mandatory payments from its members, as well as additional voluntary contributions. Despite its size, its numerous committees, and the scope of its stated activities, the OIC is run on a tight budget.

**Pressures for change** have been incubating for some time in the OIC. Current Secretary General Ekmeleddin Ihsanoglu (Turkey) is seen as a figure who will implement reforms of the organisation to make it more outward-looking. The OIC Ten Year Programme of Action was launched on 19<sup>th</sup> June 2006. It promises an organisation that will uphold transparency and accountability in governance and protect the rights of women, children, and minorities. It promises to promote sustainable development and to assist the least developed states in tackling diseases such as Aids, malaria and tuberculosis. It also pledges to work more closely with international agencies and with existing development initiatives and promises concrete steps on theological issues, for example confronting ideologies that claim to be able to use Islamic rulings to justify extremism.

Apart from the general economic (development, poverty alleviation, institution building, debt cancellation), humanitarian (relief, coordination, reconstruction, advocacy), political (statements, conflict resolution, principles, territory), cultural (arts, sport, heritage), health (the elimination and reduction of diseases), technical (technology transfer, etc) and religious **support and solidarity** that membership of the OIC brings, when deemed necessary, **special committees** are formed to give support around specific issues related to politics or conflict resolution. Although a useful forum for discussion, the OIC has **lacked the means to implement its resolutions**. There are some indications that this is changing and also that the OIC is starting to play a more significant role on the **global stage**. The Secretary General played a key role in diffusing the Danish Cartoon crisis, while decisions to tackle "Islamophobia" have helped raise the OIC's profile, not just among Muslims.

The establishment of coordination mechanisms with **CSOs**, and recognition of their role, has been on the agenda of the OIC for a number of years. At his inauguration, the current Secretary General called for a **renewed effort** to establish linkages with NGOs. In addition, in the bodies and work of the OIC, there is already a **significant degree of engagement** with CSOs in discussion forums (youth, women, and children). The OIC regularly calls upon CSOs to assist in specific emergencies where Muslim communities are affected. The Secretary General also holds meetings with CSOs about key humanitarian issues, and is currently in discussion with OCHA to build a forum for humanitarian NGOs. There are few official opportunities for CSOs to participate in OIC *decisions*. However, the OIC is now in the process of drafting laws for NGOs to gain Observer Status. It is in these areas that there exist **entry points and opportunities** for CSOs to start engaging further with the OIC.

# The Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC): Overview and Analysis



## Pre-OIC Cooperation

The pooling of ideas, comparisons and contrasting views among the Muslim-dominated states began with the numerous conferences which were held from 1926 to 1966. The launch of the World Islamic Conference in Mecca in 1926, opened by King Abdul Aziz Ibn Saud, was unevenly received because purely political issues such as territorial claims were raised, although the avowed purpose and aims were the safeguarding of the Holy Places, improved conditions for pilgrims and religious liberty for all Muslim sects. Delegates were drawn from Palestine, the Beyrout Society, Syria, Sudan, Nejd, Hijaz, Asir, Egypt, as well as the Soviet Union, Afghanistan, Turkey and Malaysia. The Conference went on to meet throughout the 1930s, famously in 1931 in Jerusalem. From the end of World War II the Islamic International Conference was held regularly. The post-war period marked both increased factionalism (between Egypt and her allies and Saudi Arabia, and also with the Hashemite bloc) and plans for unification. The pan-Islamic ideal was partly eclipsed by the emergence of the Arab League from the late 1940s, particularly as it became the conduit of Arab efforts for the problems associated with Palestine. Splits among Muslim powers and thinkers are evidenced by the four separate congresses held in 1962: one based in Karachi, but held in Baghdad (World Islamic Conference), one based in Cairo (Islamic Congress), a breakaway group meeting in Jerusalem (Associates of the General Islamic Congress), and a newly formed group founded at Mecca to act against Nasser (League of the Islamic World). As more Arab states acquired complete independence during the 1960s and turned to international organisations for support, as well as drawing from wealthier oil-rich sister states, the need for pan-Islamic agitation declined.<sup>1</sup>

## History and Establishment

The Organization of the Islamic Conference (Arabic: منظمة المؤتمر الإسلامي) was set up in Rabat, Morocco, on September 25, 1969 in reaction to an arson attack against the Al-Aqsa Mosque on August 21, 1969.<sup>2</sup> In March 1970, the First Islamic Conference of Ministers of Foreign Affairs held in Jeddah set up a permanent General Secretariat, to ensure a liaison among Member States and charged it to coordinate their action. The Conference appointed its Secretary General and chose Jeddah as the Headquarters of the Organization, pending the liberation of Jerusalem, which would be the permanent Headquarters. In February 1972, the Islamic Conference of Foreign Ministers, meeting in its Third Session, adopted the Charter of the Organization (see below), whose purpose is to strengthen solidarity and cooperation among Islamic States in the political, economic, cultural, scientific and social fields.<sup>3</sup>

The OIC General Secretariat made a modest start as a small organ entrusted with practical arrangements for organising OIC Conferences. The Secretariat's work gradually expanded during the 1970s, and the Mecca Declaration of 1981, which focused on strengthening economic and commercial cooperation among the Member States, constituted a turning point. The Organization subsequently branched out into several subsidiary organs and specialized and affiliated institutions working in various fields of Joint Islamic Action (see below).<sup>4</sup> With 57 Member States the OIC is today the second largest organisation after the UN. The OIC countries represent a substantial portion of the world's developing countries, possess significant human and material resources (70% of world crude oil reserves and 50% of world natural gas reserves<sup>5</sup>), and have a considerable potential for production and trade. However, today many member countries lag far behind the industrialised countries and even average developing countries in terms of all indicators of socio-economic development, from literacy rates

<sup>1</sup> *Islamic Movements in the Arab World 1913-1966*, <http://www.archiveeditions.co.uk/Leafcopy/800-6.htm>

<sup>2</sup> See: [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Organization\\_of\\_the\\_Islamic\\_Conference](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Organization_of_the_Islamic_Conference)

<sup>3</sup> For more details see: <http://www.oic-oci.org/>

<sup>4</sup> Speech of H.E. Professor Ekmeleddin Ihsanoglu, Secretary General of the OIC, at the Inaugural Meeting of the OIC Commission of Eminent Persons, Malaysia, 27-29 January 2005 *Secretary General Speeches Main Page* <http://www.oic-oci.org/press/english/2005/feb%202005/SG-putrajaya.htm>

<sup>5</sup> Profile: Organisation of the Islamic Conference, Story from BBC NEWS: [http://news.bbc.co.uk/go/pr/fr/-/2/hi/middle\\_east/country\\_profiles/1555062.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/go/pr/fr/-/2/hi/middle_east/country_profiles/1555062.stm), Published: 2006/03/10.

and income levels to technology and industry.<sup>6</sup> The OIC is well aware of the challenges that its members face, although according to many analysts, it is not capable, for the time being at least, of addressing many of them.

## Headquarters and Structure

The OIC system consists of:

### The Islamic Summit

The highest policy-making organ, attended by the Kings and the Heads of State and Governments of the member states, convened every three years.

### The Islamic Conference of Foreign Ministers

In the interval between summits, OIC foreign ministers meet to oversee the implementation of decisions taken by the heads of state.

### The Permanent Secretariat / General Secretariat

The executive organ of the Organization, entrusted with the day-to-day running of the OIC and the implementation of the decisions of the two preceding bodies, located in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia. The General Secretariat is headed by a Secretary General appointed by the Foreign Ministers Conference for a period of four years renewable once only. As the highest authority of the General Secretariat and subsidiary organs, the Secretary General is responsible to the Conference for their work and submits reports to the Conference on the execution of his duties. The tasks of the General Secretariat are divided among general departments headed each by an Assistant Secretary General, who is responsible to the Secretary General for the functioning of his department.



<sup>6</sup> Inaugural Statement by H.E. Professor Ekmeleddin Ihsanoglu Secretary General of the OIC Jeddah, 28 December 2004, <http://www.oic-oci.org/press/english/2005/january%202005/SG-Inaugural.htm>

Previous and the current Secretaries General since the establishment of the OIC include:

1.	H.R.H. Tunku Abdul Rahman	(Malaysia)	1971-1973
2.	H.E. Hassan Al-Touhami	(Egypt)	1974-1975
3.	H.E. Dr. Amadou Karim Gaye	(Senegal)	1975-1979
4.	H.E. Mr. Habib Chatty	(Tunisia)	1979-1984
5.	H.E. Syed Sharifuddin Pirzada	(Pakistan)	1985-1988
6.	H.E. Dr. Hamid Algabid	(Niger)	1989-1996
7.	H.E. Dr. Azeddine Laraki	(Morocco)	1997-2000
8.	H.E. Dr. Abdelouahed Belkeziz	(Morocco)	2001-2004
9.	H.E. Prof. Dr. Ekmeleddin Ihsanoglu	(Turkey)	2005-

Ekmeleddin Ihsanoglu, the current Secretary General, an Egyptian-born Turkish former diplomat, promised to "re-energise" the organisation by making administrative changes. Turkey had lobbied hard on behalf of its candidate, presenting Mr Ihsanoglu as a reformer, both in terms of the OIC and the wider Islamic world. Mr Ihsanoglu has called for collective action by Islamic countries to combat religious extremism. He wants a greater role for Muslim nations in international affairs, including permanent representation in the UN Security Council. Mr Ihsanoglu is the first head of the OIC to have been chosen by secret ballot.<sup>7</sup>

#### Standing Committees

In order to coordinate and boost its action, align its view points and stands, and be credited with concrete results in the various fields of cooperation - political, economic, cultural, social, spiritual and scientific - among Member States, the Organization has created different committees, nearly all at ministerial level, a number of which are chaired by Heads of State:

- Al-Quds (Jerusalem) Committee.
- Standing Committee on Information and Cultural Affairs (COMIAC).
- Standing Committee on Economic and Trade Cooperation (COMCEC).
- Standing Committee on Scientific and Technological Cooperation (COMSTECH).
- Islamic Committee for Economic, Cultural, and Social Affairs.
- Permanent Finance Committee.
- Financial Control Organ.

The number and types of secondary organs and institutions of the OIC have been steadily increasing, and cover various areas of cultural, scientific, economic, legal, financial, sports, technological, educational, media, as well as vocational, social and humanitarian fields. Depending on their degree of autonomy vis-à-vis the parent organization, they are classified as subsidiary and specialized organs, or affiliated institutions.

#### Subsidiary Organs

- The Statistical, Economic, Social Research and Training Center for Islamic Countries, Ankara, Turkey.
- The Research Center for Islamic History, Art and Culture (IRCICA), Istanbul, Turkey.
- The Islamic University of Technology, located in Dhaka, Bangladesh.
- The Islamic Center for the Development of Trade, Casablanca, Morocco.
- The Islamic Fiqh Academy, Jeddah, Saudi Arabia.
- The Executive Bureau of the Islamic Solidarity Fund and its Waqf, Jeddah, Saudi Arabia.
- The Islamic University of Niger, Niamey, Niger.
- The Islamic University of Uganda, Mbale, Uganda.

#### Specialized Institutions

- The Islamic Development Bank (IDB), Jeddah, Saudi Arabia.
- The Islamic Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (ISESCO), Rabat, Morocco.
- The Islamic States Broadcasting Organization (ISBO) and the International Islamic News Agency (IINA), Jeddah, Saudi Arabia.

---

<sup>7</sup> Profile: Organisation of the Islamic Conference, Story from BBC NEWS: [http://news.bbc.co.uk/go/pr/fr/-/2/hi/middle\\_east/country\\_profiles/1555062.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/go/pr/fr/-/2/hi/middle_east/country_profiles/1555062.stm), Published: 2006/03/10.

### Affiliated institutions

- Islamic Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ICCI), Karachi, Pakistan.
- Organization of Islamic Capitals and Cities (OICC), Jeddah, Saudi Arabia.
- Sports Federation of Islamic Solidarity Games, Riyadh, Saudi Arabia.
- Islamic Committee of the International Crescent (ICIC), Benghazi, Libya.
- Islamic Shipowners Association (ISA), Jeddah, Saudi Arabia.
- World Federation of International Arab-Islamic Schools, Jeddah, Saudi Arabia.
- International Association of Islamic Banks (IAIB), Jeddah, Saudi Arabia.
- Islamic Conference Youth Forum for Dialogue and Cooperation, (ICYF-DC) Istanbul, Turkey.<sup>8</sup>

### **Mandate and Charter**

The mandate of the OIC is to promote all-round cooperation among its member states, to safeguard Islamic holy places, and to work towards eradicating racial discrimination and colonialism.<sup>9</sup> Under the Charter, the Organization aims to:

#### *1. Strengthen:*

- a) Islamic solidarity among Member States;
- b) Cooperation in the political, economic, social, cultural, and scientific fields;
- c) The struggle of all Muslim people to safeguard their dignity, independence, and national rights.

#### *2. Coordinate action to:*

- a) Safeguard the Holy Places;
- b) Support the struggle of the Palestinian people and assist them in recovering their rights and liberating their occupied territories.

#### *3. Work to:*

- a) Eliminate racial discrimination and all forms of colonialism;
- b) Create a favourable atmosphere for the promotion of cooperation and understanding between Member States and other countries.

The Charter also enumerates the principles governing OIC activities, namely:

- Full equality among Member States
- Observation of the right to self determination and non-interference in the internal affairs of Member States
- Observation of the sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity of each State
- The settlement of any dispute that might arise among Member States by peaceful means such as negotiations, mediation, conciliation and arbitration
- A pledge to refrain, in relations among Member States, from resorting to force or threatening to resort to the use of force against the unity and territorial integrity or the political independence of any one of them.<sup>10</sup>

### *Charter Links*

[| ARTICLE I](#) | [| ARTICLE II](#) | [| ARTICLE III](#) | [| ARTICLE IV](#) | [| ARTICLE V](#) | [| ARTICLE VI](#) | [| ARTICLE VII](#) | [| ARTICLE VIII](#) | [| ARTICLE IX](#) | [| ARTICLE X](#) | [| ARTICLE XI](#) | [| ARTICLE XII](#) | [| ARTICLE XIII](#) | [| ARTICLE XIV](#) |

### **Member States**

The OIC is made up of countries whose peoples are mainly followers of the Islamic religion. The OIC comprises 57 states dispersed over four continents. This amounts to a population of 650 million (21% of world's population).<sup>11</sup>

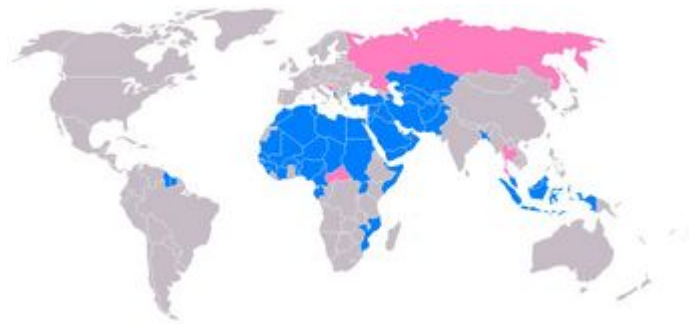
---

<sup>8</sup> See: <http://www.answers.com/topic/organization-of-the-islamic-conference>

<sup>9</sup> Profile: Organisation of the Islamic Conference, Story from BBC NEWS: [http://news.bbc.co.uk/go/pr/fr/-/2/hi/middle\\_east/country\\_profiles/1555062.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/go/pr/fr/-/2/hi/middle_east/country_profiles/1555062.stm), Published: 2006/03/10.

<sup>10</sup> See: <http://www.oic-oci.org/>

<sup>11</sup> Profile: Organisation of the Islamic Conference, Story from BBC NEWS: [http://news.bbc.co.uk/go/pr/fr/-/2/hi/middle\\_east/country\\_profiles/1555062.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/go/pr/fr/-/2/hi/middle_east/country_profiles/1555062.stm), Published: 2006/03/10.



OIC Member States; Full members in blue/Observers in pink<sup>12</sup>

**Full members**

<b>State</b>	<b>Year</b>
 Afghanistan, Islamic Republic of	1969
 Algeria, People's Democratic Republic of	1969
 Chad, Republic of	1969
 Egypt, Arab Republic of	1969
 Guinea, Republic of	1969
 Indonesia, Republic of	1969
 Iran, Islamic Republic of	1969
 Jordan, Hashemite Kingdom of	1969
 Kuwait, State of	1969
 Lebanon, Republic of	1969
 Libya, Socialist People's Libyan Arab Jamahiriya	1969
 Malaysia	1969
 Mali, Republic of	1969
 Mauritania, Islamic Republic of	1969
 Morocco, Kingdom of	1969
 Niger, Republic of	1969
 Pakistan, Islamic Republic of	1969
 Palestine, State of	1969
 Yemen, Republic of	1969
 Saudi Arabia, Kingdom of	1969
 Senegal, Republic of	1969
 Sudan, Republic of the	1969
 Somalia	1969
 Tunisia, Republic of	1969
 Turkey, Republic of	1969
 Bahrain, State of	1970
 Oman, Sultanate of	1970
 Qatar, State of	1970
 Syrian Arab Republic	1970
 United Arab Emirates, State of	1970
 Sierra Leone, Republic of	1972
 Bangladesh, People's Republic of	1974

<sup>12</sup> For more information about Member States, visit <http://www.sesrtcic.org>

	Gabon, Republic of	1974
	Gambia, Republic of the	1974
	Guinea-Bissau, Republic of	1974
	Uganda, Republic of	1974
	Burkina Faso	1975
	Cameroon, Republic of	1975
	Comoros, Federal Islamic Republic of the	1976
	Iraq, Republic of	1976
	Maldives, Republic of	1976
	Djibouti, Republic of	1978
	Benin, Republic of	1982
	Brunei Darussalam, Sultanate of	1984
	Nigeria, Federal Republic of	1986
	Azerbaijan, Republic of	1991
	Albania, Republic of	1992
	Kyrgyzstan, Republic of	1992
	Tajikistan, Republic of	1992
	Turkmenistan, Republic of	1992
	Mozambique, Republic of	1994
	Kazakhstan, Republic of	1995
	Uzbekistan, Republic of	1995
	Suriname, Republic of	1996
	Togo, Republic of	1997
	Guyana, Republic of	1998
	Côte d'Ivoire, Republic of	2001
<b>Observer States</b>		
	Bosnia and Herzegovina	1994
	Central African Republic	1997
	Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (Turkish Cypriot State)	1979
	Thailand, Kingdom of	1998
	Russian Federation	2005
<b>Observer Muslim Organizations and Communities</b>		
	Moro National Liberation Front	1977
<b>Observer International Organizations</b>		
	League of Arab States	1975
	United Nations	1976
	Non-Aligned Movement	1977
	Organization of African Unity	1977
	Economic Cooperation Organization	1995

India has the second largest Muslim population in the world and has shown interest in joining the OIC as an observer nation. While India's candidature is supported by several OIC members including Saudi Arabia, some influential OIC members such as Pakistan have blocked India's inclusion into the OIC. They argue that although India is home to more than 175 million Muslims, they form just over 10% of India's total population. Another factor affecting India's induction into the OIC is the Kashmir dispute. The OIC supports Pakistan's claim over the entire region of Kashmir. The Philippine government has also made attempts to join the OIC, but this was

opposed because Muslims make up only 5% (4.5 million) of its 90 million population in what is a predominately Christian country.<sup>13</sup>

### **Influential Governments**

Saudi Arabia played a key role in the founding of the OIC, is highly involved in all of the Summits and bodies, and also provides by far the largest mandatory and voluntary contributions. Saudi Arabia also brings with it a key symbolic role in shaping the course of the OIC as an organization and in the Muslim world in general, as summed up by Bernard Dunn: "Leadership in the Islamic world is diffused, but if there could be said to be a symbolic seat for the center of Islam, it would be Saudi Arabia, because of its custodianship of the two holy mosques, Mecca and Medina... Saudi Arabia and the head of state of Saudi Arabia will continue to be where the Islamic world turns to for guidance, leadership and defense of Islamic interests." King Abdullah was the main architect of the summit in Mecca that approved the 10-year Action Plan for the OIC (see below).<sup>14</sup>

As a founding member of the OIC Pakistan has an abiding commitment to the purposes, principles, and objectives of its Charter. Pakistan has played an important role in strengthening cooperation among Muslim States by its active participation in the programmes and activities of the OIC. The efforts by Pakistan have received due acknowledgment in the OIC signified by its membership of all key OIC's Specialized Committees and Contact Groups, specialised and affiliated Organs, on critical issues of the Islamic world - Palestine, Afghanistan, Jammu and Kashmir, Bosnia, Kosovo and Sahel. Numerous Committees and Institutions of the OIC are located in Pakistan and Pakistan has hosted several OIC conferences and special sessions.<sup>15</sup>

The Malaysian commitment towards the OIC has been consistent over the years. Malaysia has carved a niche for itself as an activist member in political, economic, and technical issues affecting the Islamic community. Despite Malaysia's dissatisfaction over internal disunity among member countries in the OIC, Malaysia has continuously promoted ideas and means to try to make the OIC a more effective organisation. The issues of Islamic solidarity within the OIC are the prime agenda as far as Malaysia is concerned. At the extraordinary session of the Islamic Conference of Foreign Ministers on Terrorism on April 3, 2002 Malaysia deliberately emphasised objectives to be achieved - that a collective response of the OIC countries to combat terrorism was needed as well as the role of converting the misperception of associating Islam with terrorism.<sup>16</sup>

In June 2003, Turkey hosted a meeting of foreign ministers of the OIC, signalling its intention to play a more active role in shaping pan-Islamic policies. Disagreements about how big a role the state should play in Islamic politics delayed it becoming a full OIC member until 1995. It has since hosted the second Joint Forum of the European Union and the OIC. Turkey also initiated diplomatic moves to gain control of the so-called Al Quds Committee of the OIC which plays a key role in shaping the policies of Muslim nations towards Israel. At present only 11 of the 57 members of the OIC have diplomatic relations with the Israel. Turkey was the first Muslim nation to recognise Israel in 1948 and to establish relations at ambassadorial level. The Turkish argument is that relations between the Muslim world and Israel must be handled by a country that has normal relations, and no history of enmity, with the state. Under Ihsanoglu, Turkey is working to promote currents of "enlightened moderation" against obscurantist movements that have "led parts of the Muslim world into violence and terror."<sup>17</sup>

Iran is a significant player in the OIC for several reasons: it provides high level of mandatory and voluntary contributions; it is actively engaged in the summits and running of the OIC; and it plays a pivotal political role globally. In the summer of 2006, the OIC Secretary General visited Tehran. The Iranian Foreign Minister stressed that Iran would strengthen its cooperation with the General Secretariat in its genuine endeavors to implement the Ten Year Program of Action. The Secretary General hailed Iran for its leading role in the OIC and expressed support for Iran's right to acquire peaceful nuclear technology and stated that this has been among the most fundamental principles and duties of the Organization, stressing that the OIC is ready to do all it can in that direction.<sup>18</sup>

---

<sup>13</sup> See: [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Organization\\_of\\_the\\_Islamic\\_Conference](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Organization_of_the_Islamic_Conference)

<sup>14</sup> Press Corner Organization of the Islamic Conference December 12, 2005 "Saudi-US Relations Information Service" Editor's Note <http://www.freemuslims.org/news/article.php?article=1150>

<sup>15</sup> See: <http://www.cssforum.com.pk/compulsory-subjects/current-affairs/current-affairs-notes/3423-pakistan-oic.html>

<sup>16</sup> Malaysia's role in revitalising OIC, Shaikh Mohd Saifuddeen Shaikh Mohd Salleh, Fellow Kanan Institut Kefahaman Islam Malaysia, 26/09/2003, [http://www.ikim.gov.my/v5/index.php?lg=1&opt=com\\_article&grp=2&sec=&key=408&cmd=resetall](http://www.ikim.gov.my/v5/index.php?lg=1&opt=com_article&grp=2&sec=&key=408&cmd=resetall)

<sup>17</sup> Turkey Enjoins Europe and Islam, by Amir Taheri Gulf News October 6, 2004, <http://www.benadorassociates.com/article/7982>

<sup>18</sup> Press Release Prof. Ekmeleddin Ihsanoglu, Secretary General of the Organization of the Islamic Conference, concludes his two day official visit to the Islamic Republic of Iran, <http://www.oic-oci.org/press/english/2006/june%202006/iran.htm>



Other members that have a significant influence because of their budgetary contributions include: Kuwait, the United Arab Emirates, and Libya.

## Reform

The OIC was established during the height of the cold war and at a time when the colonial period was coming to an end as the sole forum for the Islamic world. According to the current Secretary General, "The OIC should be equipped to cope with the prevailing tendencies of the new world order, including the highly-tuned sensitivity to the values of human rights, democracy and good governance... The present status of the General Secretariat is not commensurate with the objectives expected of it. Staff numbers are extremely limited as compared with similar international organizations, while the qualifications of many are below the required standards."<sup>19</sup> Efforts are underway to restructure the OIC General Secretariat and to strengthen the role of the Secretary General in order to be able to respond more effectively to emergency situations<sup>20</sup>, and also, to reform the Joint Islamic Action mechanisms, including the objectives, subsidiary organs, institutions and funding sources of the Organization.<sup>21</sup>

Absence of engagement and connection has meant that inside the OIC, pressures for change have been incubating for some time. In 2004, several of the OIC's more influential players (including Malaysia, Pakistan and Turkey) supported the candidacy of Ekmeleddin Ihsanoglu as a figure who would implement reforms of the organisation to make it more outward-looking. The OIC Ten Year Programme of Action was launched on 19<sup>th</sup> June 2006.<sup>22</sup> The action plan is an impressive document. It promises an organisation that will uphold transparency and accountability in governance and protect the rights of women, children, and minorities. It promises to promote sustainable development and to assist the least developed states in tackling diseases such as Aids, malaria and tuberculosis (twenty-seven OIC member-states are African). It also pledges to work more closely with international agencies and with existing development initiatives such as the New Partnership for Africa's Development (Nepad) and the UN's Millennium Development Goals. The action plan also promises concrete steps on theological issues, for example confronting ideologies that claim to be able to use Islamic rulings to justify extremism. Meanwhile, Ihsanoglu has opened up the Jeddah secretariat to the outside world. The OIC website contains details of where he goes, who he meets, even names of people that he speaks with on the phone. All of this represents genuine progress. According to analysts, for a predominantly Muslim body to acknowledge good governance, rights for children, the threat from Aids is welcome evidence of fresh, innovative thinking. Some of the OIC's specialist development agencies (such as Comstech) have already started to coordinate what they do with other specialised agencies outside of the OIC system.<sup>23</sup>

In addition, the OIC intends to open a new office in Brussels, in view of the increasing common and bilateral actions and positions with the EU and its numerous organizations and reflecting a direct interest in European affairs as a result of the increasing number of political, economic and social issues linking OIC countries with the West, particularly with the greater Islamic presence there as a result of the growing Islamic communities in most of Europe, whose population is now estimated at over 20 million.<sup>24</sup>

## Budget

The OIC's budget comes from mandatory payments from its member states, as well as additional voluntary contributions. Despite its size, its numerous committees, and the scope of its stated activities, the OIC is run on

---

<sup>19</sup> Speech of H.E. Professor Ekmeleddin Ihsanoglu, Secretary General of the OIC, at the Inaugural Meeting of the OIC Commission of Eminent Persons, Malaysia, 27-29 January 2005 [Secretary General Speeches Main Page http://www.oic-oci.org/press/english/2005/feb%202005/SG-putrajaya.htm](http://www.oic-oci.org/press/english/2005/feb%202005/SG-putrajaya.htm)

<sup>20</sup> The first case requiring immediate action on the part of the OIC as soon as the current Secretary General assumed duties was the Tsunami earthquake that hit South and South-East Asia. An "OIC Alliance to rescue child victims of Tsunami" was established to provide and coordinate relief.

<sup>21</sup> Speech of H.E. Professor Ekmeleddin Ihsanoglu, Secretary General of the OIC, at the Inaugural Meeting of the OIC Commission of Eminent Persons, Malaysia, 27-29 January 2005 [Secretary General Speeches Main Page http://www.oic-oci.org/press/english/2005/feb%202005/SG-putrajaya.htm](http://www.oic-oci.org/press/english/2005/feb%202005/SG-putrajaya.htm)

<sup>22</sup> Report of the Secretary General on the Current Status of the Implementation of the Ten-Year Programme of Action to the 22<sup>nd</sup> Session of COMCEC, Istanbul, Turkey, 21-24 November 2006.

<sup>23</sup> The Islamic world's United Nations, Ehsan Masood, 7/3/2006, [http://www.opendemocracy.net/globalization/islamic\\_un\\_3333.jsp](http://www.opendemocracy.net/globalization/islamic_un_3333.jsp)

<sup>24</sup> Speech of H. E. Prof. Ekmeleddin Ihsanoglu, Secretary General of the OIC, At the Thirty-Fourth session of the Permanent Finance Committee, Saudi Arabia 13-15 May 2006, <http://www.oic-oci.org/>

a shoe-string budget.<sup>25</sup> The OIC budget is much lower than comparable organizations and the Secretariat collects less than half of its already meagre appropriations.<sup>26</sup> Recently, there have been initiatives to introduce major reforms to boost efficiency, transparency and increase the sense of responsibility in order to encourage member states to fulfill their obligations of paying their mandatory contributions. There has been a significant reduction from 21 to 12 of states that have never paid their contribution, while the number of regular payers has increased from 21 to 25 States. 27 Member States met their financial obligations in 2004/2005 financial year. However, the General Secretariat has suffered during the current year from budget constraints as a result of the expansion of activities. The new programmes and interest in the general Islamic affairs have increased expenditure. Hence, the proposed budget for the financial year 2006/2007 envisages a nominal 10% increase. The current budget will amount to 17,600,000 US dollars<sup>27</sup> (an increase of 1,600,000 USD).

Other budgets that have increased include:

- Islamic Fiqh Academy - 2,100,000 USD (increase of 250,000 USD).
- Statistical, Economic, and Social Research and Training Center for Islamic Countries - 2,250,000 USD (increase of 250,000 USD).
- Islamic University of Technology - 2,880,000 USD (increase of 630,000 USD).
- Research Center for Islamic History, Art and Culture - 2,676,000 USD (increase of 446,000 USD).
- Islamic Center for Development of Trade - 1,500,000 USD (increase of 327,786 USD).<sup>28</sup>

<b>Mandatory Contributions of Member States by percentage for 2006/7 Financial Year<sup>29</sup></b>	
<b>0.5%:</b>	Afghanistan, Albania, Benin, Burkina Faso, Chad, Comoros, Cameroon, Djibouti, Gambia, Guinea, Guinea Bissau, Guyana, Kyrgyzstan, Maldives, Mali, Mauritania, Mozambique, Niger, Sierra Leone, Somalia, Suriname, Tajikistan, Togo, Uganda, Yemen
<b>1.0%:</b>	Azerbaijan, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Gabon, Ivory Coast, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Lebanon, Senegal, Sudan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan
<b>1.5%</b>	Nigeria, Syria, Tunisia
<b>2.0%</b>	Egypt, Iraq, Morocco, Oman, Pakistan
<b>3.0%</b>	Algeria
<b>3.5%</b>	Brunei, Indonesia, Qatar
<b>5.0%</b>	Malaysia, Turkey
<b>5.5%</b>	Iran
<b>6.0%</b>	Libya
<b>7.0%</b>	United Arab Emirates
<b>9.0%</b>	Kuwait
<b>10.0%</b>	Saudi Arabia
<b>Exempt</b>	Palestine

The OIC is funded mainly by the Saudi Arabia (10%). The other largest mandatory contributions come from the United Arab Emirates (7%), Libya (6%), Iran (5.5%), Turkey (5%), and Malaysia (5%). At the June 2006 summit, Iran announced a US\$ 1 million voluntary donation to the OIC; the United Arab Emirates decided to contribute US\$ 2 Million to the Islamic Solidarity Fund; and Saudi Arabia decided to contribute US\$ 1 billion to the Poverty Alleviation Fund which was created within the framework of the Islamic Development Bank in December 2005.<sup>30</sup>

## **Areas of support to member states and Muslim communities**

<sup>25</sup> Profile: Organisation of the Islamic Conference, Story from BBC NEWS: [http://news.bbc.co.uk/go/pr/fr/-/2/hi/middle\\_east/country\\_profiles/1555062.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/go/pr/fr/-/2/hi/middle_east/country_profiles/1555062.stm), Published: 2006/03/10.

<sup>26</sup> Speech of H.E. Professor Ekmeleddin Ihsanoglu, Secretary General of the OIC, at the Inaugural Meeting of the OIC Commission of Eminent Persons, Malaysia, 27-29 January 2005 [Secretary General Speeches Main Page http://www.oic-oci.org/press/english/2005/feb%202005/SG-putrajaya.htm](http://www.oic-oci.org/press/english/2005/feb%202005/SG-putrajaya.htm)

<sup>27</sup> Speech of H. E. Prof. Ekmeleddin Ihsanoglu, Secretary General of the OIC, At the Thirty-Fourth session of the Permanent Finance Committee, Saudi Arabia 13-15 May 2006, <http://www.oic-oci.org/>

<sup>28</sup> Resolution No. 1/33-AF on The Report of the 34<sup>th</sup> Session of the PFC and the budgets of the General Secretariat and its subsidiary organs.

<sup>29</sup> Resolution No. 3/33-AF on the New Scale of Member States' Mandatory Contributions to Annual Budgets of the General Secretariat and its Subsidiary Organs, 2006/7.

<sup>30</sup> News on the Sideline of Baku Ministerial Meeting, (19 – 21 June 2006), <http://www.oic-oci.org/>

Apart from the general economic (development, cooperation, poverty alleviation, institution building, debt cancellation, etc), humanitarian<sup>31</sup> (relief, coordination, reconstruction, advocacy, etc), political (statements, conflict resolution, principles, territory), cultural (arts, sport, heritage, etc), health (the elimination and reduction of diseases), technical (technology transfer, etc) and religious support and solidarity that membership of the OIC brings, when deemed necessary, special committees are formed to give support to specific issues.

For example, currently:

- The *Afghanistan Committee* coordinates aid and assistance to mitigate the suffering of the Afghan people and to find a peaceful, comprehensive solution to the Afghan question.
- The *Islamic Committee for Solidarity with People of African Sahel* provides urgent food aid or assistance in development projects and studies the best means to intensify the fight against drought and desertification.
- The *Ministerial Committee of Eight on Philippines Muslims* examines the situation of Muslims in southern Philippines, even though Philippines is not a member state.
- The *Committee of Six on Palestine* follows up the implementation of sanctions decided by the OIC as well as the sanctions provided for in article 7 of the Charter of the United Nations against Israel for refusing to implement UN resolutions, and for violating the principle of the Charter of the UN and the Universal Declaration on Human Rights.
- The *Contact Group on Bosnia Herzegovina* coordinates the activities of Member States on Bosnia Herzegovina and has created a fund to accelerate the return of refugees and displaced persons to Bosnia.
- The *Contact Group on Jammu and Kashmir* coordinates efforts of Member States to support the rights of the Jammu and Kashmir people to self determination in accordance with United Nations resolutions, and to safeguard the basic human rights of this people.
- There is also a *Sierra Leone Committee* and *Contact Group on Somalia*, as well as a *Committee on United Nations Reform*.

### Global influence of OIC

The institutional architecture of the OIC may look impressive, but, according to analysts, the way the OIC is run reflects the democratic deficit in many Muslim countries. For example, its highest decision-making body calls itself the "Conference of Kings and Heads of State and Government". Until recently, its workings were opaque to the outside world (even to citizens of Muslim states). Only five new countries have been given observer status and the OIC has had little contact or cooperation with other organisations in the global community, such as agencies attached to the UN.<sup>32</sup> Although a useful forum for discussion, the OIC has lacked the means to implement its resolutions. Thus, despite a 1981 call to redouble efforts "for the liberation of Jerusalem and the occupied territories" and to institute an economic boycott of Israel, several members, including Indonesia, Egypt, Jordan and Arab Gulf states, maintain economic ties with Israel. Furthermore, pledges for financial aid to member states or to Muslim communities suffering from civil war or natural disasters are often at best met only in part. The effectiveness of the OIC has also been constrained by the fact that many of its members have a wide variety of political orientations, from revolutionary Iran to conservative Saudi Arabia. Members have sometimes been in bitter dispute with one another, such as Iraq and Iran and Iraq and Kuwait.<sup>33</sup>

In his inaugural statement, Ihsanoglu stated "the OIC has not been able to fully achieve its potential and establish itself as a powerful entity capable of actively voicing the Muslim causes and making itself heard in the international arena... The OIC must acquire more weight and impact on the world scene."<sup>34</sup> Ihsanoglu stated in January 2005 that the OIC could only achieve its goals if: "we can change our methodology for adopting resolutions and find a mechanism for their implementation. Otherwise, many of our resolutions will remain a mere expression of good will towards each other."<sup>35</sup> However, in some areas, there is no doubt that the

---

<sup>31</sup> Professor Ihsanoglu confirmed that the OIC Member States were the biggest donors after the Tsunami disaster, extending assistance to Indonesia of 1.3 billion US\$. On the first anniversary of the tsunami disaster: *The OIC Secretary General appeals to the member states and the international community to honor their pledges for he reconstruction process, Jeddah, 26 December 2005.*

<sup>32</sup> The Islamic world's United Nations, Ehsan Masood, 7/3/2006,

[http://www.opendemocracy.net/globalization/islamic\\_un\\_3333.jsp](http://www.opendemocracy.net/globalization/islamic_un_3333.jsp)

<sup>33</sup> Profile: Organisation of the Islamic Conference, Story from BBC NEWS: [http://news.bbc.co.uk/go/pr/fr/-/2/hi/middle\\_east/country\\_profiles/1555062.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/go/pr/fr/-/2/hi/middle_east/country_profiles/1555062.stm), Published: 2006/03/10.

<sup>34</sup> Inaugural Statement by H.E. Professor Ekmeleddin Ihsanoglu Secretary General of the OIC Jeddah, 28 December 2004, <http://www.oic-oci.org/press/english/2005/january%202005/SG-Inaugural.htm>

<sup>35</sup> Speech of H.E. Professor Ekmeleddin Ihsanoglu, Secretary General of the OIC, at the Inaugural Meeting of the OIC Commission of Eminent Persons, Malaysia, 27-29 January 2005 [Secretary General Speeches Main Page http://www.oic-oci.org/press/english/2005/feb%202005/SG-putrajaya.htm](http://www.oic-oci.org/press/english/2005/feb%202005/SG-putrajaya.htm)

influence of the OIC is increasing. The Secretary General has decided to break away from the past practices of detachment and seclusion and is seeking to re-equip itself to play an active, engaged role in the global political arena. The fact that the few days after a fatwa was issued on Danish cartoonists passed off without incident may have had something to do with the presence in Islamabad of Ihsanoglu. At a press conference in Islamabad on 21 February, Ihsanoglu angrily said: "We have no authority to kill anybody and take the law in our hands." Ihsanoglu was emphatic: "Such a fatwa goes against Islam." His comments were widely reported in Pakistan's press and may have helped to release some of the tension. Ihsanoglu is respected across the Muslim world. In Pakistan (as elsewhere) Islamists cannot criticise him in the same way they routinely do President Pervez Musharraf. This is partly because he represents the consensus (and the conscience) of the Muslim world.<sup>36</sup>

But, as one analyst points out, there is a more practical, immediate reason: it was the OIC's December 2005 summit in Mecca – where the notorious "expanded" dossier of cartoons produced by Danish imams seeking to mobilise Muslim anger was circulated – that helped to alert Muslims to the images' existence. The OIC's vigorous condemnation of the "desecration" and its concern over the "rising hatred of Muslims" in Europe follows its decision to establish what it calls an "Islamophobia Observatory" in Jeddah, with a brief to document and publicise prejudice against Muslims in countries where they are a minority of the population. Such initiatives have helped raise the OIC's profile – and not just among Muslims. Ihsanoglu is now much in demand in the capitals of Europe. His office in Jeddah has hosted high-profile visitors, including United Nations secretary-general Kofi Annan, European Union foreign-policy chief Javier Solana, British foreign secretary Jack Straw, and the Director of the Office for Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs.<sup>37</sup>

The election victory of Hamas could provide a further opportunity for the OIC to demonstrate its capacity to make a difference in the region. Several OIC members now have contacts with Israel. Europe's foreign ministers may press Ihsanoglu to suggest that leaders of Hamas make some public gesture of Israel's existence; and that Hamas acknowledge that it will need to put its weapons beyond use. The OIC has more leverage on the second of these issues. Member states provide financial and military assistance to the Palestinians, and the OIC has made a public pledge to counter any justification for extremism in the name of Islam.<sup>38</sup>

#### **A chronology of key events:**

**1979** - Egypt suspended from OIC after signing peace agreement with Israel.

**1981** - OIC summit calls for broad struggle "for the liberation of Jerusalem and the occupied territories", including an economic boycott of Israel; general agreement for economic, technical and commercial cooperation comes into force.

**1982** - OIC foreign ministers resolve to create Islamic offices for boycotting Israel and for military cooperation with the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO).

**1984** - Egypt readmitted.

**1987** - OIC summit resolves that Islamic Peace Committee should make efforts to prevent the sale of military hardware to Iraq and Iran; requests holding of UN summit to define international terrorism and to differentiate it from legitimate struggle for freedom.

**1990** - OIC condemns Iraq's invasion of Kuwait and demands the withdrawal of Iraqi troops.

**1991** - OIC calls on UN Security Council to take all necessary steps against Serbia and Montenegro, including military intervention, in order to protect Bosnian Muslims.

**1993** - OIC calls on UN Security Council to remove arms embargo against Bosnian Muslims in order to allow them to defend themselves against Bosnian Serbs; OIC members pledge 80 million dollars in emergency assistance for Muslims affected by the war in Bosnia; seven OIC states commit themselves to providing up to 17,000 troops to the UN peacekeeping force in Bosnia (UNPROFOR).

**1994** - OIC summit proclaims UN arms embargo on Bosnia-Herzegovina null and void as far as the Muslim authorities there were concerned.

**1995** - OIC foreign and defence ministers endorse the creation of an "assistance mobilisation group" to supply military, economic, and other assistance to Bosnia-Herzegovina.

**1999** - OIC decides to send humanitarian aid to Kosovar Albanian refugees

**2000** - OIC summit pledges solidarity with Palestinian people and accuses Israel of large-scale systematic violations of Palestinian human rights.

**2001 September** - OIC condemns the September 11 terrorist attacks against the US, describing them as "barbaric and criminal".

**2001 October** - OIC emergency session held in Qatar to discuss September 11 attacks and US strikes against Taliban in Afghanistan. Delegates urge Washington not to target other countries in its campaign against terrorism.

**2002 February** - OIC rejects US President George W Bush's assertion that member countries Iran and Iraq are part of an "axis of evil".

<sup>36</sup> The Islamic world's United Nations, Ehsan Masood, 7/3/2006, [http://www.opendemocracy.net/globalization/islamic\\_un\\_3333.jsp](http://www.opendemocracy.net/globalization/islamic_un_3333.jsp)

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*

**2003** March - OIC emergency summit is held in Doha, Qatar, to discuss the Iraqi crisis and the threat of a US-led military campaign against Baghdad. The summit calls for diplomacy to be given more time.

**2004** April - Emergency summit held in Malaysia to consider the Middle East situation, including ongoing troubles in Iraq.

**2004** June - Delegates at Istanbul meeting choose Turkish former diplomat Ekmeleddin Ihsanoglu as secretary-general. He takes office in December.

**2006** August - OIC special session demands a halt to fighting between Israeli forces and Hezbollah militia in Lebanon and calls for a UN force to be deployed.<sup>39</sup>

**2006** October - OIC organizes a meeting between Iraqi religious leaders representing Sunnis and Shias to adopt a reconciliation document calling for ending the bloodshed in Iraq.<sup>40</sup>

**2006** November - OIC Secretary General renewed his call for an International Conference for Peace in the Middle East; strongly appeals for urgent humanitarian assistance for the flood-affected people in the Horn of Africa; expressed his deep concern and sorrow at the heinous acts of violence in Iraq; warmly welcomes the resumption of diplomatic relations between Syria and Iraq 21 November 2006.<sup>41</sup>

### **The Cairo Declaration of Human Rights in Islam (CDHRI)**

CDHRI is a declaration of the member states of the OIC, which provides an overview on the Islamic perspective on human rights, and affirms Islamic Shariah as its sole source. This declaration is usually seen as an Islamic counterpart of and a response to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and diverges from it in key respects. Article 24 of the declaration states: "All the rights and freedoms stipulated in this Declaration are subject to the Islamic Sharia." Article 19 also says: "There shall be no crime or punishment except as provided for in the Sharia." The CDHR underscores its basis in Islam as the "true religion" and in the way of life of the Muslim society — Ummah, which is described as the best community and as playing a "civilizing and historical role". Article 22 restricts freedom of speech to those expressions of it that are not in contravention of the Islamic law. Similarly, the right to hold public office is contingent upon such right being in accordance with Sharia. Article 5 prohibits the imposition of any restrictions on marriage stemming from "race, colour or nationality", excluding religion from the list, so that men and women may be prevented from marrying on the basis of their religion. Similarly, CDHRI is criticized as not endorsing equality between men and women and affirming the superiority of men. In the Article 6, women are guaranteed equal dignity, but not equality in other matters.<sup>42</sup>

### **Engagement with CSOs**

The establishment of coordination mechanisms with civil society organizations, and recognition of their role, has been on the agenda of the OIC for a number of years. For example, the Tehran Declaration on Dialogue Among Civilizations Adopted by The Islamic Symposium on Dialogue Among Civilizations in May 1999 recognised that: "Representatives of civil society can play an instrumental role in promoting the culture of dialogue within various societies and should also participate in such dialogue."<sup>43</sup> At his inauguration, the current Secretary General, called for a renewed effort to establish linkages with non-governmental organisations, "which represent the people, society itself, and I believe that in this relationship the Muslim world can best be inspired by its own history, having been the birthplace of the *waqf* institution, of which NGOs are a contemporary extension and a modern version."<sup>44</sup> The Ten Year Programme of Action calls for the development and adoption of a clear strategy on Islamic relief action and support for the trend towards cooperation and coordination between individual relief efforts of Islamic states and Islamic civil society institutions on the one hand and international civil society institutions and organisations on the other.<sup>45</sup> In November 2006, OCHA also offered assistance in the creation of an OIC forum for NGOs around humanitarian activities and relief. The OIC on its part will promote OCHA's image in OIC Member States and mobilize more resources for OCHA programs in OIC countries.<sup>46</sup>

<sup>39</sup> *Timeline: Organisation of the Islamic Conference, Story from BBC NEWS:* [http://news.bbc.co.uk/go/pr/fr/-/2/hi/middle\\_east/country\\_profiles/1564339.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/go/pr/fr/-/2/hi/middle_east/country_profiles/1564339.stm) Published: 2006/08/19.

<sup>40</sup> Organization of the Islamic Conference plans talks for Iraqi religious leaders, 12 October 2006 (BBC Monitoring), Source: Arab News website, Jeddah, [http://www.iragupdates.com/p\\_articles.php/article/11040](http://www.iragupdates.com/p_articles.php/article/11040)

<sup>41</sup> See: <http://www.oic-oci.org/>

<sup>42</sup> See: [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cairo\\_Declaration\\_on\\_Human\\_Rights\\_in\\_Islam](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cairo_Declaration_on_Human_Rights_in_Islam)

<sup>43</sup> The Tehran Declaration on Dialogue Among Civilizations Adopted by The Islamic Symposium on Dialogue Among Civilizations Tehran 3-5 May 1999, <http://www.oic-un.org/pr/1999/News.99.htm>

<sup>44</sup> Inaugural Statement by H.E. Professor Ekmeleddin Ihsanoglu Secretary General of the OIC Jeddah, 28 December 2004 [Secretary General Speeches, http://www.oic-oci.org/press/english/2005/january%202005/SG-Inaugural.htm](http://www.oic-oci.org/press/english/2005/january%202005/SG-Inaugural.htm)

<sup>45</sup> *Report of the Secretary General on the Current Status of the Implementation of the Ten-Year Programme of Action to the 22<sup>nd</sup> Session of COMCEC, Istanbul, Turkey, 21-24 November 2006.*

<sup>46</sup> The next meeting between the two organizations is scheduled for March 2007. OIC-OCHA agreed to meet every six months for evaluating the level of cooperation and to look into new projects of common interest. OCHA and OIC agreed to cooperate on humanitarian programs, The OIC Weekly Newsletter Issue 5, 8 November 2006, <http://www.oic-oci.org/journal/newsletter-web5.htm>

In addition, in the bodies and work of the OIC, there is already a significant degree of engagement with CSOs. The Committee for the Islamic Conference Youth Forum for Dialogue and Cooperation was initiated by the National Assembly of the Youth Organizations of the Republic of Azerbaijan, an umbrella youth NGO in special consultative status with the UN ECOSOC, and Eurasian International Development Association within the Islamic Conference Youth Initiative. The main goal of the Initiative was to establish a coordinating body functioning on a permanent basis to discuss issues of common interest, advocate for issues of pressing concern for Muslim youth and explore the ways for future cooperation, coordination and networking.

The OIC regularly calls upon CSOs to assist in specific emergencies. For example, the OIC Alliance to Rescue Tsunami Child Victims was formed, with the participation of the Islamic Development Bank, a number of OIC Member States, and NGOs.<sup>47</sup> Regarding the situation of Muslims in Myanmar, the OIC appealed to Muslim leaders and institutions and civil society organizations in the Union of Myanmar to combine their efforts and work in coordination and cooperation with opposition parties “in order to achieve the aspirations of the people of Myanmar to freedom, justice, equality, and democracy.”<sup>48</sup> During the latest conflict in Lebanon, the Secretary General of the OIC exhorted “all member states and all their philanthropic organizations and civil society institutions to kindly extend all kinds of assistance to the beleaguered people of Lebanon in these trying times.”<sup>49</sup> The Secretary General voiced his commitment to initiate efforts to increase the OIC’s contribution in the reconstruction and development of the region as well as to mobilize the civil society-charity organizations of the Muslim world to extend assistance to the refugees and displaced people in Darfur.<sup>50</sup> Regarding the situation in Beit Hanoun, the OIC Secretary General requested a meeting to be convened of the humanitarian organizations and civil society institutions of member states to develop a joint programme to provide urgent humanitarian assistance.<sup>51</sup>

The Secretary General also holds meetings with CSOs. Whilst investigating the serious humanitarian situation that has resulted from the widespread drought conditions in the Horn of Africa, the Secretary General held detailed meetings with “all relevant civil society organizations.”<sup>52</sup> The First Islamic Ministerial Conference on the Child pointed to the need for active partnerships among OIC governments, as well as with regional and international financial institutions, civil society, and the private sector, in order to provide the necessary funding and technical expertise to make a meaningful difference for children in OIC Member States.<sup>53</sup> The Islamic Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization –ISESCO - held its Annual Consultative Meeting of the representatives of youth and women civil society organizations, on 31 October -1 November 2006 in Manama, Bahrain. The meeting brought together some thirty-one officials of non-governmental associations from West Asia and North Africa to address such topics as poverty and environment, war and environment as well as water and environment.<sup>54</sup>

---

<sup>47</sup> *On the first anniversary of the tsunami disaster: The OIC Secretary General appeals to the member states and the international community to honor their pledges for the reconstruction process, Jeddah: 26 December 2005.*

<sup>48</sup> *Resolution No. 4/33-MM, on the Muslim Minority in Myanmar, The Thirty-third Session of the Islamic Conference of Foreign Ministers, (Session on Harmony of Rights, Freedoms and Justice), held in Baku, Republic of Azerbaijan 19-21 June 2006.*

<sup>49</sup> *Press Release, Jeddah: 18 July 2006.*

<sup>50</sup> *The OIC Secretary General Concluded his Visit to Khartoum, Jeddah, 18 October 2006.*

<sup>51</sup> *Final communiqué adopted by the extraordinary expanded meeting of the OIC executive committee at the level of foreign ministers Headquarters of the General Secretariat Saudi Arabia 18 November 2006.*

<sup>52</sup> *OIC secretary general dispatches fact-finding mission to the horn of Africa to assess the humanitarian situation resulting from the widespread drought conditions Jeddah, 14 May 2005.*

<sup>53</sup> *Joint press release, Ministers from Islamic countries take strong stand in favour of children, Rabat Declaration on the Child signals commitment to children in the drive for Islamic solidarity, 8 November 2005*

[http://www.unicef.org/media/media\\_29763.html](http://www.unicef.org/media/media_29763.html)

<sup>54</sup> *Rabat: 30 October 2006 Consultative Meeting of Representatives of Civil Society Organizations on Environment Issues*  
<http://www.isesco.org.ma/English/News/CT/index.asp>

## Official Participation of CSOs

Despite such interactions, there are few official opportunities for CSOs (such as charities, trade unions, professional societies or business) to participate in its *decisions*.<sup>55</sup> However, recognising that CSOs have a vital role to play in many of the key areas with which the OIC is concerned, and referring to other organisations that have structured involvement of NGOs – such as the UN ECOSOC, the European Union, and the League of Arab States - the Extraordinary Session of the Islamic Summit Conference, which was held in Saudi Arabia in December 2005, recommended strengthening relations with internationally recognized NGOs. Proceeding from that basis, the OIC General Secretariat has prepared *draft* rules and bylaws for accession of NGOs to the OIC as observers.<sup>56</sup>

Observer Status at the OIC may be granted to: Non-governmental Organizations engaged in international activities that are not in conflict with the objectives of the OIC, which, through their accession to the Observer Status, can conduct activities and render outstanding services to Muslims, provided the granting of Observer Status to them is not contested by the State hosting their headquarters. Non-governmental organizations enjoying Observer Status shall establish an office to represent them collectively and organize their activities with the OIC. In consultation with the Department of Legal Affairs at the OIC, the office shall draft bye laws to organize joint activities. The organizations may hold a regular meeting before an ordinary session of the Islamic summit conference or the Islamic Conference of Foreign Ministers and shall have a right to submit memoranda or recommendations to these meetings.<sup>57</sup> However, until such laws are finalized there still appears to be opportunities for CS to become more involved in the work of the OIC.

## Recommendations of entry points and engagement opportunities for CSOs:

The OIC now concerns itself with a broad spectrum of issues that are also of concern to CSOs: the status of women and children<sup>58</sup>; poverty alleviation; disease eradication; humanitarian relief; development, etc. Moreover, the OIC has a much more “open door” policy than was the case previously. What remain slightly unclear are the extent to which the role of CSOs should focus specifically on Muslims, and the extent to which CSOs themselves should be Muslim organisations. To find out more about the role of CSOs in the OIC, and to further engage through CSOs with the OIC, the following initiatives could be taken:

- Follow up developments with the discussions around the OCHA-OIC forum for NGOs
- Find out more about the work and discussions of the Youth Forum, and other OIC initiatives that gather CSOs, such as around the status of women and children
- If possible, be part of meetings such as that called for around the situation in Beit Hanoun, or in any other emergency humanitarian situations where the OIC shows an interest in gathering NGO / CSO support
- Follow developments of the Observer Status Draft Laws for NGOs
- Visit the OIC office in Brussels when it opens
- Communicate directly with the OIC to find out more.....

---

<sup>55</sup> The Islamic world's United Nations, Ehsan Masood, 7/3/2006,

[http://www.opendemocracy.net/globalization/islamic\\_un\\_3333.jsp](http://www.opendemocracy.net/globalization/islamic_un_3333.jsp)

<sup>56</sup> *Message of H.E. Professor Ekmeleddin Ihsanoglu, Secretary General of the OIC, at the Second Session of the Intergovernmental Group of Experts to Review OIC Observer Status, Jeddah, Saudi Arabia 4-6 February 2006.*

<sup>57</sup> *Report of the Second Meeting of the Intergovernmental Group of Experts on the Review of Rules of observer Status at the OIC, Jeddah, 4-6 February 2006.*

<sup>58</sup> At the first OIC conference on 'Women's role in the development of OIC member states' in November 2006, ways and means were elaborated to implement World Summit recommendations of 2005 which called for eliminating gender inequalities in primary and secondary education, ensuring equal access to the facilities of reproduction health, promoting adequate labor access and protection, ensuring equal access of women to productive assets and resources, eliminating all forms of discrimination and violence, and promoting increased representation of women in government decision-making bodies. The OIC Weekly Newsletter, <http://www.oic-oci.org/journal/newsletter-web2.htm>

**Links:**

**Official** [The Organization of the Islamic Conference](#)

**Official** [Islamic Conference](#) with documents and information from the latest Summit

**UN** [Organization of the Islamic Conference](#)

**Subsidiary Organs:**

Statistical, Economic and Social Research and Training Center for Islamic Countries [www.sesrtcic.org](http://www.sesrtcic.org)

Research Center for Islamic History, Art & Culture [www.ircica.org](http://www.ircica.org)

Islamic Fiqh Academy [www.fiqhacademy.org](http://www.fiqhacademy.org)

Islamic Center for Development of Trade [www.icdt.org](http://www.icdt.org)

Islamic University of Technology [www.iutoic-dhaka.edu](http://www.iutoic-dhaka.edu)

**Specialized Institution & Organs:**

Islamic Development Bank [www.isdb.org](http://www.isdb.org)

International Islamic News Agency [www.islamicnews.org](http://www.islamicnews.org)

Islamic States Broadcasting Organization [www.isboo.org](http://www.isboo.org)

Islamic Educational, Scientific & Cultural Organization in Rabat [www.isesco.org.ma](http://www.isesco.org.ma)

**Affiliated Institutions:**

Islamic Chamber of Commerce and Industry [www.icci-oic.org](http://www.icci-oic.org)

Organization of Islamic Capitals and Cities [www.oicc.org](http://www.oicc.org)

Islamic Conference Youth Forum For Dialogue & Cooperation [www.icyf.com](http://www.icyf.com)

Islamic Solidarity Fund <http://www.oic-oci.org/english/main/subsidiary%20organs.htm>