



1st OIC OBSERVATORY
REPORT ON
ISLAMOPHOBIA

May 2007 to May 2008

PRESENTED TO THE
35TH council of foreign ministers

KAMPALA, REPUBLIC OF UGANDA

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Foreword

**By Professor Ekmeleddin Ihsanoglu,
Secretary General of the Organization of Islamic Conference**

It is my great pleasure to introduce the updated report of the OIC Observatory on Islamophobia to the 35th Session of the Council of Foreign Ministers for the period May 2007-May 2008.

The Muslim Ummah has noticed with utmost concern the continued attacks by a section of marginal groups and individuals in the West on the most sacred symbols of Islam including the Holy Quran and Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) in an offensive and denigrating manner, the most recent being the reprints of the blasphemous cartoons by 17 Danish newspapers on February 13, 2008 and the release of the film Fitna by a Dutch Parliamentarian on March 27, 2008. This apart, Muslims continue to be stereotyped, discriminated and profiled in many Western countries that have contributed to the issue.

The concern of the Muslim world over the rise in Islamophobia was voiced very strongly by the Heads of State and Government and leaders of delegation at the 11th OIC Summit held in Dakar, Senegal on March 13-14, 2008. The leaders in their statements condemned the campaign of hatred and intolerance against Islam and discrimination against Muslims and this was clearly reflected in the Final Declaration and Resolutions adopted by the Summit. The Report of the UN Special Rapporteur on Contemporary Forms of Racism, Racial Discrimination, and Xenophobia to the 6th Session of the UN Human Rights Council in 2007 has also confirmed the rise of the phenomenon of Islamophobia.

The present Observatory Report is an implementation of the directives of the 11th OIC Summit held in Dakar and the 34th ICFM in Islamabad on May 15-17, 2007 to monitor and counter Islamophobia. The manifestations of Islamophobia that have been cited in the OIC Observatory Report provide sufficient evidence of the rising trend of Islamophobia in parts of the western world. The instances quoted or referred to in the report corroborate that marginal western groups and individuals, motivated by hatred and intolerance against Muslims and Islam remain unabated in acts of provocation and incitement of religious intolerance by misuse or abuse of the right to freedom of expression. The need to address this issue through adoption of an adequate international instrument has been underscored in the Report.

The Observatory Report has also highlighted the actions taken by the General Secretariat to raise the awareness of the international community of the dangers of Islamophobia by its active engagement with Western interlocutors. The report has put up strong arguments of the issue being not only a campaign of religious intolerance but a new form of racism and calling on the West to join in a constructive and meaningful dialogue that would succeed in the development of a mechanism against defamation of religions and discrimination against Muslims. The Observatory Report has taken into consideration some positive developments that have been noticed from the reports and statements of Western political leaders and think tanks including research institutions which indicate the recognition by the West of Islamophobia as an issue of concern.

I am confident that the Observatory Report will meet the expectations of the Member States and will serve as an eye opener to the outside world on the gravity of the issue. I believe that with the continued support and inspiration of the Member States, the Observatory will be further strengthened and will remain committed to the task entrusted upon it.

Executive Summary

One of the major challenges of today's world is the issue of Islamophobia. In recent years, this phenomenon has assumed serious proportions and has become a major cause of concern for the Muslim world. As a result of this rising trend, Muslims, in the West in particular, are being stereotyped, profiled, and subjected to different forms of discriminatory treatment. The most sacred symbols of Islam are being defiled and denigrated in an insulting, offensive, and contemptuous manner to incite hatred and unrest in society. While Islam, as the religion of peace and tolerance, affirms moderation and balance and rejects all forms of extremism and terrorism, the proponents of Islamophobia continue their campaign in defaming Islam and Muslims.

Against this backdrop, the Heads of State and Government, during the 3rd Extraordinary Islamic Summit held in Mecca in December 2005, adopted the OIC Ten-Year Program of Action, which inter-alia, decided to establish an Observatory at the OIC General Secretariat to raise awareness of the dangers of Islamophobia and counter it by monitoring all its forms and manifestations, in addition to initiating a structured dialogue to project the true values of Islam. The leaders also tasked the Observatory with issuing an annual report. That decision to submit the report was reiterated by the 34th Islamic Conference of Foreign Ministers (ICFM) held in Islamabad in May 2007. Accordingly, the first report of the Observatory was submitted to the Eleventh Islamic Summit Conference held in Dakar, Senegal, on March 13-14, 2008.

The Observatory Report is a collation of incidents and developments that vindicate the Ummah's concerns over the growing phenomenon of Islamophobia. It also provides an account of the activities and efforts on the part of the OIC Observatory and initiatives and efforts undertaken by the OIC Secretary General in countering Islamophobia and in bringing the issue to the forefront of the international community's agenda. It also aims to highlight and explain its dangerous repercussions on global peace and security and stress the urgent need to muster a collective political will to combat it. The present Report has been developed by elaborating the definition and causes of the phenomenon and recording incidents and developments on the issue.

The Observatory Report is presented in four main sections: (i) the conceptual part, where the term "Islamophobia" is discussed, including its definition and its root causes; (ii) recent manifestations of Islamophobia, including Islamophobic incidents and derogatory political statements as well as a few positive developments that have been observed; (iii) the activities and efforts of the Observatory and the Secretary General to counter Islamophobia; and (iv) conclusion.

The methodology in compiling the report consists of providing an account of the outcomes of international conferences, and UN documents and resolutions, as well as the collation of reports and studies by established research organizations and think-tanks, monitoring and documenting available credible reports of Islamophobic incidents. The Report's methodology has also deliberately sought to avoid reproducing overly racist slurs or excessively incendiary or confrontational language as sometimes reproduced in the Internet so as to respect sensitivities, avoid giving undue space or exposure to the elements propagating such invectives, and thereby contribute to raising the standards of the debate on this question. The Report has focused on the Muslim world's concerns over the disturbing situation that Muslims are facing mainly in western societies, in addition to the practices of vilification of Islam in that part of the world. It also highlights the legal implications of Islamophobia by emphasizing that this phenomenon is in contradiction with the letter and spirit of several legal instruments and calls for the enactment of national legislations and international instruments to ensure protection against the defamation of religion and the elimination of all aspects of discrimination and intolerance of Muslims. The

Report puts up relevant arguments on the urgent need for the international community to come up with effective legal instruments to fight this menace and affirms that the right to freedom of expression should be concomitantly exercised with its inherent responsibilities and cannot be a license to cause hurt, provoke and incite hatred, or discriminate against Muslims on the basis of their faith by defaming, denigrating, or insulting the sacred religious symbols of Islam and fomenting unrest and violence in societies.

In compiling its first report, the Observatory has taken into account the complexity of the issue of Islamophobia and the way it is perceived by its protagonists. In working to come up with a definition of Islamophobia, the report has taken into consideration the definition provided by *the UN Special Rapporteur on Contemporary Forms of Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia, and related Intolerance*, who has defined Islamophobia as “a baseless hostility and fear vis-à-vis Islam and, as a result, a fear of, and aversion towards all Muslims or a majority of them.” In his 2007 report to the 6th session of the UN Human Rights Council, the UN Special Rapporteur stated that Islamophobia was a growing phenomenon and a matter of concern in the aftermath of the events of the 9/11.

The Observatory Report has referred to the findings of polls, studies, and reports of important international institutions to establish recognition of the rise of Islamophobia in western societies. In this respect, excerpts of the reports and findings of the *International Helsinki Federation for Human Rights* of March 2005; August 2006 *USA Today/Gallup Poll*; the Washington-based *Human Rights First 2007 Report on Islamophobia*; the *Pew Research Center Report* of September 25, 2007 and the *European Monitoring Centre on Racism and Xenophobia (EUMC)* now known as *FRA*, were incorporated. The European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI)'s 2007 "*Third Report on the Netherlands*" released on 12 February 2008 that provides substantiating evidence of OIC concerns on Islamophobia, has also been referred to. The ECRI report clearly shows the "dramatic" increase of Islamophobia in the Netherlands, stating that Muslims of the Netherlands have been subject to stereotyping, stigmatizing, and sometimes outright racist political statements, in addition to biased media profiling.

The Observatory Report states that Islamophobia will continue to be an issue of concern for the international community in the near future unless the international community comes up with effective measures to contain it. The Report, however, argues that the Muslim world's outcry at Islamophobic incidents, in particular the publication of the defamatory cartoons of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) and the unfortunate and unwarranted remarks by Pope Benedict XVI at a University in Germany on September 20, 2006, had a negative impact on the Muslim world and drew attention of its official and public opinion to the gravity of the issue.

The negative impact of the blasphemous cartoons was reflected in the OIC-initiated trilateral joint statement by the OIC Secretary General, the UN Secretary General, and the EU High Representative for the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP), on February 7, 2006, as well as in the joint statement on "*the Rights to Freedom of Expression and Peaceful Protest*" issued in Doha, Qatar, on February 25, 2006, by the Secretaries General of the UN, OIC, and League of Arab States, Qatar's First Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister, and Spain's and Turkey's Foreign Ministers respectively. Furthermore, the OIC Secretary General's participation in various international Conferences on inter-religious and inter-cultural tolerance, together with his meetings with Heads of State and Government, Foreign Ministers, leading academics and NGO leaders of Western countries, and Heads of International Organizations, including the United Nations, the UN Alliance of Civilizations, the EU, the OSCE, and the Council of Europe, has contributed to raising awareness of the issue of Islamophobia. The announcement by the US

Government to appoint a Special Envoy to the OIC and the Vatican's decision to reinstate the Department for Dialogue with Muslims were also considered among positive developments.

The OIC General Secretariat took a major initiative by organizing an important conference on Islamophobia, in cooperation with the Wilton Park Institution on May 2-3, 2006 in London. The significance of the Conference was highlighted by the participation of high-level representatives of OIC Member States, European governments, and international organizations, such as the UN, Council of Europe, OSCE, European Union, in addition to academics, media representatives, Muslim organizations and NGOs based in Europe. The Conference, which was addressed, among others, by the OIC Secretary General, British Minister of State, Kim Howells, and Malaysia's High Commissioner in London acting on behalf of the OIC Summit Chairmanship, issued a report containing a number of recommendations to address the issue of Islamophobia.

The Observatory Report also took into account the important role of the Media in dealing with the issue of Islamophobia. Accordingly, the international conference jointly organized by the Government of the Republic of Azerbaijan and the OIC General Secretariat under the title of "*the Role of Media in the Development of Tolerance and Mutual Understanding*" in Baku, Azerbaijan, on April 26-27, 2007, and attended by political leaders, prominent media professionals, and NGO members of both the Muslim world and the West, highlighted the urgent and pressing need for fair and balanced reporting and responsible political commentary in order to foster the culture of tolerance and promote mutual understanding. The Baku Conference also emphasized that freedom of expression should be linked with a sense of responsibility on the part of those exercising this freedom.

The OIC General Secretariat, in cooperation with the Georgetown University-Prince Al-Waleed bin Talal Center for Christian-Muslim Understanding in Washington DC, organized two symposiums on 20-21 September, 2007, where the OIC Secretary General addressed two interactive round-table sessions, one on "*Islamophobia and the Challenge of Pluralism in the 21st Century*" and the other on "*the Role of the Media in West-Islam Relations*".

The Muslim world's concern over the growing phenomenon of Islamophobia was voiced very strongly by the Heads of State and Government and leaders of delegations at the 11th OIC Summit held in Dakar, Senegal, on March 13-14, 2008. In their statements, the leaders and the OIC Secretary General condemned the campaign of hatred and intolerance of Islam and discrimination towards Muslims.

Since the submission of the first Observatory Report and immediately in the wake of the 11th OIC Summit, a major Islamophobic incident that shocked and dismayed all Muslims and the international community was the release of the film "Fitna" denigrating the Holy Qur'an. This was preceded by the reprint of cartoons of the Prophet (PBUH) by seventeen Danish newspapers. Condemning the release of the film in the strongest terms, the OIC Secretary General described it as a deliberate act of discrimination against Muslims, incitement of hatred, and an act of defamation of religions solely designed to incite and provoke unrest among peoples of different religious beliefs, and to jeopardize world peace and stability. He warned the international community against the repercussions of this serious development. He also took up the matter with the Dutch Government, urging it to initiate legal action against the acts committed under the pretext of freedom of expression.

The Observatory Report concludes that the relentless campaign of hatred and intolerance of Islam and Muslims by vested individuals and ultra-right wing groups notwithstanding, there is now a

general awareness in the international community on Islamophobia's serious implications. Western Governments, NGOs, and the civil society have started to take serious note of the concerns of the Muslim world over the dangers of defamation of Islam and have shown willingness to engage in dialogue. The Report also shows that these developments still fall short of the actions and political will needed to address the issue in decisive and clear terms, since Islamophobes remain free to carry on their attacks in the absence of necessary legal measures to curb the misuse or abuse of the right to freedom of expression. The Report therefore concludes that OIC Member States may continue to vigorously pursue their efforts to combat Islamophobia at both multilateral and bilateral levels.

Finally, it is to be noted that the Report's conclusions are based on the Observatory's research findings and analysis of the facts and figures collated throughout its monitoring activities of key international and regional bodies, agencies, internet websites, and reports.

1. Introduction

The end of the Cold War and the subsequent breakup of the Soviet Union towards the turn of the 20th century having led to the dismantling of ideological barriers and divisions infused a sense of renewed optimism for peace, stability, and development within the international community at large. This optimism was, however, short-lived as the world became witness to the emergence of new kinds of entrenched conflicts and insidious acts of xenophobia and discrimination based on ethnicity. Mass killings and brutal human-rights violations were perpetrated in the Balkans, in which the Muslims were among the most affected victims. The Srebrenica Genocide is one of these unfortunate examples.

The situation took a turn for the worse in the aftermath of the 9/11 terrorist attacks in the US. Discrimination and intolerance towards Muslims and defamation of Islam, particularly in Europe and North America, reached alarming and unprecedented proportions. Distortion of the image of Islam and smear campaigns to defame this faith as “*supportive of extremism*” have been on the rise while Muslims were treated with suspicion and in many cases profiled as potential terrorists. As a result, they became victims of various forms of discrimination, stereotyping, and violation of their human rights.

In modern times, some western scholars, who are proponents of Islamophobia, have accentuated the phenomenon through their writings. In his book “*The Clash of Civilizations*”, Samuel Huntington argued that “*the underlying problem for the West is not Islamic fundamentalism*”, but “*Islam*” itself. For many years now, a section of the Western media has been engaged in depicting Islam and Muslims as a problem, with a view of manipulating public opinion to such a degree that Muslims would be universally viewed as the enemy and Islam as a violent religion.

By contrast the French scholar Vincent Geisser of the Paris-based Institute of Research and Studies on the Arab and Muslim world, “*Islamophobia is not a resurgence of the old issue of Crusades vs. Jihad—though it retains occasional traces of theological argument—but a deeply modern form of anti-Muslim racism*”¹.

The Personal Representative of the Chairman-in-Office on Combating Intolerance and Discrimination against Muslims, in his report to the *OSCE High-Level Conference on Combating Discrimination and Promoting Mutual Respect and Understanding (Working Session II)*, Bucharest, June 7-8, 2007, noted that, in the eyes of many in the West, extremist elements allegedly claiming allegiance to Islam had become synonymous with the Muslim community as a whole, so much so that many Muslims who believed in tolerance and peaceful coexistence were nevertheless being subjected to discrimination and viewed with suspicion.

The Muslim world’s concern over growing Islamophobia was voiced very strongly by the Heads of State and Government and leaders of delegations at the 11th OIC Summit held in Dakar, Senegal, on March 13-14, 2008. In their statements, the leaders condemned the campaign of hatred and intolerance against Islam and discrimination towards Muslims by a marginal group of individuals with vested interests. President Abdoulaye Wade of Senegal and Chairman of the 11th Islamic Summit Conference asserted that, “today, our freedom to worship in peace should be a concern to us, since we are unfortunately witnessing the emergence of a certain trend for Islamophobia nourished and entertained by malevolent individuals, adept at falsifying history from all angles”,

¹ V. Geisser, 2004 in “Islamophobia and its Consequences on Young People”, European Youth Center, Budapest, 1-6 June 2004, Seminar Report.

adding that “the pretext of freedom of opinion, as an attempt to justify attacks led by a minority of malevolent individuals on the religious feelings of close to a billion and half Muslims, is simply inadmissible” and concluding that, in actual fact, “a freedom without limits exists nowhere and this is recognized by all political systems”.

In his address to the Summit, the OIC Secretary General lamented that “In our relations with the Western World, we are going through difficult times. We strongly feel that our religion and its sacred symbols, on both community and individual levels, Muslims are being targeted by a campaign of defamation, denigration, stereotyping, intolerance, and discrimination”. “Ignorance about Islam and also calculated animosity with deep historic roots on the part of a minority in the West, as well as our failure to disseminate the true values of Islam” he explained “are the reasons of this increasing wave of Islamophobia”. He noted that, “We are confronted by hatred and bigotry of radical marginal groups who believe that it is only through insulting Muslims and their religious symbols that they can demonstrate their commitment to freedom of speech”. He urged the Summit “to send an unequivocal message to the Muslim World, to the Western World, and to the international community at large that irresponsible attacks targeting our religion, our Prophet, and our Muslim brothers and sisters will not and cannot be condoned and that serious political engagement, dialogue, and cooperation are necessary between the Muslim and Western Worlds, including at UN platforms”.

The Final Communiqué issued by the 11th Islamic Summit Conference expressed its deep concern at the systematically negative stereotyping of Muslims, Islam, and other divine religions. The Summit stated that Islamophobia constituted an affront to human dignity and ran counter to international human rights instruments. It strongly condemned the publication of offensive caricatures of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), as well as all the inappropriate remarks made about Islam and Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), under the pretext of freedom of expression and the press, and stressed the need to prevent the abuse of freedom of expression and the press for insulting Islam.

The 20th Arab Summit held in Damascus on March 29, 2008, underscored that the escalation of the vicious campaign on Islam and the growing phenomenon of Islamophobia and discrimination faced by Muslims in Western societies are matters of deep preoccupation indeed, particularly in view of the defamation and insults of Islam and Muslims in countries that were once known for their pluralism and acceptance of the other. The current state of unilateralism prevailing in the world calls for a greater effort to close the widening gap between cultures and civilizations. Hence cooperation between the League of Arab States, the OIC, and other relevant organizations is important in order to face up to this phenomenon and the rising grave misperception and discrimination towards Islam, which calls for moderation, tolerance, and acceptance of the other.

The distorted image of Islam and Muslims presented in public statements, and media reports in the West reflects a general tendency to vilify Islam, and creates an atmosphere of an irrational fear and hostility vis-à-vis Islam. Consequently, this new international environment has created a critical need for a comprehensive assessment of the present scenario for forging an understanding of the true nature and consequences of the problems underlying the current image of Muslims.

1.1. The OIC Islamophobia Observatory

It may be recalled that, during the 3rd OIC Extraordinary Summit in Mecca, 2005, the Heads of State and Government took into account the Muslim world’s concerns over the rising trend of Islamophobia, and mandated the OIC General Secretariat to establish an Observatory to monitor

Islamophobia, take necessary counter-measures, and initiate a structured dialogue in order to project the true values of Islam and empower Muslim countries to meet the challenges of 21st century. Since its establishment, the Observatory has been active in implementing the decision of the 3rd OIC Extraordinary Summit regarding Islamophobia.

A major development in this regard has been the holding of a *Brainstorming Session on Countering Discrimination and Intolerance towards Muslims and Defamation of Islam* during the 34th Session of the ICFM in Islamabad in May 2007. At that Session, the OIC Foreign Ministers emphasized that one of the main reasons for Islamophobic causes was ignorance. It was also noted that not enough had been done to project Islam as a religion of peace and tolerance. The Session also concluded that it was erroneous and misleading for anyone to assume a link between Islam and terrorism and urged the OIC Secretary General to foster close ties with the United Nations and other organizations, such as the European Union (EU) and the OSCE, at both bilateral and multilateral levels. The Session recommended that along with countering Islamophobia, the OIC General Secretariat should also engage in a dialogue with the West, underscoring that the dialogue had to be a two-way street in order to build confidence among all faiths by respecting each other's diversity.

To address the issue effectively, the OIC Foreign Ministers emphasized the necessity for the enforcement of international legal instruments prohibiting discrimination against Muslims. They decided to work together in international *fora* by safeguarding Muslim interests. They agreed that the UN Human Rights Council (HRC) is the appropriate venue through which resolutions protecting Islam and Muslims should be submitted and adopted. The Foreign Ministers laid strong emphasis on education, in particular for younger generations, in terms of enlightening them on the true and positive image of Islam, mainly with regard to its core values of tolerance, mercy, and compassion.

The OIC Foreign Ministers also decided that the Observatory should prepare an annual report on Islamophobia. Accordingly, the Observatory's first Annual Report was submitted to the 11th OIC Summit held in Dakar on March 13-14, 2008. The Report analyzed the phenomenon of Islamophobia in the context of the discrimination and denial of human rights suffered by Muslims and put forward a set of recommendations to effectively address the issue. The methodology followed was to utilize UN documents, resolutions, and outcomes of international conferences and to compile and examine reports, studies, and figures from verifiable research and media sources and think-tanks, as well as findings from monitoring available reports of Islamophobic incidents. The Observatory has also relied to a large extent on materials published by international human-rights organizations and watchdog bodies, research findings, credible media reports, and official documents that the Observatory has been compiling since the 34th ICFM. The Report's methodology has also deliberately sought to avoid reproducing overly racist slurs or excessively incendiary or confrontational language.

1.2. Definition

The dictionary definition of the word "phobia" is "**a strong fear or dislike: an irrational or very powerful fear and dislike of something**". Simplistic as may be, Islamophobia by this very definition would mean an irrational or very powerful fear or dislike of Islam and the feeling as if the Muslims are under siege and attack. Islamophobia however goes much beyond this and incorporates racial hatred, intolerance, prejudice, discrimination and stereotyping. The phenomenon of Islamophobia in its essence is a religion-based resentment. It has two distinct

aspects: (1) from the viewpoint of the protagonists of Islamophobia and (2) from the victims' point of view.

In 1997 the "Commission on British Muslims and Islamophobia" released *the Runnymede Trust² Report "Islamophobia: a Challenge for All of Us"*³ institutionalizing the word "Islamophobia" to mean "prejudice vis-à-vis Muslims", although the word literally means "unreasoned and undue fear of Islam". Among the components of Islamophobia are (i) Islam is seen as a monolithic bloc, static and unresponsive to change; (ii) Islam is seen as "inferior" to the West, it is also seen as irrational and primitive; (iii) hostility towards Islam is used to justify discriminatory practices towards Muslims and exclusion of Muslims from mainstream society; and (iv) anti-Muslim feeling is seen as neutral or normal.

In his Report to the 6th Session of "*the UN Human Rights Council on the Manifestations of Defamation of Religions and in Particular on the Serious Implications of Islamophobia on the Enjoyment of all Rights*", the UN Special Rapporteur on Contemporary Forms of Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia, and Related Intolerance, documented the dangers of the issue in clear and unequivocal terms by defining Islamophobia as "a baseless hostility and fear vis-à-vis Islam, and, as a result, a fear of and aversion towards all Muslims or the majority of them. [Islamophobia] also refers to the practical consequences of this hostility in terms of discrimination, prejudices, and unequal treatment of which Muslims (individuals and communities) are victims and their exclusion from major political and social spheres. The term was invented in response to a new reality: the increasing discrimination against Muslims which has manifested itself in recent years."⁴

1.2.1. The Root Causes of Islamophobia

Based on the aforesaid, the OIC Observatory has identified the following as the root causes of Islamophobia:

- a) **Ignorance or insufficient knowledge of Islam in non-Muslim societies** have contributed to the development of a mind set in various strata of public opinion in the West and non-Muslim societies at large that Islam was a religion that "*lived by the sword*", preached hatred and violence towards non-believers, and stood to challenge the Western way life.
- b) **Insufficient dissemination of information about Muslim countries** being victims of terror attacks by extremists. The lack of coverage of the firm rejection of terrorism and extremism by the Muslim world's political leaders, including OIC leaders, mainstream public opinion, and key religious authorities, in addition to the **misrepresentation** and incorrect interpretation of Islam at various levels have contributed significantly to the growth of Islamophobia.
- c) **Abuse or misuse of freedom of expression** by the Western media and vested interests have caused hurt and insult to Muslims through bringing them prejudice and discrimination.

² The Runnymede Trust describes itself as a think tank devoted to research and advocacy on the subjects of ethnicity and cultural diversity. The Runnymede Trust has the stated aim of challenging racial discrimination, influencing legislation and promoting multi-ethnicity in the United Kingdom, thus bearing some characteristics of an action committee or lobbyist group. For more details, please see: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Runnymede_Trust

³ Runnymede Trust, "*Islamophobia: A Challenge for All of Us*", 1997, in <http://www.runnymedetrust.org/uploads/publications/pdfs/islamophobia.pdf> retrieved on November 24, 2007.

⁴ See UN Human Rights Council, Document No. A/HRC/6/6, August 21, 2007, p.8 Para. 19, available at <http://www2.ohchr.org/english/bodies/hrcouncil/6session/reports.htm>

- d) **Incitements by individuals, groups, or organizations with vested interests** with the sole objective to create violence and cross-religious intolerance.
- e) **Lack of binding legal instruments** to prevent propagation of literature and statements that incite religious and intercultural intolerance.
- f) **Confinement of the debate** and dialogue on religious intolerance and discrimination against Muslims **to the educated elite** and, thus the failure to percolate down to the grass roots.
- g) **Exacerbation of Anti Muslim sentiments after 9/11** by intensification of stereotypes, generalizations about Muslims, and practicing collective punishment on all Muslims for the acts of marginal, misguided individuals claiming to speak or act in the name of Islam.
- h) **Lack of a political will and commitment** to entering into a serious dialogue that would generate reconciliation.
- i) **The threat posed by the cheap labors** of Muslims immigrants to western workforce, which negatively affects the chances of the original citizens to find jobs.

1.3. Scope of Analysis: Muslims in the US and Europe

The Observatory Report has focused on the Western world where Islamophobia was more pronounced and visible, with the necessary distinction to be made between the more acute situations in Europe, in contrast with that in the US. For instance, the “Islam and the West: Annual Report on the State of Dialogue, January 2008”, by the World Economic Forum (WEF), quoting a recent Gallup Poll (p. 25), has reported that, “Clear majorities in all European countries surveyed see greater interaction between the West and the Muslim worlds as a threat. This is true of 79% of the population in Denmark, 67% in Italy, 67% in the Netherlands, 68% in Spain, 65% in Sweden and 59% in Belgium. This corresponds to a growing fear among Europeans of a perceived "Islamic threat" to their cultural identities, driven in part by rising immigration from predominantly Muslim regions”. The WEF Report goes on to assert that “in the United States (70%) [and] Canada (72%) majorities say that greater interaction is a benefit”.

Nevertheless, several important polls have indicated that the level of Islamophobia is also on the rise in American society. An August 2006 USA Today/Gallup poll, for instance, reported that “a significant number of Americans [were] willing to admit [that] they harbored at least some feelings of prejudice against Muslims. Nearly four in ten Americans (39%) said [that] they did feel some prejudice while 59% say they didn't”. The same poll indicated that Americans’ personal discomfort with Muslims is reflected in survey questions dealing with their reaction to being near Muslims in different situations. “Nearly one quarter of Americans, 22%, said they would not like to have a Muslim as a neighbor. Slightly fewer, 18%, said they felt nervous if they noticed a Muslim woman flying on the same airplane as themselves, while significantly more—31%—said they would feel nervous if they noticed a Muslim man on their flight”. The diagram on the findings of the poll is reproduced below:

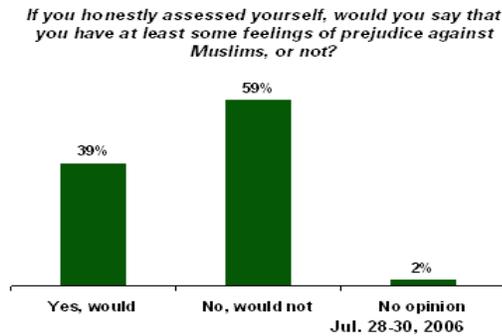


Fig.1. How Americans feel towards Muslims. (Source: *USA Today/Gallup* poll released in August 10, 2006)⁵

By contrast, Muslims in Europe have been facing even greater discrimination than Muslim Americans in civic and political life, as hinted above. Despite the stated EU major objectives of its recent Racial Equality Directive with regard to citizenship and integration for Muslim and other minorities and communities, and despite the fact that “by the end of 2006, legislation transposing the Racial Equality Directive had been adopted”, the EU Agency for Fundamental Rights⁶, recognizes that “in the thematic areas of legal issues, employment, housing, education, and racist violence and crime (...), in many [EU] countries there is no indication that a single sanction had been applied or compensation awarded in cases of ethnic discrimination during 2006”. This is being the case, even though “regular evidence” exists that shows “ethnic discrimination”, “gross exploitation”, “exclusion”, and “inequalities”, in all the above-listed areas, in addition to “neglect of mother tongue education” and “racist violence and crime [...] across the EU”. More importantly, despite its recommendations of good practices, the FRA 2007 Report (p. 14), furthermore and more importantly, notes that “there continue to be disturbing reports of violence and malpractice against vulnerable minorities by agents of the state—police, immigration, and border control personnel—in many [EU] countries”.

Consequently, since European Muslims tended to be much less socio-economically integrated than Muslim Americans, their feelings of alienation have been correspondingly higher. Thus, Muslims in Europe have faced even greater discrimination than Muslim Americans in civic and political life and have encountered several barriers to integration. The ethnic and religious diversity that has long been a fact of American life is a relatively new phenomenon in most Western European nations.

Assertion of a Muslim identity by Muslims is generally not well taken in western societies. The French public who see Muslim identity on the rise, “87% call it a bad thing”; in Germany, 83%; in Spain (82%). The primary reason of concern for a growing Muslim identity is because of the misperception that such growing identity may lead to violence. Many are also worried that this fact may keep Muslims from integrating into the larger society. For Muslims in Germany who see a growing Muslim identity as worrisome, “concern about retarding integration is paramount for 58%, while fewer than one-in-five worry about violence. Among French Muslims, concerns are split between violence (40%) and integration (45%).”The figure presented below gives a clearer picture of how Westerners’ views feed increasing sentiments of Islamophobia:

⁵ Cf: USA Today/Gallup, “Anti-Muslim Sentiments Fairly Commonplace” at <http://www.gallup.com/poll/24073/AntiMuslim-Sentiments-Fairly-Commonplace.aspx> retrieved on December 15, 2007.

⁶ See: EU Agency for Fundamental Rights, “Report on Racism and Xenophobia in the Member States of the EU”, 2007, p. 7-14.

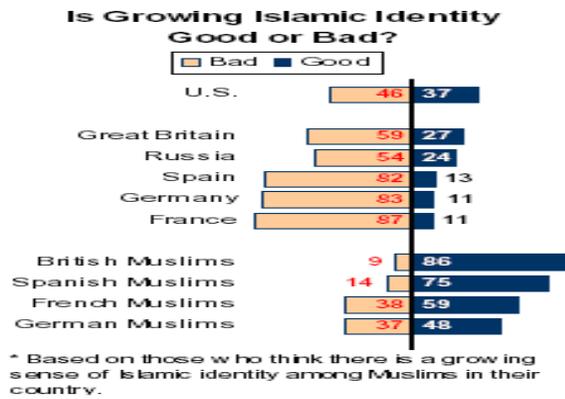


Fig.2 – How growing Islamic identity is perceived by Westerners. (Pew Global Attitude Project)⁷

These projections clearly support the view that the phenomenon of Islamophobia is on the rise. Islamophobic incidents in the West have served to fuel hostility and anti-Western feelings in the Muslim world. The using of Islamophobic rhetoric in the war on terror, such as “Islamic” extremists, “Islamic” terrorists, have created an unfair misinterpretation of the Islamic message in the Western and Non Muslim worlds.

In the West where Jews are defended through anti-Semitic laws, Muslims feel discriminated and ignored by not being protected by similar laws. Anti-Semitic expressions are widely been condemned and punishable under law while no such safeguards are in place against acts of Islamophobia. In fact many Islamophobic incidents have been allowed unhindered under the pretext of freedom of expression.

The Report submitted by the *UN Special Rapporteur on Contemporary Forms of Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance* to the Human Rights Council (UN-HRC) and to the UN General Assembly, on the manifestations of defamation of religions and in particular on the serious implications of Islamophobia on the enjoyment of all rights, affirms (pp. 7-8, para. 16), that, “These trends, along with the overarching climate of widespread and systematic suspicion against Muslims, conduce to all sorts of discrimination and intolerance, ranging from individual acts such as verbal aggressions and stereotyping to physical violence and institutionalized discrimination at large, including barriers to adequate housing, schooling, employment and, more generally, racial profiling. In the realm of freedom of religion or belief, one notices that in some regions, particularly in Europe, Muslims face growing difficulties to establish places of worship... and carry out their religious practices (e.g. dietary regimens, burials, etc). (...) In sum, Islamophobia is in the process of being impregnated in all facets of [Muslims’] social life.”

The UN-HRC Report goes on to confirm (p. 8, para. 17), that, “The rise of Islamophobia thus increases the likelihood of social disorder and has economic and juridical repercussions for those affected. In particular, one should note how Islamophobia can lead to a vicious cycle of further exclusion and ultimately extremism. Its persistence leads to a sense of cultural inferiority and social vulnerability among young Muslims, who are likely to become marginalized and more open to influence by groups which seem to offer them a reaffirmed identity and reason for pride. Normal regular religious practices and expressions of faith, which are more broadly held and

⁷ Cf. Pew Global Attitude Project, “*Muslims in Europe: Economic Worries Top Concerns about Religious and Cultural Identity*”, at <http://pewglobal.org/reports/display.php?ReportID=254> released on June 07, 2006, retrieved on December 05, 2007.

essential for an effective intercultural dialogue, have more difficulty in finding expression in many societies and countries, leading to even further discrimination against them”.

Amber Haque, a noted Muslim scholar, stated that “Islamophobia creates polarization in the wider society and provokes discrimination and injustice towards Muslims in all walks of life. Women and children are specially exposed to hostile treatment, making them feel unsafe. Hostility does nothing to foster self-esteem. The young generation born and raised in the West may face an identity crisis and opt to bond more closely with their parents' backgrounds and distrust of the West. Such distrust may lead some young Muslims to drop out of mainstream society and this fosters the conditions that make them readily influenced by extremist groups, which offers vulnerable youth a strong sense of identity and purpose. At the national level, such social disintegration can weaken the social fabric of a country when a party of its (educated) minority withdraws from society and fails to contribute effectively to the growth of society at large.”⁸

1.4. Islamophobia Awareness as an Issue in the West

An important point to reiterate is that the phenomenon of Islamophobia is not only a concern voiced by Muslims. Many western governments, including the EU and its institutions, and reputable western research institutions and organizations are beginning to share Muslim concerns over Islamophobia.

The following section reproduces below some of the findings noted in the reports of selected western institutions recognizing the rise of Islamophobia:

- a) The International Helsinki Federation for Human Rights (IHF)⁹ released in March 2005 a Report on “Intolerance and Discrimination against Muslims in the EU: *Developments Since September 11*” in which it stated that the social climate facing Muslims had deteriorated in EU countries in the aftermath of 9/11 because “the fight against terrorism has been stepped up and the perceived threat of religious extremism has given wide attention in public debates, pre-existing prejudice and discrimination against Muslims have been reinforced. Muslims have increasingly felt that they are viewed with distrust and hostility and that they are stigmatized because of their beliefs.”¹⁰ It has highlighted that “only by scrupulously defending the rights of their Muslim minorities that the EU member states can retain the confidence of these minorities and fruitfully promote their integration in the long run.”¹¹ It has also stated that “the responsibilities of individuals with regard to integration should also always be viewed in light of the opportunities to participate in society that are available to them, e.g. in terms of education, employment and political participation. It should not be overlooked that experiences of discrimination and exclusion may result in Muslims and other minority members adopting behaviors that further underscore their segregation in relation to the majority population.”¹²

⁸ Cf. A. Haque, in “Islamophobia in North America: Confronting the Menace”, in Barry van Driel (Ed), *Confronting Islamophobia in Educational Practice*, Trentham Books, UK, pp. 9-10.

⁹ The IHF is described as “a unique community of 46 human rights NGOs in the OSCE region, working together internationally to insist on compliance with human rights standards”. For more details about the organization and its activities, please see: <http://www.ihf-hr.org/>

¹⁰ IHF Report on *Intolerance and Discrimination against Muslims in the EU: Developments since September 11*, Vienna, March 2005, p.7.

¹¹ IHF, *op. cit.*, p.7.

¹² *Idem*, p.8.

- b) The Washington-based **Human Rights First**¹³, 2007 Report entitled “*Islamophobia: Hate Crime Survey*” has documented authentic sources which confirm that Islamophobia is on the rise in most Western societies. In its introduction (p. 7), the Report states that anti-immigrant and anti-Muslim rhetoric has been on the rise explaining that radical political figures in Europe “have sought to legitimize xenophobia and have in doing so contributed to the upswing in anti-Muslim discrimination and violence across Europe. Coupled with heightened national security concerns and economic uncertainty, this has translated into a political mood in which Muslims are the object of fear and exclusion.” The Report goes on to show (ibid. p.7) that “Discrimination and violence against Muslims has frequently taken the form of assaults on ordinary people in their shops, schools, or homes, often accompanied by indiscriminate racist and anti-Muslim epithets”.
- c) **The Pew Research Center Report** of September 25, 2007, conducted a poll in the US which concluded, on the basis of its findings, that public attitudes about Muslims and Islam have grown more negative in the United States in recent years¹⁴. For example, “The belief that Islam encourages violence has increased among groups that express mostly negative views of Muslims, such as conservative Republicans, but also among those groups that have relatively favorable opinions of Muslims, such as college graduates. The proportion of college graduates saying Islam is more likely than other religions to encourage violence has increased by 17 points (from 28% in 2005 to 45% today). College graduates are now about as likely as those with no college experience (44%) to express this point of view”.
- d) **The European Monitoring Centre on Racism and Xenophobia (EUMC)**, in a foreword of its 2007 Document entitled “*Perceptions of Discrimination and Islamophobia: Voices from Members of the Muslims Communities in the European Union*”¹⁵, reports that the evidence it has been gathering over the last few years indicates that, since September 11, 2001, “European Muslims have been seriously affected by an increasingly hostile social climate”. The Director of the EUMC felt that it was important (ibid. p. 5) “to recount the experiences of European Muslims with regard to discrimination, and Islamophobic incidents and discourse which can be found increasingly in the public and political domain, and also to identify the social and political context which gives rise to this verbal and physical aggression”.

The EUMC 2006 Report entitled “*Muslims in the European Union—Discrimination and Islamophobia*”¹⁶ shows that the “disadvantaged position of Muslim minorities, evidence of a rise in Islamophobia” and that the “concern over processes of alienation and radicalization have triggered an intense debate in the European Union regarding the need for re-examining community cohesion and integration policies”. The EUMC Report explains (p. 5) that “European Muslims are a highly diverse mix of ethnicities, religious affiliation, philosophical beliefs, political persuasion, secular tendencies, languages and cultural

¹³ The Human Rights *First* is a non-profit, nonpartisan international human rights organization founded in 1978, and based in New York and Washington D.C. without government funding in order to maintain its independence. For more details about the organization and its activities, please see: <http://www.humanrightsfirst.org/>.

¹⁴ The Pew Research Center is a nonpartisan fact tank that provides information on the issues, attitudes and trends shaping America and the world through public opinion polling. For more details about the center and its activities, please see: www.pewresearch.org. Their Report is available at: <http://people-press.org/reports/display.php3?ReportID=358>.

¹⁵ Available at http://eumc.europa.eu/eumc/material/pub/muslim/Perceptions_EN.pdf retrieved on January 12, 2007. Cf. p. 5.

¹⁶ Available at http://eumc.europa.eu/eumc/material/pub/muslim/Perceptions_EN.pdf retrieved on January 12, 2007.

traditions, constituting the second largest religious group of Europe's multi-faith society. In fact Muslim communities are no different from other communities in their complexity. Discrimination against Muslims can be attributed to Islamophobic attitudes, as much as to racist and xenophobic resentments, as these elements are in many cases inextricably intertwined". The EUMC Report raises the central questions (ibid p. 5) of "how to avoid stereotypical generalizations, how to reduce fear and how to strengthen cohesion in our diverse European societies while countering marginalization and discrimination on the basis of race, ethnicity, religion or belief".

- e) **The European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI)**'s latest 2007 "*Third Report on the Netherlands*"¹⁷, released on 12 February 2008, reveals that there was a "dramatic" increase of Islamophobia in the Netherlands. The ECRI Report found that Muslims of the Netherlands, who have been the subject of stereotyping, stigmatizing, and sometimes downright racist political rhetoric, and of biased media portrayal, have been disproportionately targeted by security and other policies. The Report makes specific mention that in recent years Dutch politicians have been resorting to "stereotyping, stigmatizing, and sometimes outright racist remarks concerning Muslims and to derogatory remarks about Islam, in both cultural and religious terms". The ECRI Report states that Islam in the Netherlands has been portrayed as a violent religion with Muslims seen as "*a threat to the country*". The Dutch society, as per the findings of the ECRI Report has repeatedly qualified Islam as a subculture and Muslims as the carriers of "*backward*" values, generally "*incompatible*" with democracy, without ever being challenged by the mainstream political parties.

It is the Observatory's view that the aforementioned recognition of discriminatory, racist, and xenophobic practices by the relevant EU Agencies as well as the adoption of EU stated objectives on citizenship and integration with the context of the EU Racial Equality Directive creates hope for gaining common grounds as the necessary springboard for the promotion and strengthening of the desired OIC-EU cooperation with a view to curbing discrimination, achieving racial and ethnic equality for vulnerable minorities, and addressing the vexing questions and manifestations of discrimination.

2. Contemporary Manifestations of Islamophobia

Islamophobia continues to be a major concern of the OIC. The Observatory has tried to keep track of major Islamophobic incidents, which are described in Annex "A"¹⁸.

The recent past has witnessed numerous incidents of hostility towards Muslims and vilification of Islam, the most outrageous being the Danish caricatures of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) and their reprints, the release of the denigrating film "*Fitna*" by a Dutch parliamentarian, and derogatory political statements by some Western politicians vis-à-vis Islam. The unfortunate remarks by Pope Benedict XVI during the lecture at the University of Regensburg in Germany on September 12, 2006 against the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) also caused deep hurt among Muslims.

¹⁷ For more details, please see: ECRI, "*Third Report on Netherlands*" available at http://www.coe.int/t/e/human_rights/ecri/1-ecri/2-country-by-country_approach/netherlands/Netherlands%20third%20report%20-%20cri08-3.pdf retrieved on February 12, 2008

¹⁸ Please refer to p. 38.

The Muslim world's outrage at the publication of the Danish caricatures of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) triggered a debate on Islamophobia as a global issue and raised the question as to whether the right to freedom of expression could ever justify discriminatory, provocative and insulting remarks and publications that create unrest and violence in societies. Although there were expressions of regret from Western governments on the incident, they took no concrete steps in order to prevent such acts even though the safeguards are provided in international legal instruments, such as *the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR)* and *the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR)*. Consequently, provocations and incitements have continued unabated, thus preventing the healing process among the diverse communities in the European society. In fact, the right to "freedom of expression" continued to be used as a guise for the vilification of Islam and discrimination towards Muslims. One may recall that in 1941, US President Franklin Roosevelt had already laid out his vision of a new world order based on "four freedoms": freedom of speech and of religion, and freedom from want and from fear, with the Roosevelt Stitching being established as a private foundation to organize the Four Freedoms Awards annual ceremony. Yet Muslims in Europe and the US, seem to be neither free to adopt or practice their religion away from the fear of denigration, prejudice, or exclusion, nor could they live free from the fear of Islamophobia and its consequences on them.

The most obvious instance supporting this prejudice is Dutch MP Geert Wilders, the leader of the far-right Freedom Party, who called for a ban of the Holy Qur'an in the Netherlands. In his own words, he cried out, "ban this wretched book like "*Mein Kampf*" is banned." Wilders, whose party holds only nine seats in the 150-member Dutch parliament, wrote in a letter published in the local *De Volkskrant* newspaper and cited by *Agence France-Presse (AFP)*: "I am fed up with Islam in the Netherlands: no more Muslim immigrants allowed..." "I am fed up with the worship of Allah and Muhammad in the Netherlands: no more mosques"¹⁹.

Perhaps Wilders and other politicians of his likes have been seeking to exploit the trend observed by the above-cited WEF Report (p. 26) that "Like the other European countries surveyed, the majority of the Dutch see greater interaction between Western and Muslim worlds as a threat" to get more publicity for their ultra-right wing political party, yet what is really surprising is that few critics have picked up on the anti-democratic and anti-constitutional message inherent in the cynical ratings of Wilders and similar political peddlers, who besides their stock-in-trade of their obviously racist and discriminatory overtones of their tirades, transgress the freedom of others in the name of his exercise of free speech when he calls for a ban on the Holy Quran thereby violating the two principles of "*freedom from fear*" and "*freedom of religion*" with respect to Muslim minorities as enshrined in the constitutions of Western and European countries. Accordingly their racially charged statements fly in the face of announced EU policies and strategies of citizenship and integration by alienating important Muslim minorities (recognized to be up to 10% of overall EU population) through decadent disrespect and calls for the denial of their citizenship and human rights, including their rights to live free from fear, to freedom of religion, and to free and unfettered practice of that religion; not to mention impeding efforts to promote tolerance and social cohesion through intercultural and inter-religious dialogue.

The abovementioned case is similar to an incident that occurred in 2003, when a relatively unknown Dutch politician, Pim Fortuyn, became famous because of his remarks attacking Muslims. Pim stated that Muslims were '*achterlijk*', a word that fits somewhere between 'retarded' or 'backward' in English. He also stated that the Dutch should only accept non-Muslim immigrants, and turn away Muslim immigrants at the border. For this controversy, he was

¹⁹ For more details, please see: <http://www.islamonline.com/news/newsfull.php?newid=25635> retrieved on August 15, 2007.

expelled from the political party he led (*Leefbaar Nederland*—Livable Holland), but he created his own party (*List Pim Fortuyn*), which gained unexpected popularity with most of the members of the *Leefbaar Nederland* switching to his new party, and after his assassination, became the second largest party in the Netherlands²⁰.

Among the Nordic states, Denmark is the country where Islamophobia has gained strong roots. “The Danish People’s Party has with...Pia Kjærsgaard in a leading role, [verbally] harassed Muslims for years. In the 90s the rightist Populist Party Dansk Folkeparti (Danish People’s Party) campaigned against the Muslims and other immigrants, but after 9-11 (2001), other parties joined in the chorus, and at the elections in November 2001, it was the main theme. The press from the beginning added fuel to the fire by focusing almost entirely on the problems with Muslims/immigrants...The Danish People’s Party has fast acquired a reputation for insulting Muslims and Islam.”²¹

Danish posturing on “*freedom of expression*” continued in 2007 when the Danish People’s Party used a caricature of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) as an election campaign under the slogan “*Freedom of speech is Danish, censorship is not*”, followed by the words “*We defend Danish values*”. The material was used during the campaign for the 2007 general election²². The publication of the Danish cartoons in 2005 and again their reprint in 2008 corroborates the Islamophobic mindset in Denmark.

In Austria, Susanne Winter, a candidate for the Freedom Party who lost local elections in Graz in southeastern Austria, made derogatory remarks on Islam and also attacked the family of the Prophet (PBUH) during her campaign. Speaking at a rally, she demanded that Islam should be “*thrown back where it came from, beyond the Mediterranean Sea*”²³ Austrian right-wing firebrand Joerg Haider stated that he planned to change building laws to prevent mosques and minarets being erected in his home province of Carinthia. Haider, Carinthia’s governor, said he would ask its parliament to amend the building code to require towns and villages to consider “religious and cultural tradition” when dealing with construction requests. He stated that “We don’t want a clash of cultures and we don’t want institutions which are *alien* to our culture being erected in Western Europe”²⁴.

In Italy, the Northern League coordinator, Roberto Calderoli, organized the ‘*Pig Day against new mosques*’ competition to select the most beautiful pig to be placed in mosque building sites. According to him mosques are not centers for religious activities but the potential centers for *the recruitment of terrorists*²⁵.

In Switzerland, members of the right-wing Swiss People’s Party, currently the largest party in the Swiss Parliament, have launched a campaign to have the building of minarets banned. For them, the minarets are not necessary for worship, but rather a symbol of Islamic law, and as such

²⁰ For more details, please see: B. van Dried (ed.) *Confronting Islamophobia in Educational Practice*, Trentham Books, Amsterdam, 2004, pp. vii-viii.

²¹ Cf. <http://www.muslimnews.co.uk/paper/index.php?article=2274>

²² Cf. The Guardian, “*Danish Election Ad Reignites Muhammad Cartoon Controversy*”, at: <http://www.guardian.co.uk/cartoonprotests/story/0,2199006,00.html> retrieved on October 27, 2007.

²³ Cf. Dier Spiegel, “*Austrian Politician Calls Prophet Muhammad a ‘Child [Blasphemy!]’*” at <http://www.spiegel.de/international/europe/0,1518,528549,00.html> retrieved on January 16, 2008. Emphasis added.

²⁴ See: <http://www.reuters.com/article/idUSL2739608920070827> retrieved on September 01, 2007. Emphasis added.

²⁵ See: <http://www.agi.it/italy/news200709131553-pol-ren0060-art.html?op=makePrintable> retrieved on September 15, 2007.

incompatible with Switzerland's legal system. Therefore, the Swiss People's Party suggested that Muslims are tolerated in Switzerland as long as they remain invisible to the public.

In January 2008, Liz Fekete, Deputy Director of International Race Relations (IRR) and Editor of the *European Race Bulletin*, published a paper on the IRR website titled “*Cultural Cleansing?*” in which she argued that, “politicians and Christian leaders are supporting public campaigns and petitions against the construction of mosques which are being denounced for destroying Europe's Judaeo-Christian heritage”²⁶. It is important to quote excerpts from her arguments:

“Central to the current public discussion of Islam is a kind of conjuring trick. By removing Muslims from the social reality they face here in Europe and linking them to the homogenous and repressive force that is said to be global Islam, the discourse vests them with an illusion of unity and power so subversive as to constitute the 'enemy within'. In reality, though, Europe's Muslim communities are so diverse – Turks, Kurds, Moroccans, Pakistanis, Bangladeshis, Somalis, Afghanis, Iraqis, Iranians, etc. – and so fragmented in ethnic, national, linguistic and sect terms and so economically marginalised – as to defy any attempt at unity, let alone power.

Muslims, as a faith group, are minorities in democratic secular states, with protected rights, including the right to practice their religion. The anti-mosque campaigners get round this inconvenient fact through a second conjuring trick: denying that Islam is a religion and categorising it instead as a political and criminal ideology that, in the name of security, must be cordoned off from the body politic. Hence, the proposal by Dutch MP, Geert Wilders, to ban the Koran which he argues is similar to *Mein Kampf* in its legitimisation of violence. In the same vein, the Frankfurt campaigners complained in a letter to the local newspaper that 'all Muslims' are 'incompatible with our legal order'; an Italian Forza Italia MP warned that 'Our land is contaminated with thousands of these dangerous [elements], spreading cancers which are centres for recruiting fanatics to be martyred in the holy war which Islam is waging against the West'; and Swiss SVP MP Oskar Freysinger sees in the minaret a 'symbol of political and aggressive Islam...a symbol of Islamic law. The minute you have minarets in Europe it means Islam will have taken over'.”

3. Some Positive Developments

Following the Danish Caricatures crisis, in a trilateral statement on February 7, 2006, initiated by the OIC, the then UN Secretary General, Kofi Annan, the High Representative for Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP), Javier Solana, and the OIC Secretary General, Prof. Ekmeleddin Ihsanoglu, expressed similar concerns over the escalation of Islamophobia. The statement affirmed: “We fully uphold the right of free speech. We also understand the deep hurt and widespread indignation felt in the Muslim World, and we believe freedom of the press entails responsibility and discretion”²⁷.

On February 13, 2006, Javier Solana, EU High Representative for the CFSP, met OIC Secretary General in Jeddah. They discussed the way forward to renewing dialogue between Europeans and the Muslim World. Top on the agenda of the meeting between the two was a discussion on the ways and means of turning the tide of the raging furor over the blasphemous cartoons depicting the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH). They agreed that the EU and the OIC should jointly exert efforts to adopt a UN resolution along the lines of the existing Resolution No. 60/150, which calls for combating defamation of religions.

²⁶ L. Fekete, “*Cultural Cleansing?*” at: <http://www.irr.org.uk/2008/january/ha000009.html> retrieved on January 19, 2008.

²⁷ For the full text, please refer to Annex B on p.43.

Another development following the Danish Cartoon crisis was a joint statement on “*rights to freedom of expression, peaceful protest*” in Doha, Qatar, on 25 February, 2006²⁸ by the Secretaries-General of the UN, the OIC, and the League of Arab States, the First Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister of Qatar, and the Foreign Ministers of Spain and Turkey.

Referring to the cartoons, Terry Davis, Secretary General of the Council of Europe, stated that “...the cartoons which were published *were offensive* – not only to the minority of violent extremists, but to the great majority of people of Islamic faith who reject violence.”²⁹

There is sizeable opinion in the West that shares the Muslim world’s concerns. Islamophobic incidents mostly occur or are motivated outside the official sphere of Western states and governments. To illustrate, the ‘*Stop the Islamization of Europe*’ rally (SIOE) that was proposed to take place on September 11, 2007 in Brussels was banned by the city Mayor Freddy Thielemans. Also the Council of Europe’s Secretary General, Terry Davis, made a statement condemning the intended rally. In the Netherlands, the government’s official position is to counter Islamophobic actions of the opposition extreme right-wing party Vlaams Belang, as it was in the case of his call to *ban* the Holy Qur’an. The Italian Minister of the Interior, Giuliano Amato, rejected calls for banning the Muslim veil in public places stating that the ban could evoke the important question: “*why a nun should be allowed to wear her habit and not a female Muslim*”, adding that the Italian constitution guarantees freedom of religion.

The decision of US President George Bush to appoint a Special Envoy to the OIC is a recognition of the need to engage in a meaningful dialogue between the Islam and the West. President Bush stated that “this is an opportunity for Americans to demonstrate to Muslim communities our interest in respectful dialogue and continued friendship”.

In a recent development, the Bush administration has launched a new front in the war on terrorism, this time amending language, according to an Associated Press report. It said federal agencies, including the State Department, the Department of Homeland Security, and the National Counter Terrorism Center, are telling their people not to describe extremists as “*jihadists*” or “*mujahedeen*”. Rather, it said terms such as “*Islamofascism*” are out since they “*may actually boost support for radicals among Arab and Muslim audiences by giving them a veneer of religious credibility or by causing offense to moderates*”. It explained that while Americans may understand “ *Jihad*” to mean “*holy war*”, it is in fact a broader Islamic concept of the struggle to do good, says the guidance prepared for diplomats and other officials tasked with explaining “*the war on terror*” to the public³⁰.

The Observatory is encouraged to note that there are efforts to counter Islamophobia by the West because, at the official level, incitement against Muslims is refrained and positive steps are taken to better integrate Muslims in Western societies.

Many European countries are giving positive signs in the fight against Islamophobia. The Council of Europe’s European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI) has published some relevant General Policy Recommendations, including the following:

²⁸ For the full text, please refer to Annex C on p.44.

²⁹ Cf. http://www.coe.int/t/dc/press/news/20080314_disc_sg_oslo_en.asp retrieved on May 3, 2008. Emphasis added.

³⁰ Cf. http://www.huffingtonpost.com/magda-abufadil/is-coverage-of-arabs-islam_b_98757.html retrieved on April 28, 2008.

- ☒ General Policy Recommendation No. 5 on Combating Intolerance and Discrimination against Muslims (CRI (2000) 21) recognizes that Muslim communities are subject to prejudice, which “*may manifest itself in different guises, in particular through negative general attitudes but also to varying degrees, through discriminatory acts and through violence and harassment*”.
- ☒ General Policy Recommendation No. 7 on National Legislation to Combat Racism and Racial Discrimination (CRI (2003) 8) defines racism as “*the belief that a ground such as race, colour, language, religion, national or ethnic origin justifies contempt for a person or a group of persons, or the notion of superiority of a person or a group of persons*”.
- ☒ General Policy Recommendation No. 8 on Combating Racism while Fighting Terrorism (CRI (2004) 26) notes that “*As a result of the fight against terrorism engaged since the events of 11 September 2001, certain groups of persons, notably Arabs, Jews, Muslims, certain asylum seekers, refugees, and immigrants, certain visible minorities and persons perceived as belonging to such groups, have become particularly vulnerable to racism and/or to racial discrimination across many fields of public life, including education, employment, housing, access to goods and services, access to public places, and freedom of movement*”³¹.

The OIC took note and is monitoring the initiative of 138 Muslim leaders and scholars who sent a letter to their Christian counterparts, including Pope Benedict XVI in October 2007 titled “*A Common Word between Us and You*”³² suggesting ways and means to initiate a productive dialogue between the two religions.

On November 26, 2007, in Abu Dhabi, more than 300 Christian scholars and clergymen, mostly from the United States and other parts across the globe, stated in a letter, inter alia, “We want to begin by acknowledging that in the past (e.g. in the Crusades) and in the present (e.g. in excesses of the war on terror many Christians have been guilty of sinning against our Muslim neighbors...Before we 'shake your hand' in responding to your letter, *we ask forgiveness of the All-Merciful One and of the Muslim community around the world*”³³. Miroslav Volf, founder and director of the Yale Center for Faith and Culture who compiled the response letter, said they hope to narrow all differences between Muslims and Christians. This step of apologizing to Muslims for the Crusades and the repercussions of America's so-called war on terror is also a positive development towards fostering tolerance among religions and cultural beliefs and countering Islamophobia.

4. General Secretariat's Activities

The OIC General Secretariat's strategy is to raise awareness on the dangers of the phenomenon of Islamophobia. It is also engaged in activities aiming at projecting the true image of Islam, as well as responding in an appropriate manner to all activities and incidents that cause insult, discrimination, or violation of human rights of Muslims on account of their faith, with a view to reaching a common ground with other civilizations to address the issue in an effective manner.

³¹ Cf. above-cited EUMC Report , pp. 62-63. Emphasis in the original.

³² For more details, please see: <http://www.acommonword.com/index.php?page=media&item=300>

³³ For more details, please see:

http://www.islamonline.net/servlet/Satellite?c=Article_C&cid=1195032694156&pagename=Zone-English-News/NWELayout retrieved on November 29, 2007. Emphasis added.

The OIC has strongly condemned and responded to the publication of a blasphemous caricature of the Holy Prophet (PBUH) by newspapers in Denmark and Sweden which inflamed Islamophobia.

The Observatory expressed its concern over the move by David Horowitz of the US-based Freedom Center to organize an “*Islamofascism Awareness Week*” in two hundred universities and college campuses throughout the United States of America on October 22-26, 2007. The concern of the OIC and its member states over this action was strongly voiced during the 62nd United Nations General Assembly with various think-tanks and academic institutions in the USA. Mr. Harowitz’ scheme did not receive the expected response.

Since the submission of the first Report of the Observatory and soon after the conclusion of the 11th OIC Summit, where Heads of State/Government were unanimous in their stance against the rise of Islamophobia, proposing dialogue as one of the possible measures to counter the malaise³⁴, two major Islamophobic incidents took place namely the reprint of the cartoon of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) by Danish newspapers; and the release of the Geert Wilders' film “*Fitna*”. Following are some of the relevant activities of the OIC:

4.1. On the Reprint of the Cartoons in Denmark

The General Secretariat has been closely following developments in the aftermath of the recent reprinting of one of the most provocative of the insulting caricatures of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) by at least 17 Danish newspapers, as a reaction to the alleged plot to assassinate the Danish artist author of the caricature. The Danish newspapers announced that their aim was to show solidarity in the defense of freedom of speech. As a reaction, the OIC Secretary General immediately made a statement denouncing the reprinting of the caricatures and calling on the Danish Government to assume moral responsibility. The OIC Secretary General also took up the matter with the Danish Government.

It may be mentioned here that the Danish authorities acquitted the alleged plotters because no credible evidence could be brought against them.

4.2. On the Release of Film “*Fitna*”

It may be mentioned here that the Observatory had closely monitored developments on the highly denigrating film “*Fitna*”, which was produced by the controversial Dutch parliamentarian, Mr. Geert Wilders, defiling the Holy Qur’an. Immediately upon learning of this issue, the OIC General Secretariat addressed a strong note of concern to the Embassy of the Netherlands in Riyadh, requesting the Dutch Government’s intervention in taking immediate steps and measures to stop its release. In its response to the letter, the Dutch Embassy stated that, “*the Dutch Government had openly expressed its concern about Mr. Wilders’ plans and the possible offensive nature of such a film for Islam and its believers*”. In a public statement on January 18, 2007, the Dutch Prime Minister Mr. Balkenende was quoted as saying that “*broadcast of the film would invite heated reactions that could affect public order, public safety and security, [as well as] the economy*”.

In a meeting with the OIC Secretary General, the Foreign Minister of the Netherlands, Mr. Maxime Verhagen, informed the former that his Government acknowledged the OIC’s preoccupation with seriousness; dissociated itself from the film; and condemned such activities in the strongest possible terms.

³⁴ Excerpts of the statements are available in Annex E on p.47.

Prior to the release of the film, the OIC Secretary General addressed letters to several European leaders, including the Foreign Minister of the Netherlands, Foreign Minister of Slovenia, as the EU term President, the Secretary General of the Council of Europe, the UN High Representative of the Alliance of Civilizations, and the Foreign Minister of Finland in his capacity as the current Chairman of the OSCE, conveying the Muslim world's preoccupations and calling for their intervention in addressing the issue with urgency. He drew their attention to Article 20, Para 2, of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights which states "*any advocacy of national, racial, or religious hatred that constitutes incitement to discrimination, hostility, or violence shall be prohibited by law*".

Upon the release of this defamatory film through an internet website on March 27, 2008, the OIC Secretary General issued two separate statements strongly condemning it and seeking the Dutch Government's intervention in using legal and judicial measures to enforce the relevant provision envisaged in the Article 10 of the European Convention on Human Rights. The OIC Secretary General also addressed letters to the UN Secretary General, the European Union, and other institutions requesting their intervention on the issue.

It is felt that the OIC's stand on the issue has raised widespread awareness. The UN Secretary General, Ban Ki-Moon, called the movie "*offensively anti-Islamic*"³⁵. The European Union said the film inflames hatred. Slovenia, which holds the rotating EU presidency, stated, inter alia, that "[The EU] believes that acts, such as the abovementioned film, serve no other purpose than inflaming hatred"³⁶. The Council of Europe's Secretary General, Terry Davis, stated that the movie was "*a distasteful manipulation which exploited ignorance, prejudice, and fears.*" In a separate statement before the Council's High-Level Human Rights Seminar, Terry Davis speaking about the film stated that "...freedom of expression can be restricted in certain cases listed by the [European] Convention [of Human Rights] itself. In fact, *the European Court of Human Rights has in the past upheld such restrictions in relation to an artistic creation which was considered offensive to a religious faith. Perhaps it is relevant to add that the religion in question was not Islam. It was Christianity.*"³⁷The Council of Europe's Deputy Secretary General mentioned that it was simply political propaganda and played into the hands of extremists who are given such a prominent role in the film, adding that the film would upset the great majority of people of Muslim faith in Europe who reject violence and accept Europe's common values³⁸.

The UN Special Rapporteur on Contemporary Forms of Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance; the Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Religion or Belief; and the Special Rapporteur for the Promotion and Protection of the Right to Freedom of Opinion and Expression issued a joint statement stating that the film "*illustrates an increasing pattern that associates Muslims exclusively with violence and terrorism*". They added that "*while on the one hand, freedom of expression is a fundamental human right that must be respected, it does not extend to include*

³⁵ For a full statement, please see: <http://www.un.org/News/Press/docs/2008/sgsm11483.doc.htm> retrieved on April 20, 2008.

³⁶ For a full statement, please see: http://www.eu2008.si/en/News_and_Documents/Press_Releases/March/0329MZZ_Presspoint_Wilders.html retrieved on April 20, 2008.

³⁷ Cf. http://www.coe.int/t/dc/press/news/20080314_disc_sg_oslo_en.asp retrieved on May 3, 2008. Emphasis added.

³⁸ For a full statement, please see: <https://wcd.coe.int/ViewDoc.jsp?id=1267151&Site=DC&BackColorInternet=F5CA75&BackColorIntranet=F5CA75&BackColorLogged=A9BACE> retrieved on April 20, 2008.

*incitement to racial or religious hatred, which is itself clearly a violation of human rights. Public expressions that paint adherents of a particular religion as a threat to peace or global stability are irresponsible*³⁹.

What was of particular significance is that Wilders has found himself isolated by mainstream Dutch society, with all national and international media channels and organizations refusing to associate themselves with his scheme.

4.3. On the Initiative to Ban Minarets in Switzerland

The OIC General Secretariat noted with concern the campaign undertaken by a Swiss Parliamentarian to draft a law banning minarets in Switzerland. The General Secretariat made a demarche to the Swiss Embassy in Riyadh requesting an explanation. The Swiss Government responded by explaining that while such a campaign was launched, its success was uncertain. The OIC Secretary General discussed the issue with the Swiss Foreign Minister, Mrs. Micheline Calmy-Rey, upon her request on 15th January 2008 in Madrid, and was assured that her government was seized with the matter.

4.4. Workshop on Media

The Observatory took into account the all-important role of the Media in dealing with the issue of Islamophobia. It is an established fact that the Western media, both print and electronic, internet websites and blogs, and even movies have, to a large extent, contributed to the increase of intolerance and prejudice vis-à-vis Muslims and Islam in Western societies. One of the measures to deal with this fact was the holding of an international conference was jointly organized by the Government of the Republic of Azerbaijan and the OIC General Secretariat under the title of *“the Role of the Media in the Development of Tolerance and Mutual Understanding”* in Baku, Azerbaijan, on 26-27 April 2007.

The objective of the Conference was to raise the awareness of the media on the dangers of religious intolerance and the need for responsible media reporting to address the issue. Political leaders, academics, media personalities, international organizations, and representatives of leading NGOs and civil society participated in that Conference. The positive outcome of the conference was that the participants were unanimous in underscoring the point that the media could and should play a constructive role in fostering tolerance and understanding among the representatives of different cultures and civilizations, as well as in combating prejudices and bridging the gap rather than widening differences. The participants emphasized the importance of unbiased teaching of history, fair and objective reporting, and responsible political discourse in fostering the culture of tolerance and promoting mutual understanding. They concluded that freedom of speech is one of the fundamental freedoms. However, it should be linked with a sense of responsibility on the part of those exercising this freedom.

4.5. Initiatives for Engaging in Meaningful Dialogue to Promote Tolerance

The OIC Secretary General took the initiative to meet the political leadership of the Western World, including meetings with Heads of Government, Foreign Ministers, political leadership of many European countries, and the leaders of international organizations, such as the UN, the OSCE, the EU Presidency, and the Council of Europe. The thrust of the initiative is to raise awareness of the issue of Islamophobia.

³⁹ For more details, please see: http://www.salem-news.com/articles/march292008/un_video_3-29-08.php retrieved on April 04, 2008. Emphasis added.

A number of initiatives were undertaken by the OIC Secretary General to raise awareness on discrimination and intolerance towards Islam and Muslims and to underscore the need for dialogue and understanding between the Muslim World and the West. Notable among these were:

- a) Participation at OSC Cordoba Conference on Anti-Semitism and on Other Forms of Intolerance, held Cordoba in June 2005;
- b) Addressing both the Parliamentary Assembly, and the Enlarged Bureau of the Ministers' Deputies of the Council of Europe, on October 4, 2005 in Strasbourg;
- c) Organizing Wilton Park Conference on "Stereotype and Islamophobia" in London in May 2006;
- d) Delivering a Speech at 'Institut Français des Relations Internationales' (IFRI), on January 29, 2007 on "Is Islam an Intruder in Europe?";
- e) Workshop on "Islamophobia", in Istanbul in February, 2007;
- f) Participation in OSCE meetings on Islamophobia: in Bucharest (June, 2007) and Cordoba (October 2007);
- g) Organizing a symposium at the Georgetown University on the "Role of the Media in West-Islam Relations", and a roundtable on "Islam-West Relations" at the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) in Washington DC in September 2007;
- h) Interactions with the US think tanks namely the *Center for Strategic and International Studies* in Washington D.C., *International Peace Academy "Turtle Bay Dialogue"* on "Global Challenges, the Role of the OIC", which took place in New York (October 1, 2007); Discussion at the *Carnegie Council* in New York (October 2, 2007) and at the *Council on Foreign Affairs* in New York, (October 4, 2007), as well as meetings with Heads of delegation of European and Muslim countries, September 2007;
- i) Lecture at Oxford Centre for Islamic Studies (OCIS), April 2008.

The point that was underscored in all these interactions was that Islamophobia was gradually gaining inroads into the mind-set of the common people in Western societies, a fact that has created a negative and distorted perception of Islam. It was emphasized that Muslims and Western societies would have to address the issue with a sense of commitment to ending Islamophobia. A step in this regard is to have a dialogue within grassroots of the societies to remove misgivings and prejudices. This dialogue should be result-oriented with support and commitment at the political level on both sides in order to arrive at a consensus that Islamophobia poses a threat not only to Muslims but to the world at large. The stakeholders of the West and Muslim world must initiate a process that would be less focused on rhetoric and more on a plan of action to address the root causes of Islamophobia.

4.5.1. Wilton Park Conference

The General Secretariat took an important initiative organizing a conference focusing on Islamophobia in UK in cooperation with the Wilton Park institution on 2-3 May 2006. This was one of the most significant events initiated and organized by the OIC General Secretariat in the West on Islamophobia. Representatives of some of the OIC Member States and European governments, and representatives of international organizations such as the UN, Council of Europe, OSCE, European Union, academicians, media representatives, as well as Muslim organizations and NGOs based in Europe were among the participants. The Conference was inaugurated by the OIC Secretary General, and addressed, among others, by the British Minister of State, Kim Howells and the High Commissioner of Malaysia in London on behalf of the OIC Summit Chairmanship.

The participants acknowledged that stereotyping has been on the rise and has led to incitement of hatred, discrimination and intolerance targeting Muslims as individuals and as followers of faiths and value systems. They emphasized that urgent steps need to be taken to address the negative consequences of stereotyping and urged the governments and all actors of civil society – intergovernmental organizations and NGOs – to take coordinated action.

The participants agreed that in Europe there is a need to enhance efforts to promote greater understanding and awareness about religion. In the Muslim world, endeavours have to be made to dispel misperceptions about the West and to promote democracy, human rights and good governance. In this regard, Conference participants encouraged the OIC to implement its Ten Year Program of Action (POA) to promote human rights, social justice and good governance within the OIC countries.

It also discussed policies of multiculturalism and integration pursued by Europe which necessitate becoming more resilient and sustainable, while respecting separate identities of other faiths and diversity of their adherents. Immigrants and multiculturalism should be regarded as an asset. In this regard, the role of Muslim civil society institutions, working in tandem with wider NGO community, is crucial. Muslim organizations in Europe should be supported and strengthened to become legitimate voices of Muslim communities.

The participants also agreed that dialogue among civilizations, cultures and religions should be fostered as the only long-term way forward. To date, there is concern that there have been simultaneous monologues between the West and the Muslim world. Each needs to listen to the other without influencing that narrative. Muslim communities in Europe can be valuable links in relations between the Muslim world and the West. Dialogue should start anew with a clear agenda and objectives, and political engagement on all sides. Some suggest that it is opportune to revive the joint OIC-EU Forum of Foreign Ministers, launched in 2002. Consideration could be given to enlarging this type of cooperation mechanism to include the OSCE, and Council of Europe. It is of crucial importance that future dialogue involves more broadly the peoples of the Muslim world and the West.

4.5.2. Istanbul Islamophobia Workshop

In preparation to the above mentioned thematic session at the 34th ICFM, the OIC Secretary General called for an informal-consultative meeting of some leading experts from the Member States, international organizations and Muslim institutions based in the West to explore options to formulate a strategy to move forward on the issue of dialogue. The Consultative meeting took place at the Islamic Research and Cultural Centre (IRCICA) in Istanbul on February 2, 2007.

The participants endorsed the efforts aiming at furthering political engagement, supporting dialogue among the representatives of different cultures, civilizations and religions, and at inviting media involvement in these activities. They also supported the call for international cooperation and cooperation with the Western countries hosting Muslim communities as well as with the EU, the OSCE, and the Council of Europe.

The participants emphasized the importance of the projects on education of youth and the need for increased coordination and cooperation between the OIC General Secretariat, its relevant bodies, and Alliance of Civilizations.

4.5.3. Visit by Mr. Greg Rickman, US Special Envoy to Monitor & Combat Anti-Semitism to the Islamophobia Observatory

A delegation of the US State Department led by Mr. Greg Rickman, US Special Envoy to Monitor & Combat Anti-Semitism had a meeting with the Observatory at the General Secretariat in Jeddah on July 23, 2007. The discussions focused on exchange of views on cooperation for further strengthening efforts to address the issue of discrimination and intolerance of religions faiths and dialogue for reaching a historical reconciliation towards the Alliance of Civilizations. The Observatory's concerns over Islamophobia in the US were conveyed to the US Special Envoy.

4.5.4. OIC- Georgetown University Symposium and Secretary General's interactions with reputed US Think Tanks (September-October, 2007)

The OIC Secretary General took opportunity of his visit to the USA to attend the 62nd United Nations General Assembly in September-October 2007 to interact with American academics, media personalities, the civil society and think tanks to raise awareness on the dangers of the rising trend of Islamophobia in the Western world including the US. He managed to impress upon them the urgent need to engage in a serious dialogue that would help in removing the prejudices and misconceptions about Islam that seemed to prevail in the minds of a large section of the American people. He, also, seized that opportunity to call for a dialogue conducive to reaching a historical reconciliation between Islam and Christianity.

The OIC Secretary General addressed two interactive roundtables sessions at the Georgetown University in Washington DC, one on "Islamophobia and the Challenge of Pluralism in the 21st Century" and the other on "Role of the Media in West-Islam Relations". These two events were organized jointly by the OIC General Secretariat and Georgetown University-Prince Al Waleed bin Talal Center for Christian Muslim Understanding.

In Washington DC, the OIC Secretary General addressed another Roundtable on "Islam-West Relations" at the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS). He also spoke on "Fostering Interfaith and Intercultural Dialogue", in an encounter arranged at the Capitol Hill by the Rumi Forum which was attended by members of the US Congress, local leaders of different religious faiths including Muslims, Christians and Jews.

The OIC Secretary General also exchanged views with the OIC Group of Ambassadors in Washington DC and held a bilateral meeting with the US Secretary of Health, Mr. Michael O. Leavitt at the latter's office. Besides, the Secretary General gave media interviews to leading TV network including the Voice of America, Al Jazeera and other TV networks.

4.5.4.1. The Georgetown University Symposiums

a) Roundtable Session on "Islamophobia and the Challenge of Pluralism in the 21st Century"

The symposium on "Islamophobia and the Challenge of Pluralism in the 21st Century" was marked by an interactive session that called for developing a road map for addressing the issue of Islamophobia. Several recommendations made by the participants consist of, inter alia, interacting on the issues of Islamophobia with a group of human rights experts; to address the concerns of Muslim Minorities in non OIC Member States; to substitute the term Islamophobia with "Intolerance and discrimination against Muslims" with a view to address this issue as human rights related matter rather than as religious one; to encourage Europe and North America to

recognize the importance of combating intolerance against Muslims and refraining from hate speech. Muslim leaders have to convey Islam's messages of tolerance and moderation and respect for others; to encourage responsible media and its positive role; to promote intercultural and inter-religious dialogue; to support and uphold the rights of Muslim communities and civil society organizations; for the OIC to have a strong and effective professional lobby in the US to project and protect Muslim interests; to work towards updating Runnymede report in order to include recent developments on Islamophobia. The OIC can select a group of experts, taking Anti Defamation League as a model to combat Islamophobia and to work at the level of the UN to adopt legal measures against the defamation of religious icons.

b) Roundtable on the "Role of the Media in West-Islam Relations"

This roundtable was held at the Mortara Center Conference Room of Georgetown University on September 21, 2007. The workshop began with Professor John Esposito introducing the OIC Secretary General to the participants. In his statement the Secretary General underscored the important role of the media on promoting tolerance and understanding among religions by avoiding misrepresentation and distortions. He spoke on the values of peace, tolerance and compassion being essential ingredients of the Islamic faith and said that the overwhelming majority of Muslims were strong adherents to these principles and values. He mentioned that media often ignored this aspect and chose to portray Islam in a negative manner. He also reiterated that a historical reconciliation between Islam and Christianity would be one of the best means to address the issue of Islamophobia.

This was followed by an interactive session on the media's role towards improving Islam-West relations. The following came out from the session:

- i. The importance of visual and media projection of Islam was underscored. The participants agreed that the Western media was inclined towards negative amalgams of Islam. An example of this amalgam is when the Western media lumps together the heinous terrorist activities of Al-Qaeda that were constantly denounced by the Muslim world, with the good name of Islam. They highlighted some positive developments such as the announcement by President Bush to appoint a Special Envoy to the OIC. The President Bush's speech at the Islamic Center as well the statement made by Under Secretary Karen Hughes at the Foreign Press Center immediately after the President Bush's program at the Islamic Center were almost completely ignored by the US media. The OIC Secretary General stated that this tendency of the US media had to be reconsidered for the sake of improving US relations with the Muslim world.
- ii. Another observation by a participant suggested that the OIC should take the lead in improving US-Islam relations and engage the media of the Muslim and Arab countries in public diplomacy. It was stated that the NGOs and civil societies in the US would play a very constructive role in this matter.

4.5.4.2. Interactions with US Think Tanks

The OIC Secretary General during his stay in the US had also interactions with the US think tanks namely the Center for Strategic and International Studies in Washington D.C., International Peace Academy Turtle Bay Dialogue on "Global Challenges, the Role of the OIC in New York (October 1, 2007); Breakfast Discussion at the Carnegie Council in New York (October 2, 2007) and at the Council on Foreign Affairs in New York, (October 4, 2007). The discussions centered

on the issue of Islamophobia and its adverse implications on the global society and on the cooperation among all stakeholders both political and the civil society. The OIC Secretary General explained the constructive role of the OIC in facilitating and engaging a dialogue that would not only help in removing misgivings about Islam but also in understanding the true values and principles that Islam stands for. He articulated the new vision and goals envisioned in the OIC Ten Year Program of Action to bring about modernization and moderation in Muslim countries and communities and to engage in a dialogue with those who were involved in defaming Islam, by correcting misinterpretations of Islam.

The OIC Secretary General's interventions evoked healthy debate. In sum, these helped not only in sensitizing the issue of Islamophobia but also in understanding of Islam and Muslims.

4.5.5. Cooperation with the United Nations

The OIC Secretary General has also remained focused on projecting Islam in the United Nations. The most recent events in this initiative were his participation in the High level Segment of UN Human Rights Council Meeting in Geneva in February 2007 and his meeting with the Secretary General of the United Nations Mr. Ban Ki Moon on the sidelines of Arab League Summit held in Riyadh at the end of March 2007. During the meeting the two Secretaries Generals held intensive discussions on the dangerous implication of the issue of defamation of Islam on global peace and security. They agreed that all possible actions must be taken to raise global awareness on the need for understanding and tolerance among faiths and the need to establish, by the international community, a mechanism and joint programs of action to address avoidable provocations and incitement and end discrimination and vilification of Islam and cooperate towards effective and meaningful dialogue among civilizations.

The Ministerial meeting at the 62nd Session of the UN General Assembly on October 4-5, 2007 in New York titled *The High-Level Dialogue on Inter-religious and Intercultural Understanding and Cooperation for Peace* also highlighted the dangers of Islamophobia. In his statement at the Meeting, the OIC Secretary General stated, inter-alia, that the concept of "*Dialogue among Civilizations*" was initiated by the OIC as early as 1998. He argued that the Dialogue was still entrapped in the phase of a debate and empty slogan, while practical and concrete actions were needed to lay down the envisaged concept. He reiterated the need for reaching an historical reconciliation between Islam and Christianity, which would be a positive development in inter-religious fraternity and concord.

The OIC Groups of Permanent Representatives to the UN in New York and Geneva considered the issue of Islamophobia as a threat to international security, stability, and peaceful coexistence. As such, it should be addressed collectively, with a strong will and sincere commitment, on the part of all stakeholders. It should be addressed in all its aspects: political, cultural, socio-economic, legal, and religious.

The Groups believe that strong political will should be advocated at the high-level segment of the international community, especially from Western countries, where this phenomenon is more acute. Voluntary commitment should be promoted in support of combating all forms of racial and religious hatred, particularly from the media and political, or ideological groupings. In this regard, a voluntary code of conduct should be encouraged among the media.

4.5.5.1. Alliance of Civilizations

On 30 September 2007, the OIC Secretary General met the UN Secretary General, Ban Ki-Moon, and discussed ways and means to cooperate, inter alia, on improving the role of the Alliance of Civilizations, as well as following-up the Doha Declaration in order to properly deal with misconceptions and defamation of Islam and Muslims in the West.

The Spanish and Turkish joint initiative for an Alliance of Civilizations (AoC) in 2005 has gained prominence in the international *fora* after it came under the UN auspices. The establishment of a permanent Secretariat for the Alliance of Civilizations at the UN Headquarters in New York, the release of the Report of the High Panel, and the appointment of former Portuguese President, Mr. Jorge Sampaio, as the UN High Representative for the Alliance of Civilizations has brought about new dimensions to the project. The OIC has been involved with the Alliance of Civilizations project since its conceptual stage. The AoC was jumpstarted with a Ministerial Meeting on the Group of Friends (GoF) held on the sidelines of the 62nd Session of the UN General Assembly (UNGA) in New York on 26 September 2007 and gained further relevance by holding its First Annual Forum in Madrid in January 2008.

The OIC Secretary General proposed during the GoF meeting that the success of AoC depended on four elements: (1) to address the problem at the grassroots level rather than confining it to the elite group; (2) to end stereotyping of Muslims by the media; (3) to have political engagement at the highest levels; and (4) to attain a historical reconciliation between Islam and Christianity.

4.5.6. OIC-EU Cooperation

The EU Ministerial Council of February 28, 2006, decided to cite the OIC among the organizations that the EU should cooperate with to foster an atmosphere of dialogue and tolerance. The two organizations have been working in close cooperation in this regard. There have been several high level exchanges between the sides, which included meetings between the OIC Secretary General with EU High Representative for Common Foreign and Security Policy. The OIC General Secretariat has also officially approached the President of the EU Commission and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Belgium in January 2007 to open an office in Brussels to develop ties of cooperation with the EU, which is already approved by the concerned authorities, and the process of finalizing it is underway.

The OIC Secretary General had a meeting with the Foreign Minister of Slovenia Mr. Dimitrij Rupel, in charge of the current EU presidency during his visit to Geneva in March 2007. Both leaders emphasized the importance to stem the rising trend of intolerance and discrimination against Muslims. The OIC expressed its willingness to cooperate with the European countries bilaterally as well as within the framework of the EU, OSCE, and Council of Europe institutions in order to combat stereotypes and misunderstandings and foster tolerance.

The OIC is currently cooperating with the EU to address the issue of Islamophobia. In September 2006, an OIC-EU Ministerial Troikas Meeting was held in New York, upon the initiative of Finland as the EU term President. This meeting took place at the sidelines of the UN General Assembly after a pause of several years when OIC and EU Foreign Ministers met in Istanbul on February 12-13, 2002 in the OIC-EU Joint Forum⁴⁰.

⁴⁰ For the Forum's outcome, please refer to Annex D on p.45.

Another OIC-EU Troika meeting took place on the sidelines of the 62nd UN General Assembly. The agenda included the discussion on the AoC. The meeting reached consensus considering that clash of civilization is not inevitable, and that engaging in a dialogue was the best way to diffuse the tensions among different cultures. The AoC should become the organization's framework for this dialogue, and the focus of its activities should be on education, immigration, youth and media, in particular, and that it needs to work to build bridges among different cultures.

4.5.7. Cooperation with the OSCE

The Vienna-based OSCE General Secretariat and Warsaw-based OSCE's Democratization and Human Rights Center (ODIHR), are prominent among Western intergovernmental institutions with which the OIC General Secretariat has established a high level of cooperation on the subject matter at hand in the last two years. The exchange of visits between the OIC and the OSCE Secretaries General, as well as participation in one another meetings and workshops related to combating discrimination and intolerance vis-à-vis Muslims, have contributed to creating a very positive ground for further development of cooperation between the OIC and OSCE.

4.5.8. Cooperation with Council of Europe

In a statement delivered at the Parliamentary Assemble of the CoE, OIC Secretary General called for shunning prejudices against each other based on the past grievances and to follow the path of moderation. To pave the road leading to this goal, the Secretary General proposed several steps, which include:

- ☒ Give official recognition to Islam as given to other mainstream religions in the European states which would infuse confidence and inter-faith harmony.
- ☒ Revise educational syllabi at all levels on both sides, particularly in key disciplines such as history, philosophy, social and human sciences with the aim of presenting a balanced view of other cultures and civilizations.
- ☒ Establish genuine inter-cultural dialogue at local, national, regional and international levels.
- ☒ Develop campaigns to foster and disseminate respect for culture, religious pluralism, and cultural diversity.
- ☒ Ensure freedom of religious practices without prejudice to secular laws.
- ☒ Address the root causes of terrorism including political conflicts.
- ☒ Prosecute and punish for racial discrimination and acts of violence through the framework of appropriate legislation.
- ☒ Strengthen existing legislation on discrimination and discriminatory and “unequal treatment” adopted by EU council directives.

4.6. Legal Dimensions of Combating Islamophobia

4.6.1. Elimination of Discrimination and Protection against Intolerance and Racially/Religiously Motivated Violence

The OIC General Secretariat has been working closely with the Permanent Missions of the OIC Member States in Geneva on the issue of combating defamation of religions. An OIC-sponsored resolution on this issue was adopted by the 5th, 6th, and 7th Sessions of the UN Human Rights Council. The resolution called for combating defamation of religions and countering attempts to link Islam with terrorism, violence, and human-rights violations. It also underlined the need to address the international community's concerns over intensifying campaign of defamation of religions, and the ethnic and religious profiling of Muslim minorities.

The elimination of discrimination, protection against Intolerance, and incitement to hatred on the basis of religion are matters addressed by laws and legal instruments. The right to be free from discrimination based on religion is enshrined in international law, particularly *the UN Charter, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the EU Convention on Human Rights*, and other instruments. Such considerations have been incorporated into the laws of many countries. UN Special Rapporteurs continue to monitor the infringements of these rights, and to recommend ways to combat Islamophobia and other forms of racism and intolerance. Indeed, Islamophobia has become a priority issue for the international community particularly, with regards to its devastating effects not only on the lives of the Muslim communities, but also on the societies where they live. Islamophobia, whether in the shape of intolerance and discrimination, or whether in the form of violence, is an act proscribed by law; a violation of human rights; and a threat to social and political cohesion.

Article 2 of *the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UNDR)* stipulates that: “Everyone is entitled to all the rights and freedoms set forth in this Declaration, without distinction of any kind, such as race, color, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth, or other status”.

Specifically with regard to discrimination based on religion, the Declaration on the Elimination of All Forms of Intolerance and of Discrimination Based on Religion or Belief⁴¹ stipulates that “all States shall take effective measures to prevent and eliminate discrimination on the grounds of religion or belief in the recognition, exercise, and enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedoms in all fields of civil, economic, political, social, and cultural life”⁴². It also adds that they “shall make all efforts to enact or rescind legislation where necessary to prohibit any such discrimination and to take all appropriate measures to combat intolerance on the grounds of religion or other beliefs in this matter”⁴³.

Crucially, according to Article 20, Para. 2 of the ICCPR, “any advocacy of national, racial or religious hatred that constitutes incitement to discrimination, hostility, or violence shall be prohibited by law”. This provision represents a clear limitation to the right to free speech which, according to Article 19 of the ICCPR, “carries with it special duties and responsibilities”. The Committee on Civil and Political Rights in its General Comment 11 affirmed that “these required prohibitions are fully compatible with the right of freedom of expression as contained in Article 19, the exercise of which carries with it special duties and responsibilities”⁴⁴. This is a clear indication that human rights instruments have provisions

⁴¹ Proclaimed by UN General Assembly Resolution No. 36/55 of November 25, 1981.

⁴² Article 4, Paragraph 1.

⁴³ Article 4, Paragraph 2.

⁴⁴ General Comment 11, Paragraph 2.

prohibiting incitement to religious hatred that are considered as legitimate safeguard against the abuse of the right to free speech. Therefore, for Article 20 to become fully enforced States parties are obliged to adopt necessary legislative measures prohibiting the actions referred to therein.

It is worth mentioning that “two EU Council directives adopted in 2000 set common minimum levels of legal protection against certain forms of discrimination in the EU member states. The first of these, directive 2000/43, requires member states to adopt a series of measures to combat discrimination on the grounds of racial or ethnic origin in employment, education, social protection and access to and supply of public goods and services. The other one, directive 2000/78, lays down a framework for measures to combat discrimination on the grounds of religion or belief (...). The EU member states were due to transpose the two directives into national law by the end of June and December 2003 respectively. However, several EU member states failed to meet the deadlines, resulting in the EU Commission initiating infringement proceedings against them.”⁴⁵

Further, in 2001, *the UN Conference Against Racism* held in Durban came to the conclusion that “at the outset of the third millennium, a global fight against racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia, and related intolerance and all their abhorrent and evolving forms and manifestations is a matter of priority for the international community”⁴⁶.

Moreover, it was recalled that “*the dissemination of all ideas based upon racial superiority or hatred shall be declared an offence punishable by law*”⁴⁷. With regard to the Internet, deep concern was expressed over the use of new information technologies “*for purposes contrary to respect for human values, equality, non-discrimination, respect for others, and tolerance, including to propagate racism, racial hatred, xenophobia, racial discrimination, and related intolerance*”⁴⁸. In this regard, the Durban Declaration made reference to Article 4(b) of the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, which “places an obligation upon States to be vigilant and to proceed against organizations that disseminate ideas based on racial superiority or hatred, acts of violence, or incitement to such acts”⁴⁹ and also defines “the stigmatization of people of different origins” by, inter alia, the media, political parties, and national or local organizations, as “an act of racial discrimination”⁵⁰.

The Durban Plan of Action urged States to take necessary legislative, judicial, regulatory, administrative and other measures to prevent and protect against racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia, and related intolerance. It specifically urged States to take all necessary constitutional, legislative, and administrative measures to foster equality among individuals and groups of individuals who are victims of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia, and related intolerance, and to review existing measures with a view to amending or repealing national legislation and administrative provisions that may give rise to such forms of discrimination;⁵¹ and also urged them, including their law enforcement agencies, to design and fully implement effective

⁴⁵ International Helsinki Federation for Human Rights, *op. cit.*, p.8.

See EU directive 2000/43 at

http://ec.europa.eu/employment_social/fundamental_rights/pdf/legisl/2000_43_en.pdf

and 2000/78 at http://ec.europa.eu/employment_social/fundamental_rights/pdf/legisl/2000_43_en.pdf

⁴⁶ *The Declaration of the World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia, and Related Intolerance* (UN, Durban, August 31—September 8 (DOC)), Paragraph 3.

⁴⁷ *Ibid*, Paragraph 86.

⁴⁸ *Ibid*, Paragraph 92.

⁴⁹ Durban Declaration, p.87.

⁵⁰ Durban Declaration, p.94.

⁵¹ Durban Plan of Action, p.70.

policies and programmes to prevent, detect, and ensure accountability for misconduct by police officers and other law enforcement personnel which is motivated by racism, or racial discrimination⁵².

International human-rights law raises awareness about religious rights and provides tools for decision-makers in governments, parliaments, and civil society. It calls on all States to commit themselves to human rights principles, including those related to combating intolerance and discrimination against religious groups. Therefore, there is a need for a binding legal instrument to fight the menace of Islamophobia in the context of freedom of religion and elimination of religious intolerance.

4.5.2. Combating Defamation of Religions

The 60th Session of the UN General Assembly adopted the OIC-Group sponsored Resolution No. 60/150 on *Combating Defamation of Religions*, in January 2006, which called for the urgent need to respect beliefs and disallow their defamation. The resolution also reflected the international community's views, concerns and willingness to eliminate any discrimination towards Muslims or defamation of Islam.

Most importantly, because of the close link between defamation of religions and discrimination vis-à-vis individual Muslims and communities, it has become necessary to deal with this particular issue as a rising human-rights issue. The non-existence of an international instrument on respect of religions and religious beliefs motivated the OIC to table a resolution before the UN Human Rights Council (HRC) in its 4th Session. On March 30, 2007, in the OIC-Group sponsored Resolution (A/HRC/4/L.12) on Combating Defamation of Religions, which was adopted, the Council expressed deep concern at attempts to associate Islam with terrorism, violence, and human-rights violations; and noted with deep concern the intensification of the campaign of defamation of religions, and the ethnic and religious profiling of Muslim minorities, in the aftermath of the tragic events of September 11, 2001. The Council urged States to take resolute action to prohibit the dissemination, including through political institutions and organizations of racist and xenophobic ideas of material aimed at any religion or its followers, that constitute incitement to racial and religious hatred, hostility, or violence. The Council also urged States to provide adequate protection against acts of hatred, discrimination, intimidation, and coercion resulting from the defamation of religions, to take all possible measures to promote tolerance and respect for all religions and their value systems and to complement legal systems with intellectual and moral strategies to combat religious hatred and intolerance. It further urged all States to ensure that all public officials, including members of law enforcement bodies, the military, civil servants, and educators, in the course of their official duties, respect different religions and beliefs and do not discriminate against persons on the grounds of their religion or belief, and that any necessary and appropriate education or training is provided. The Council invited the Special Rapporteur on Contemporary Forms of Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia, and Related Intolerance to regularly report on all manifestations of defamation of religions and, in particular, on the serious implications of Islamophobia for the enjoyment of all rights; and requested the High Commissioner for Human Rights to report to the Human Rights Council on the implementation of this resolution at its 6th session.

The 6th session of the HRC in Geneva in September 2007 was marked by the UN Special Rapporteur on *Contemporary Forms of Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia, and Related*

⁵² Durban Plan of Action, p.94.

Intolerance's Report (A/HRC/6/6), which affirmed that “the increasing trend in defamation of religions cannot be disassociated from...the ominous trends of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia, and related intolerance, which in turn fuel and promote racial and religious hatred”. He asserted that “in the current context, Islamophobia constitutes the most serious form of religious defamation and that Muslim minorities in the West have been in the eye of the storm since the 9/11 attacks”. He further asserted that “Political parties with open anti-Islamic platforms have joined governmental coalitions in several countries and started to put in place their political agendas,” and, that, “In sum, Islamophobia is in the process of permeating all facets of social life”. He referred to the cartoons of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) as evidence of the rising Islamophobia in the West and as evidence that “the basic principle of coexistence of different cultures and different religions, which is the lasting basis for peace, is threatened now”. His report concluded that, “Freedom of expression cannot be used as a pretext or excuse for incitement to racial or religious hatred”.

Indeed, the Report of the Special Rapporteur on Contemporary Forms of Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia, and Related Intolerance concluded that the concept of the clash of civilizations and religions is “becoming increasingly widespread in the thinking and rhetoric of the political, intellectual, and media elite, and [...] is manifested in the refusal of diversity, a dogmatic rejection of multiculturalism, and a defense of identity based on intangible “values”. At the legal level, these two ominous trends are reflected in a hierarchical interpretation of fundamental freedoms that ignores the balance and complementarity of such freedoms and the restrictions and limits so carefully established by the relevant international instruments, particularly by giving preference to freedom of expression over all other freedoms, such as freedom of religion”. In addition, the EUMC Report 2006, referred to elsewhere in the present document, noted that efforts to protect human-rights values, such as freedom of expression “may at times clash with the perceptions of religious duties of certain individuals or faith groups. However, this perspective is of fundamental importance and Member States have a positive duty under international human rights law to protect and promote these values, while ensuring that a potential critical stance towards certain attitudes of other groups in society, respects the principle of equal treatment”.

In fact, the question of avoiding the use of the right to freedom of expression to provoke any given religion was addressed by the Council of Europe’s Secretary General, Terry Davis. In a statement before the Council’s High-Level Human Rights Seminar, he underscored that

“...freedom of expression is vital to the normal functioning of our democracies and our societies as a whole. It is guaranteed by the European Convention on Human Rights. But this needs to be qualified...it is important to bear in mind that, unlike the prohibition of torture or the right to life, freedom of expression can be restricted in certain cases listed by the Convention itself. And that is why I cannot agree with the way the Scandinavian media have reacted to the most recent escalation in this regrettable and unfortunate saga. We all agree on the need to condemn violence. We all agree on the need to respect and protect freedom of expression. But I fail to understand how the publication of the cartoons, which once again offended the entire Muslim population worldwide, has had any positive effect on both counts. I said it at the time, and I will repeat it again. *Freedom of expression should not be considered as a license to insult. In fact, in is not a coincidence that Article 10, which guarantees freedom of expression, is the only provision in the Convention for Human Rights which expressly mentions the notion of responsibility in the exercise of this right.*”⁵³

⁵³ Cf. http://www.coe.int/t/dc/press/news/20080314_disc_sg_oslo_en.asp retrieved on May 3, 2008. Emphasis added.

In sum, the right to freedom of expression should be exercised with the responsibilities and limitations as prescribed by law. The international community should initiate a global dialogue to promote a culture of tolerance and peace based on respect for human rights and religious diversity and should urge states, NGOs, religious bodies, and the media to support and promote such a dialogue. Developing the human rights language to address emerging issues, such as defamation of religions, was an important step forward that is of interest not only to Muslims but to the whole international community.

4.7. Role of NGOs and Civil Society

NGOs play an important role in present-day international relations and issues of global concern. Their role in stemming discrimination towards Muslims in non-Muslim societies and addressing the issue of Islamophobia is also crucial. The UN General Assembly “*High-level Dialogue on Inter-religious and Intercultural Understanding and Cooperation for Peace*” held two plenary sessions on the role of NGOs and civil society. It was encouraging to note that religious leaders, journalists, academics, and diplomats taking part in the sessions touched on a range of topics, such as the manipulation of faith and religious doctrine by extremist groups to justify violence, and the need to combat that trend. The importance of balancing respect and preservation of local cultures and beliefs with strategies towards modernization and development and advocacy efforts to promote cultures of peace and tolerance over war and hatred was also highlighted. Among the many suggestions for moving the dialogue forward, participants stressed the need to establish an “Inter-Religious Advisory Council” to mediate religiously-motivated conflicts worldwide and to teach children to respect people of different faiths. They also deliberated at length on best practices and strategies for inter-religious and intercultural cooperation. The OIC concern over the rising trend of Islamophobia was articulated in those sessions and the role of civil society for greater involvement in addressing the issue was underscored.

The OIC Secretary General attended the International Conference on Islamophobia held in Istanbul on December 08-09, 2007, organized by the Union of the NGOs of the Islamic World (UNIW)⁵⁴. It was stated in its Final Communiqué that “All non-governmental organizations and especially the Union of non-Governmental Organizations of the Islamic World must persistently and vigorously take the necessary measures on a civil basis. A Monitoring Centre Committee must be established under the body of the Union of non-Governmental Organizations of the Islamic World and this committee must apprise and inform international decision making mechanisms, press organs and international community with the periodical reports.”

⁵⁴ For more details about the union and its activities, please see: www.theunity.org

Conclusion

One can conclude that Islamophobia will continue, in the foreseeable future, to be one of the major concerns for the international community at large and Muslim countries, in particular. Therefore, the OIC General Secretariat's strategy and efforts in raising awareness of the growing trend of Islamophobia and the need for a meaningful dialogue should continue with a view to making further positive impact on the international community. In fact, awareness has been raised among governments and other stakeholders that Islamophobia is a serious threat to global peace and stability so much so, that the political will to address the issue seems to be emerging and growing stronger.

It has been proved that the media has been more than often abused to incite religious intolerance and hatred. The Observatory Report would underscore the need for corporate bodies and media owners, including internet network use their discretion so that they do not fall prey to the agenda of a marginal minority.

The OIC Islamophobia Observatory and initiatives taken by the OIC Secretary General raised awareness. The western circles seem to have come to accept that the issue of Islamophobia needs to be addressed as is evident from the initiatives taken on their part to engage in a dialogue with the OIC.

The US Government demonstrated that by its decision to avoid using terminologies in their official directives that may be derogatory for Muslims. The appointment by President Bush of a Special Envoy to the OIC is another indication to that direction. Moreover, the European inspired initiative of the creation of the Alliance of Civilizations is positive development which helps bring the issue of Islamophobia into the international community's agenda.

The West, including Governments, and civil society institutions, have started to take serious note of the Muslim World's concerns over the grave dangers and repercussions of the defamation of Islam and of its willingness and commitment to engage in dialogue. However, their positive response still falls short of the actions and political will needed to address the issue in definitive terms. Islamophobes remain free to carry on their attacks due to the absence of the enforcement of relevant legal measures to deter the misuse or abuse of the right to freedom of expression while ensuring the right to freedom of religion without discrimination. The OIC Member States and their civil society must therefore step up their counter-Islamophobic measures by promoting dialogue with the international community at both multilateral and bilateral levels.

In this respect, *the World Economic Forum Report on Islam and the West: Annual report on the State of Dialogue*, January 2008 (p. 125)⁵⁵, rejoices that growing Muslim minorities that are "committed to active and full citizenship, within the West, are increasingly finding a voice in the public sphere. Governments committed to ideals of equality and recognition, but eager to maintain majority support and national cohesion, are seeking to engage Muslim groups in structured dialogue". The WEF Report (p. 28) also recognizes that, "Over the past several years, the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC), a grouping of 57 mainly Muslim-majority countries, has emerged as a major voice in international affairs. Under its Secretary General Ekmeleddin Ihsanoglu the OIC has highlighted the interests and concerns of Muslims and charged the West with not being adequately responsive to them". The WEF report goes on to reproduce Professor Ihsanoglu's statement to "a group of OIC foreign ministers that "most of the world's hot-bed areas of conflict

⁵⁵ For more details, please see: World Economic Forum, *Report on Islam and the West: Annual report on the State of Dialogue*, January 2008.

and tension involve Muslim parties or Muslims' concerns." He continued: "The suffering in Iraq, the denial of rights in Palestine, Kashmir and Cyprus, the state of lawlessness in Somalia, the security situation in Afghanistan, and the situation of Muslim minorities in the Philippines, southern Thailand, Myanmar, and elsewhere in the Diaspora cries for justice and recognition of rights." Ihsanoglu called for political action, but also for dialogue to counter what he termed the "lack of real political will on the part of officials, media, academics and legislators in the West".

The prevailing common misconception in Western countries that Muslim countries have not spoken out against terrorism needs to be corrected and dissipated without any delay. The OIC and its Member States have minced no words in their unqualified and categorical condemnation of terrorism. The Western society has to be convinced of the OIC position that terrorism is a multifaceted and multidimensional menace which does not follow any religion, has no allegiance or loyalty to any human principles whatsoever, and that it is contrary and diametrically opposed to the spirit of Islam. Furthermore, Western civil society must be made to realize that Islam has been simultaneously the prime target of both terrorism and those associating it with terrorism.

The Observatory also believes that the above developments are conducive to creating a better climate between Muslims and Westerners. For instance, the majority of people in most Western and Muslim countries believe in the importance of better interaction between both sides, despite skepticism of the other side's keenness on building bridges of confidence.

Therefore, these positive and encouraging signs of optimism coming from the grassroots need a clear political engagement asserted by a robust and committed agenda so that harmony could become a reality. Such an agenda should have the statutory mission of realizing, fostering, and safeguarding the spiritual and moral values that are the common heritage of the West and the Muslim world in light of our firm and abiding conviction. Present-day insensitivities are based on temporary and surmountable differences arising from cultural misperceptions and diverse social backgrounds rather than on lasting or irreconcilable variance in intrinsic religious values.

ANNEXES

A. Developments since May 2007

1. The following three paragraphs were taken from the executive summary of **US based institution Human Rights First in its 2007 Islamophobia Hate Crime Survey**:

In 2006, discrimination and violence against Muslims persisted throughout much of Europe. The report highlighted that although the number of registered incidents decreased from a peak level in 2005, after the subway bombings in London, the number of violent incidents remains high. In Belgium, in May, an anti-immigrant fanatic murdered a pregnant Malian au pair, and the two-year-old Belgian infant in her charge. Shortly before, he had shot and seriously wounded a woman of Turkish origin wearing a Muslim headscarf, as she sat on a bench reading. In Poland, in July, at least four men attacked a Moroccan actor at an antiracism festival in the northern city of Olsztyn, hitting him over the head with a bottle and stabbing him repeatedly, leaving him in critical condition. Both cases illustrate the double discrimination of racism and religious intolerance so frequently evident in attacks against Muslims. Other recent incidents have included bombings and arson attacks on mosques and Muslim institutions in many countries, including Austria, France, the Netherlands, Spain, Russia, and the United Kingdom, with attacks on Muslim cemeteries.

Assaults on individuals ranged from spitting, shoving, or the snatching of women's headscarves, to punches and kicks and lethal bludgeoning, stabbings, and shootings. Personal assaults were often accompanied by hurling insults alluding to religion and ethnic or national origin – sometimes expressing both racism and religious hatred. Muslims were often singled out for attack because of their apparel, their association with Muslim institutions, or even the color of their skin, while members of minorities that are often mistaken for Muslims were also attacked. The perpetrators included members of organized extremist movements, racist youth cultures, and ordinary people acting in a climate of xenophobia and nationalist chauvinism. In Western Europe, anti-Muslim violence was driven by fears of Islamist terrorism and newly mainstream trends to present immigration and Muslim minorities as a threat to national identity. In parts of eastern Europe and in particular in the Russian Federation, proliferating nationalist movements have propagated ideologies of ethnic and religious supremacy and fueled growing violence toward national minorities, the largely Muslim minorities of Russia's southern territories, in particular.

A majority of governments in Europe still do not track and record anti-Muslim incidents through official state mechanisms. In nations where the recording of data does take place, many governments still under-report such incidents and significantly under-record official complaints. In addition to continuing fears of suicide bombings and other violent attacks, two series of events dominated international discussions of the status of Muslims in Europe. First, there was nationwide rioting in France in late 2005 that brought national and international attention to previously unheard grievances of the largely Muslim minority population on the outskirts of major cities. The second set of events followed the publication of cartoons ridiculing Islam by a leading Danish daily newspaper in September 2005, at a time of heightened xenophobia and anti-immigrant discourse in Denmark and in much of Europe. After protests by Muslims and others that the cartoons were denigrating and offensive, they were republished in early 2006 by mainstream media across Europe. Non-violent protests in Europe were followed by demonstrations across much of the Muslim world, many of which became violent, further contributing to and exacerbating European xenophobia and anti-Muslim bias.

2. **US based Freedom Center activist David Horowitz** took an initiative to observe an Islamo-Fascist Awareness Week (IFAW) in 200 US Universities in October 2007 with the objective “to corrupt the minds of young Americans against Islam”. The OIC Secretary General expressed the outrage of the OIC and the member states on the event at the United Nations and reputed think tanks and Universities in the USA. He underscored Fascism was a Western concept that was practiced by some European governments in the early decades of the twentieth century and had no connection whatsoever with Islam. Mr. Harowitz the said that the US would be rocked by the biggest conservative campus protest ever – IFAW, which, according to its website⁵⁶, would feature, inter alia: (i) Memorial services for the victims of Islamic Terror both in America and around the globe; (ii) A Student petition denouncing Islamo-Fascist violence against women, gays, Christians, Jews and non-religious people; (iii) Sit-ins in Women’s Studies Departments and campus Women’s Centers to protest their silence about the oppression of women in Islam; (v) Documentary films about the Islamo-Fascist crusade against America, Israel and the West.

3. **Dutch MP Geert Wilders, the leader of the far right Freedom Party, pressed Wednesday, August 8, for banning the Holy Qur'an in the Netherlands, drawing immediate rebuke from the government.** "Ban this wretched book like "*Mein Kampf*" is banned," Wilders, whose party holds nine seats in the 150-member parliament, wrote in a letter published in the local *De Volkskrant* newspaper and cited by *Agence France-Presse (AFP)*. "I am fed up with Islam in the Netherlands: no more Muslim immigrants allowed." "I am fed up with the worship of Allah and Muhammad in the Netherlands: no more mosques," wrote the far-right lawmaker. Earlier this year, Wilders pressed for a no-confidence vote against Muslim ministers Ahmed Aboutaleb and Nebahat Albayrak, questioning their loyalty to the Netherlands. He has also campaigned to ban the building of new mosques and halt all Muslim immigration. The Dutch government swiftly condemned the remarks as damaging for community relations and said the proposal was unworthy of consideration

In: <http://www.islamonline.com/news/newsfull.php?newid=25635> retrieved on 15.08.2007

4. **The Right Wing Swiss people's Party** has taken up an initiative to move for a legislation for **banning minarets in Switzerland** since members of the right-wing Swiss People's Party, currently the largest party in the Swiss parliament, have launched a campaign to have the building of minarets banned since, for them, they are not necessary for worship, but rather are a symbol of Islamic law, and as such incompatible with Switzerland's legal system. In fact, Muslims pray in bad conditions as they are confined to disused warehouses and factories. The Party is trying to obtain 100.000 signatures after which it will be tabled in the parliament. The issue will be examined by the concerned authorities whether such a move is in accordance with the Swiss constitution after which it will be put up for vote. If passed, it will become a law.

More details available at: <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/6676271.stm> retrieved on 06.06.2007.

5. **Austrian right-wing firebrand Joerg Haider plans to change building laws to prevent mosques and minarets being erected in his home province of Carinthia.** Haider, Carinthia's governor, said he would ask its parliament to amend the building code to would require towns and villages to consider "religious and cultural tradition" when dealing with construction requests. "We don't want a clash of cultures and we don't want institutions which are alien to our culture being erected in Western Europe," Haider said in a statement.

In: <http://www.reuters.com/article/idUSL2739608920070827> retrieved on 01.09.2007

6. **Church leader calls for building of mosques to be banned because of risk 'Britain will become an 'Islamic state'** – A senior Church of England member called yesterday for the building of

⁵⁶ Cf: <http://www.terrorismawareness.org/islamo-fascism/49/a-students-guide-to-hosting-islamo-fascism-awareness-week/>

mosques to be banned. Alison Ruoff said more construction would lead to Islamic no go areas dominated by exclusively Muslim populations living under sharia law.

In: http://www.dailymail.co.uk/pages/live/articles/news/news.html?in_article_id=553014&in_page_id=1770
retrieved on 03.04.2008

7. Mosque targeted in urine attack: Reports of shoes, clothes and a carpet in a mosque in Bath (UK) were urinated on during prayers. Avon and Somerset Police treated the incident at the mosque on Pierrepoint Street as a hate crime. Police have released close circle TV images of two men suspected of being connected with the incident. Bath Liberal Democrat MP Don Foster said he had written to the mosque's leader, Imam Rashad Amazi, expressing his concern.

In: <http://newsvote.bbc.co.uk/mpapps/pagetools/print/news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/england/somerset/6976289.stm>
retrieved on 05.09.2007

8. A gunman used a military assault rifle to fire on a dozen worshipers at an Islamic centre at the Swiss city of Lausanne late on Monday, injuring one seriously, police said on Tuesday, November 13. "He injured one person seriously before worshipers immobilized him on the ground," according to a police statement cited by Reuters.

In: <http://www.islamonline.com/news/newsfull.php?newid=56927> retrieved on 14.11.2007

9. British columnist Adrian Morgan wrote a defamatory article entitled "Islamist and Our Dangerous Silence". He wrote "Appeasement to an uncompromising 7th century ideology (Islam), especially when such appeasement is motivated more by fear than by genuine respect, is the fast route to totalitarianism or subjugation. America is not nearly as far down the road to perdition as Europe and Britain. Unless people are allowed to speak freely, critically and openly about any dead religious figure, even if that speech causes offense to some, the very mainstays of our Western values will disappear. I would rather live free and forthright, even with death threats from barbarians, than be cowed into silence under PC servitude. Remember what your Constitution was built upon, and stand up for what it contains. I fear that Britain is already dying. Please do not allow this to happen to your great nation."

In: <http://globalpolitician.com/articles.asp?ID=2971&print=true> retrieved on 17.06.2007.

10. There was widespread outrage in France (21.06.07) after the discovery in the north of the country that about **50 graves of Muslim soldiers who had died for France over 90 years ago had been desecrated**, mainly with Nazi slogans. French officials showed their displeasure over the incident. The incident took place in April 2007. [See: <http://www.arabia.pl/english/content/view/374/16> retrieved on 24.06.2007]. **Muslim War Graves Defaced in France** – Vandals desecrated 148 Muslim graves in France's biggest war cemetery, hanging a pig's head from one tombstone and daubing slogans insulting France's Muslim justice minister, officials said on April 6, 2008.

In: <http://www.arabnews.com/?page=4§ion=0&article=108688&d=7&m=4&y=2008> retrieved on 07.04.2008

11. The Case of Swedish Caricature of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) – A Swedish artist called Lars Vilks has produced a blasphemous caricature of Prophet Muhammad, and *Nerikes Allehanda*, a Swedish provincial newspaper published the cartoon alongside an editorial on freedom of expression. PeO Warring, deputy chairman of the Swedish Newspaper Publishers' Association (TU), said that regardless of what people thought of the cartoons it was important that they could be published and debated. "The strength of freedom of expression lies in the fact that it tolerates - and protects - not only comfortable, harmless and uncontroversial opinions, but also those that are tasteless, controversial, upsetting and offensive," he said in a statement.

In: <http://www.thelocal.se/8318/20070828> retrieved on 30.08.2007

12. Islamophobia in Danish Electioneering – The far-right Danish People's Party (DPP) stepped up its anti-immigrants campaign ahead of legislative elections in November 2007 with more electioneering posters antagonizing Muslims, who make up the largest immigrant minority in Denmark. The DPP election posters portrayed the party's xenophobic agenda with one poster showing a group of hijab-clad women under the headline: "Follow the Country's Traditions and Customs or Leave."

In: <http://www.turkishweekly.net/printer-friendly/printerfriendly.php?type=news&id=50166> retrieved on 13.11.2007

13. The autobiography of outspoken Norwegian Progress Party politician Carl I. Hagen "Ærlig talt" - Speaking Honestly - has offended Muslims. Hagen denigrated Prophet Mohammed (PBUH) as a warlord, man of violence and abuser of women.

In: <http://www.aftenposten.no/english/local/article2093629.ece?service=print> retrieved on 11.11.2007

14. Two Dutch women who recently married young Muslims from Tunisia have lost their jobs at the NATO base at Gellenkirchen in Germany, close to the Dutch border.

In: <http://www.muslimnews.co.uk/news/news.php?article=13212> retrieved on 01.09.2007

15. A New South Wales Senate candidate for the Christian Democratic Party (CDP) has compared controlling Muslim immigration in Australia to stopping the spread of bird flu. The Christian Democrats are pushing for a halt to Muslim immigration because there has been no serious study of the effects of Muslims on Australia. They say the 10-year measure would give some breathing space to assess the situation.

In: <http://abc.net.au/news/stories/2007/08/23/2013166.htm?section=justin> retrieved on 26.08.2007

16. Driver attempts to run over a Muslim woman: the British Police has said that a man's attempt to run a 30-year-old woman over with his car while she waited for a bus in Southampton was racially motivated. The woman, wearing traditional Islamic dress and a head covering, was targeted at Lordshill Centre on 23 August. The man drove up next to her in a red car and verbally abused her, before trying to mount the kerb in his car. He drove off towards a nearby roundabout, before driving back towards the woman, who ran off, police said.

In:

http://newsvote.bbc.co.uk/mpapps/pagetools/print/news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk_news/england/hampshire/6972201.stm retrieved on 05.09.2007

17. Media report reveals 'torrent' of negative Muslim stories – A "torrent" of negative stories has been revealed by a study of the portrayal of Muslims and Islam in the British media, according to a report on 13.11.07. Research into one week's news coverage showed that 91% of articles in national newspapers about Muslims were negative. London mayor Ken Livingstone, who commissioned the study, said the findings were a "damning indictment" on the media and he urged editors and programme makers to review the way they portray Muslims, adding that "the overall picture presented by the media is that Islam is profoundly different from and a threat to the West," and "there is a scale of imbalance which no fair-minded person would think is right." Only 4% of the 352 articles studied last year were positive, he said.

In: <http://www.24dash.com/printNews/7/29255.htm> retrieved on 14.11.2007

18. Britain's first Muslim minister, Shahid Malik, was detained by airport security officials in America. He was stopped and searched at Washington DC's Dulles airport after a series of meetings on tackling terrorism.

In: http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/england/west_yorkshire/7066944.stm retrieved on 31.10.2007

19. **Alex Epstein in his article "'Muslim Opinion' Be Damned: Hatred of America is Irrational and Undeserved"** posted on *American Chronicle* on September 3, 2007, assumes that "the biggest problem facing America today, six years after 9/11, is the fact that many Muslims are mad at us...It is the irrational and unjust opinion of the world's worst Muslims: Islamists and their legions of "moderate" supporters and sympathizers...these people oppose us not because of any legitimate grievances against America, but because they are steeped in a fundamentalist interpretation of their religion." He accused President Bush of taking the opposite approach to "Muslim opinion": appeasement. Instead of identifying anti-American Muslims as ideological enemies to be discredited, he has appealed to their sensibilities and met their demands.

In: <http://www.americanchronicle.com/articles/viewArticle.asp?articleID=36664> retrieved on 04.09.2007

20. **The religious liberty arm of the World Evangelical Alliance** strongly rebuffed Doudou Diène's report [manifestations of defamation of religions] that has claimed that the source of Muslim extremism is the "defamation" of Islam. Elizabeth Kendal, who serves as the principal researcher for the WEA's Religious Liberty Commission, reacting to report to the U.N. Human Rights Council (UNHRC) written by U.N. Special Rapporteur Doudou Diene, who recommended that the international human rights covenants be "reinterpreted and amended" to deal with Islamophobia, stated that "the very heart of the issue was not 'defamation' of Islam or 'baseless' Islamophobia but the fact that the dictators of Islam were consumed and driven by 'apostaphobia!'"

In: <http://www.christianpost.com/pages/print.htm?aid=29348> retrieved on 19.09.2007

B. Text of the Joint Statement by the Secretary-General of the United Nations, the Secretary General of the Organization of the Islamic Conference and the High Representative for Common Foreign and Security Policy of the European Union, issued simultaneously in New York, Jeddah, and Brussels on February 7, 2006:

We are deeply alarmed at the repercussions of the publication in Denmark several months ago of insulting caricatures of the Prophet Mohammed and their subsequent republication by some other European newspapers, and at the violent acts that have occurred in reaction to them.

The anguish in the Muslim World at the publication of these offensive caricatures is shared by all individuals and communities who recognize the sensitivity of deeply held religious belief. In all societies there is a need to show sensitivity and responsibility in treating issues of special significance for the adherents of any particular faith, even by those who do not share the belief in question.

We fully uphold the right of free speech. But we understand the deep hurt and widespread indignation felt in the Muslim World. We believe freedom of the press entails responsibility and discretion, and should respect the beliefs and tenets of all religions.

But we also believe the recent violent acts surpass the limits of peaceful protest. In particular, we strongly condemn the deplorable attacks on diplomatic missions that have occurred in Damascus, Beirut and elsewhere. Aggression against life and property can only damage the image of a peaceful Islam. We call on the authorities of all countries to protect all diplomatic premises and foreign citizens against unlawful attack.

These events make the need for renewed dialogue, among and between communities of different faiths and authorities of different countries, all the more urgent. We call on them to appeal for restraint and calm, in the spirit of friendship and mutual respect.

Kofi A. Annan
Ekmeleddin Ihsanoglu
Javier Solana

C. Text of the Doha Statement, signed by the UN Secretary General, the OIC Secretary General, the Secretary General of the League of Arab States, the First Deputy Prime Minister, Foreign Minister of Qatar, the Foreign Minister of Spain and Foreign Minister of Turkey, in Doha, Qatar on February 25, 2006:

Earlier this month the United Nations, the European Union and the Organization of the Islamic Conference took the unprecedented step of issuing a joint statement appealing for restraint and calm after the publication of insulting caricatures of the Prophet Mohammed, considered blasphemous by Muslims and deeply offensive by many others, as well as the reactions thereto.

All of us now join to renew our call for restraint, and for an immediate end to the present atmosphere, which threatens to sow deep discord between communities, societies and countries. We deeply regret the offence given by the caricatures, as well as the loss of life and damage to property in several countries.

We reaffirm the universal right to freedom of expression. We appeal to everyone to exercise that right responsibly, and not to use it as a pretext for incitement to hatred, or insult to the deeply held belief of any community.

We also reaffirm the right to peaceful protest, especially where deep hurt has been caused, and we acknowledge that Muslims do indeed feel deep hurt over the caricatures. We applaud that vast majority of the protesters and demonstrators throughout the world, who chose to express their indignation in an orderly and peaceful manner.

We urge everyone to resist provocation, overreaction and violence, and turn to dialogue. Without dialogue, we cannot hope to appeal to reason, to heal resentment or overcome mistrust.

As we meet today in Qatar, we appeal earnestly to all leaders, religious and secular, to use their influence to promote the universal values and beliefs that we all share. As individuals, and as representatives of our respective organizations and countries, we fully support universal human rights, and the strict application of relevant laws. We believe all rights should be exercised responsibly. Neither media publications, nor places of worship, should be used for incitement, or to spread hatred.

The international society we all want to live in is a tolerant one, which recognises both rights and responsibilities. The hallmark of every tolerant society -- and indeed of every tolerant person -- is respect for the right of all people to freedom of worship and of opinion and expression, and appreciation of diversity as an asset, not a threat.

We look to the high-level group of the Alliance of Civilizations, which meets here in Qatar tomorrow, to suggest ways of encouraging broader and deeper mutual respect and understanding between people of different belief, culture or tradition.

We intend, as a group, to follow up this joint statement, and commit ourselves to formulate a joint strategy and agreed measures that will contribute to overcome the current crisis, to prevent its recurrence, and to promote tolerance and mutual respect between all religions and communities, in Europe and elsewhere.

The group has requested the United Nations Secretary General to bring this document to the attention of the United Nations General Assembly and Security Council, and the European Union.⁵⁷

⁵⁷ Cf. <http://www.unis.unvienna.org/unis/pressrels/2006/sg2106.html?email=yes> retrieved on December 25, 2007.

D. The OIC-EU Joint Forum, February 13, 2002

The Ministers of Foreign Affairs of the OIC Member and Observer Countries and the EU Member and Candidate Countries came together, on 12-13 February 2002, for a Joint Forum in Istanbul at the invitation of the Foreign Minister of Turkey, to share their assessments of the world's present political situation and to promote understanding and harmony among civilizations.

History has taught us that the lack of mutual knowledge and respect among civilizations can greatly affect world stability and peace. Harmony and welfare are nurtured when different peoples make communication a priority, taking the time to express and listen to each other's views and interests, acknowledging and tolerating differences, while at the same time seeking out commonalities that can help build strong relationships that promote political and economic cooperation.

The tragic events of September 11th and their repercussions have shown the need to strengthen tolerance and understanding among different cultures to avoid reappearance of deeply rooted prejudices that can surface. The horrifying attacks of September 11th are purely brutal acts of terrorism and they cannot be explained or justified for religious, cultural or any other reasons whatsoever. On the other hand, September 11th has also sparked a growing consciousness of the need for all sides to discuss and attempt to better understand the differences in perceptions, values and interests, as well as to promote tolerance and appreciation for cultural diversity among them. We jointly have a responsibility to address and resolve issues which can lead to divisions within and between our communities, to embrace and value our diversities, and to promote and uphold the values we all share.

During its deliberations, the OIC-EU Joint Forum has acknowledged the various activities, resolutions, recommendations and reports of international and regional organizations, such as the UN and the UNESCO, the OIC, the EU, the Council of Europe, the OSCE, the Arab League, the Organization of African Unity and other *fora* as the Barcelona Process, including the Global Agenda on Dialogue Among Civilizations adopted by the UN General Assembly on 21 November 2001, which are designed to protect and improve the common heritage of mankind and the shared values of different cultures, and to enhance tolerance, dialogue and cooperation within and among nations and peoples.

In the course of discussions the following points were agreed upon:

- i. The Forum reaffirms its strong belief that cultures, in their diversity, complement and enhance one another. The Forum also confirms its belief in the harmony among civilizations and in its attainability.
- ii. The main means to support coherence and solidarity and to avoid racial, religious and cultural prejudices is to enhance our knowledge of one another through communication and cooperation for the promotion of common universal values, such as those enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and other relevant international human rights instruments. To this end the two political organizations, the EU and the OIC have a joint responsibility to contribute to the achievements of these goals.

- iii. The Forum affirms that terrorism cannot be justified for any reason whatsoever. It recognizes the joint responsibility to fight terrorism in all its forms and manifestations within the framework of the UN, in conformity with its Charter and its resolutions.
- iv. The OIC and EU countries are committed to defining problems emerging from cultural prejudices and political and economic injustices and to promoting solutions that will contribute to universal peace, welfare and stability.
- v. The Forum underlined that for peace, stability and harmony to prevail, the Middle East conflict must be settled in a just and comprehensive manner and in accordance with international law and the relevant Security Council resolutions. In this context, the "two state" solution will contribute to bring peace and security to the peoples concerned.
- vi. The OIC-EU Forum, having listened to the exchange of ideas and to participants' views, has concluded that there is a need for further cooperation. The Forum proposes that existing bilateral and multilateral frameworks continue to be used for general debate on the issues raised during this meeting.
- vii. The Forum noted with appreciation the invitation of His Highness the Emir of the State of Qatar in his capacity as current Chairman of the OIC to host a OIC-EU Troika meeting in the second half of the current year, in Doha.
- viii. The Forum thanked the Government of Turkey for the initiative and effort in organizing this Forum that constituted an event of great political significance. They welcomed Turkey's intention to publish the *compte rendu* of the OIC-EU Joint Forum and its readiness to facilitate communication among the participating countries and organizations if the need arises.

E. Excerpts from Statements of leaders on Islamophobia at the 11th Islamic Summit Conference, Dakar, 13-14 March 2008:

1. Excerpts from the Statement by the President of the Republic of Senegal and Chair of the OIC Summit, H.E. Maitre Abdoulaye Wade:

Today, our freedom to worship in peace should be a concern to us, since we are unfortunately witnessing a certain Islamophobia fuelled and sustained by evil-spirited people, expert in the falsification of history and looming from all sides. However, alongside these challenges, albeit marginal, we must admit that people in the West are developing a certain tolerance for Islam. An increasing number of mosques are surfacing in Europe, which could not be imagined some twenty years ago. We should therefore refrain from falling into the trap of a few society drop-outs lacking in publicity and seeking to make themselves known by choosing to insult 1.2 billion human beings. They do not deserve our contempt. Nor do they deserve our reaction. We should ignore them and pursue our forward march.

It is clear that those who strive to link Islam to terrorism are bent on arousing hatred among peoples and triggering confrontational reactions. But we will not give them the opportunity.

I know that the authorities of these countries disagree with these practices. But they evoke freedom of expression, a pillar of their political systems. But is the freedom of expression tantamount to "freedom to blasphemy? Pretexting freedom of opinion as an attempt to justify attacks led by a minority of evil-spirited people against the religious feelings of close to a billion and a half Muslims is simply unacceptable.

There is indeed no freedom without limits/bounds and this is recognized by all political systems.

The sublime message of Islam, sealed for over 14 centuries in the Holy Koran, will remain eternal to the end of time. God the Self-Sufficient is the Guardian of His Sacred Word according to Sura 15 (Al Hijr) Verse 9: "Surely We have revealed the Reminder (the Qur'an), and surely We are its Guardian"

We should rather endeavor to put across the great achievements of Islam for social peace such as the Medina Constitution, which in 622, enshrined, within a remarkable legal framework, the rights and responsibilities of Muslims and other religious communities living in the City of Light.

To conclude on this issue, we shall recall the results, published on 26 February 2008 by a leading Western agency following six years of investigation, of a wide survey carried out in 40 Muslim countries in three continents covering a population that is representative of the Muslim world. The results clearly indicate that a vast majority of individuals interviewed (93%) rejected terrorist acts no matter the reasons or the perpetrators.

Islam is peace and Muslims should accept their religion without complex. We need not be embarrassed, nor give reasons or even excuses in accordance with the teachings of Sura 109, Verse 6: "To you is your religion, and to me is my religion".

2. Excerpts from the Statement by the OIC Secretary General, Ekmeleddin Ihsanoglu:

In our relations with the Western World, we are going through difficult times. We strongly feel that our religion, its sacred symbols, and on both community and individual levels Muslims are

being targeted by a campaign of defamation, denigration, stereotyping, intolerance and discrimination. It seems that ignorance about Islam and calculated animosity with deep historic roots on the part of a minority in the West, as well as our failure to disseminate the true values of Islam are the reasons of this increasing wave of Islamophobia. We are confronted by hatred and bigotry of radical marginal groups of people who believe that it is only through insulting Muslims and their religious symbols that they can demonstrate their commitment to freedom of speech. Combating Islamophobia is one of the main priorities for our organization in the Ten Year Program of Action.

The OIC General Secretariat gave utmost support to the roles of the OIC Ambassadorial Groups particularly in Geneva and New York towards more concerted action. Our Organization has assumed, with a deep sense of responsibility, the role of the legitimate representative and voice of the Muslim World on issues of dialogue among civilizations, interfaith dialogue, and combating the dangerously increasing trend of Islamophobia through dynamic interaction with the international community, particularly with the UN, OSCE, Council of Europe, EU and Western governments. We have established strong ties with the centers of "think-tanks" in Europe and the USA to expose our views and values and defend our causes. We have laid down bridges of communication with the international media and press centers to project and propagate the voice of the Muslim world to the Western societies in particular and to the world public opinion in general.

Here, I would particularly like to highlight an important document that has been prepared and circulated by the General Secretariat, the first ever Report of the OIC Islamophobia Observatory. As has been exhibited clearly with some recent negative developments in some western countries, promotion of dialogue and mutual respect and combating Islamophobia is and will continue to be one of the biggest challenges faced by the Muslim World. We need concerted efforts in this area now more than ever. This Summit should give an unequivocal message to the Muslim World, to the Western World and to the international community at large that irresponsible attacks targeting our religion, our Prophet and our Muslims brothers will and cannot be condoned and that serious political engagement, dialogue and cooperation is necessary between the Muslim and Western Worlds including at the UN platforms.

3. Excerpts from the Statement by King of Kingdom of Morocco, His Majesty King Mohammad VI:

Terrorism has become the plague of our time, a scourge that assaults the lofty values of human society. Once again, I wish to express my utter condemnation of all criminal terrorist acts and of the obscurantist, takfiri ideology underlying them. I also strongly condemn the attacks against the sacred values of Islam, a faith which played a pioneering role in upholding the global dimension of human dignity and has always advocated constructive interaction and dialogue between civilizations and religions, in an atmosphere of mutual respect.

4. Excerpts from the Statement by the Emir of the State of Kuwait, H.R.H. Sheikh Sabah IV Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah

What hurts all of us is the persistent attack which is inimical to Islam and Muslims in Europe and the United States of America, particularly the publication and reprinting by Danish and other newspapers in certain Western European countries of the defamatory caricatures of our Master and Prophet Mohammed (PBUH), in addition to the production by media institutions of films that smear Islam and Muslims.

While we strongly recall these reprehensible acts which affect the feelings of hundreds of millions of Muslims and serve extremism, fanaticism, and animosity, we call on government authorities in these countries to put an end to such provocative acts. Whatever potential reactions such acts may instigate will surely not serve the interests of Muslim relations with these countries.

Accordingly, I call on my brothers the Kings and Heads of State of Muslim countries to consider and activate the eighth item of the draft OIC Ten-Year Programme of Action (POA) on combating Islamophobia by working for the adoption of an international resolution from the United Nations with a view to countering this international phenomenon and calling on all states to enact laws against it, including deterrent sanctions, provided this issue be included among the resolutions of this Summit.

5. Excerpts from the Statement by the President of Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, H.E. Hamid Karzai:

The holy religion of Islam forbids insult and desecration of the beliefs of non-Muslims. We are deeply troubled by the continued insults and disrespect against our holy prophet (peace be upon him) exhibited by some media organizations. It takes our collective call and resolve to end such acts of ignorance.

Afghanistan is concerned at the spread of Islamophobia in some parts of the world. Islam has dealt with the followers of other religions in peace and harmony. Non-Muslims were not persecuted under the Islamic Andalusia. The Ottomans treated non-Muslims in the territories under its control in Eastern Europe and Greece with respect and dignity.

Peaceful coexistence in our global village where followers of various religions and civilizations live side by side requires the Islamic world to choose dialogue, cooperation and unity with others. Therefore, we should engage with the world around us in an open and constructive dialogue in order to put an end to prejudice and misjudgments about us and also our own pre-judging of others with an aim to contribute to a peaceful world for all.

6. Excerpts from the Statement by the President of the People's Democratic Republic of Algeria, H.E. Abdelaziz Buteflika

In order to answer the legitimate preoccupations of our peoples and safeguard our religion from the attacks of which it is the object, we should place our reform action under the slogan of openness.

Together, we should find more rational strategies to adapt our organization to a rapidly changing and hardly predictable international environment, notably through the opening of democratic dialogue platforms that are respectful of human rights. This opening should be consolidated by international action geared to promote better understanding and interaction among religions and civilizations.

7. Excerpts from the Statement by the President of the Republic of Djibouti, H.E. Ismail Omar Guelleh

During these last years, we can see the spread, day in day out, month in month out, year in year out, of an erroneous and contrived conception of Islam, a representation which seeks to assimilate our religion to the most barbaric form of demonstrative terrorism. Whether deliberate or not, this attempt to mix us up with a world which the foundations of our religion condemn and reject has managed to tarnish the image of Islam, its principles of peace, tolerance, and compassion. This phobia of anything that represents Islam has considerably jeopardized the correct perception of

Islam and Muslims. Nevertheless, this phenomenon of international terrorism that has done so much harm to Muslims does not spare the countries of the Muslim world which have also become victims of this scourge.

In this regard, my country expresses its satisfaction of the very clear and unequivocal position adopted by our organization and its total commitment in the struggle against terrorism under all its forms.

8. Excerpts from the Statement by President of the Arab Republic of Egypt, H.E. Mohammed Hosni Mubarak:

(...) Our Muslim Ummah has witnessed, during the past five years that have elapsed since our last Summit in Putrajaya, many developments and events. Indeed the Islamic world is still facing major challenges today, from occupation and military clashes, through developmental, economic and social problems with their various dimensions, to accusations and allegations liberally pronounced against Muslims calling them extremists, to campaigns of disparagement and defamation against our noble faith (...).

9. Excerpts from the Statement by the President of the Republic of Gambia, H.E. Alhajri Dr. Yahya Aj Jammeh:

Islam as a religion and Muslims as followers or believers of this religion are sweepingly branded and categorized as terrorist religion or its followers simply terrorists. Do we blame these non-Muslims especially in the so-called developed world who see us and our noble religion as synonymous to terrorism? I believe not. I think that we the leaders of the Islamic Ummah are to be blamed squarely for this outrageous perception of Islam and Muslims. The perception is outrageous and diametrically opposed to the true meaning of Islam because Islam is the embodiment of PEACE. Why have I put the blame on all of us who are gathered here as leaders of the Islamic Ummah including of course the leadership of the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC) as well as allied organizations like the Arab league? The simple reason is that we are not UNITED and words and deeds do not truly reflect the spirit and letter of Islam.

We as leaders of the Islamic Ummah must come out on a united front not only to fight but to also dissociate ourselves and our religion from such terrorist elements if we are to be seen as credible in the eyes of our followers and in defense of our NOBLE RELIGION. However, such an action alone would not suffice as a panacea to bring respect and dignity to Islam and Muslims around the world.

10. Excerpts from the Statement by the President of the Republic of Indonesia, H.E. Dr. Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono:

We must first prove ourselves effective at promoting peace and reconciliation in our respective nation building efforts. Protracted conflicts in Muslim societies bring shame to the Ummah and tarnish the good name of Islam. Thus, in many circles outside the Muslim world, Islam has been unjustly associated with violence.

We must strongly denounce the irreverent portrayal of Islam and its sacred symbols in mass media. But we must not resort to violence because that would prove our detractors tight. Instead, we must reach out to the rest of the world through dialogue inter-faith, inter-cultural and inter-civilizational.

11. Excerpts from the Statement by the President of Islamic Republic of Iran, H.E. Mahmud Ahmadinejad:

This is not acceptable to see anti-human circles in the west dare to insult the sanctity of the great Prophet of Islam, Hazrat Mohammad (S.A.W.A) and stand against the ever –increasing interest of the Europeans in the genuine Islam. Today with the failure of western schools like liberalism and secularism the people in the world are increasingly attracted to Islam and the brilliance of the jewel of Islam and other Abrahamic faiths have enthralled the eyes and swiftly magnetized the justice-seeking hearts of the people around the globe. Of course they will not succeed in diminishing the dignity and holiness of our prophet by insulting him and dissuade people from embracing the truth and justice.

12. Excerpts from the Statement by the President of Federal Republic of Nigeria, H.E. Umaru Musa Yar'adua:

The dialogue among major world civilizations is a process that would underscore the primary focus of this Organization to work for the maintenance of international peace and security. It will project the real image of the Islamic religion and its readiness to co-exist in harmony and peace with adherents of other faiths. Such is the unique strength of our Organization and such has been the reason behind its sustained success over the years.

Notwithstanding the success so far realized in collectively addressing the problems posed by the seeming clash of civilizations, political divisions based on ideological issues have assumed new and dangerous dimensions. What is being referred to as Islamophobia is now threatening to upset the modest successes so far recorded in fostering dialogue among cultures. With the accusations and counteraccusations of religious intolerance among religious faithful and the phenomenon of wars based on religious stereotyping, the task before the Organization continues to be daunting.

We have the required commitment, the solidarity, and the moral force to engage in constructive dialogue and to reverse the unfortunate trends.

13. Excerpts from the Statement by the President of Republic of Sierra Leone, H.E. Ernest Bai Koroma:

He said “Our organization is facing serious problems in the international arena and within umaah at this critical period of development. The prevalence of international terrorism and the rising islamaphobia are cases in point.” Adding that the OIC “must come out with positive proposals in the form of concrete resolutions to help in solving these burning international issues.” He said the OIC should work hand in hand with other international bodies like the AU, the EU, and the UN. On terrorism, President Koroma said “this scourge is seen as one of the greatest challenges facing our world.”

14. Excerpts from the Statement by the President of Republic of Somalia, H.E. Abdullahi Yusuf Ahmed:

Even in the old established democracies, Islamophobia is rife and Muslims are often prompted with unfair scrutiny and ready suspicion. Other manifestations of Islamophobia include such blasphemous practice as the frequent linking of Islam with terrorism. Deviously, these practices attempt to revive some validation for the defunct theory of "The Clashes of Civilizations" which envisions a doomsday scenario of a bitter global enmity eventually breaking out between the Islamic World and Christendom. It is, therefore, a highly dangerous practice as it provocatively risks working against the interest of global harmony, concord, and peace.

15. Excerpts from the Statement by President of the Republic of Tajikistan, H.E. Imam Ali Rahman

Under the prevailing circumstances of competition, discrepancies, the race to domination among the major powers with the emerging centres of dominance in a bid for vital and strategic sources, we have to bear in mind that if we are to stand in the way of attempts to interfere in the domestic affairs of sovereign states, we need to act very responsibly and carefully and to take appropriate measures to rise to a higher qualitative level of Islamic solidarity.

Such a matter bears particular interest at the turn of the 21st century with the intensified fault lines of separation between groups and factions which try to play-act the issue of clash of civilizations in order for them to attain their dirty objectives. The vicious abuse of Islam, the distortion of its noble values and the spread of defamatory images of the Prophet (PBUH), all fall within the framework of the same sinister designs.

The proper and sound scientific vision asserts that all civilizations share the same humanitarian inclination, and that Man is their common goal and key factor. The grandeur of the Islamic civilization is reflected in the portrayal of “the perfect human” as depicted by Ibn Al Arabi and his philosophical writings as well as in those of Jalaluddin Al Rumi in his timeless book “Al Mathnawi Al Maanawi” with its matchless appeal.

16. Excerpts from the Statement by President of Republic of Tunisia, H.E. Zine El Abidine Ben Ali:

While taking note, with satisfaction, of the international community's growing awareness of the dangers of terrorism, we call for avoiding confusion between terrorism and Islam, and for increasing efforts to highlight the true and shining image of our sublime religion which embraces noble universal values and advocates tolerance, moderation and the golden mean. In this regard, it is necessary to join efforts in order to redress the distorted image attached to Islam and Muslims as a result of the acts of certain organizations and the behavior of certain parties.

Achieving this noble objective requires that we all show openness to the other and establish a genuine and balanced dialogue between our civilization and culture and the other civilizations, away from convulsions, seclusion and confrontation; thus blocking the way in front of all attempts to distort and speak evil of our religion.

17. Excerpts from the Statement by the President of the Republic of Turkey, H.E. Abdullah Gul:

In some countries, Muslims are made the target of the campaign called Islamophobia, as well as xenophobia and racism.

The reactions of the Governments and public opinions in these countries to the above mentioned attitudes and their quest to find appropriate measures is a positive point, although these efforts may be insufficient.

18. Excerpts from the Statement by President of the Republic of Yemen, H.E. Ali Abdullah Saleh

Today – Majesties and Highness – once again, the Danish media have perpetrated the same crime – with a blatant or indirect condonement and suspicious oblivion on the part of other European parties – the crime of maligning our noble messenger Muhammad (PBUH) under a fictional excuse fabricated at the hands of fistful of extremists in the west, thus reaffirming a systematic approach that has obtained since September 2001 against Islam and Muslims.

Therefore, the Republic of Yemen, from this form which represents the voice of Islam and Muslims, I call for a affirm stand to be adopted unanimously by all the OIC Member States, that would include political and media related measures and approaches to deal with this organized provocations against Muslims, and to decided on a common approach in dealing with the disparagement of Islam, Muslims and their noble Prophet (PBUH). Also a resolution needs to be adopted at the international level, at the United Nations, to incriminate any abuse against Prophets and heavenly religions, earmark the perpetrations of such abuses as violators of international peace and security and to ensure that they are punished in accordance with national and international law.

19. Excerpts from the Statement by the Chief Advisor (Head of the Government) of People's Republic of Bangladesh, H.E. Dr. Fakhruddin Ahmad:

Today, the Islamic Ummah confronts numerous challenges. These are multi-pronged. Many are daunting. We see around us a world enveloped in an irrational fear of Islam. This Islamophobia is devoid of reason, without cause. It is unjust and unfair. It must cease. We must do the needful to counter these apprehensions. We must nullify those fears by our explanations to the world of the positive values of Islam. We must paint to them what Islam stands for. We must demonstrate our commitment towards good governance, rule of law, freedom of expression, human rights, transparency in governance, compassion for the poor, empowerment of women, and justice and equity for all. We must underscore that Islam and terrorism are incompatible and absolutely irreconcilable.

20. Excerpts from the Statement by Prime Minister of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, H.E. Nader Dahabi:

He reiterated that the major challenges which the Islamic world is facing on the political, economic, social and cultural fronts make it imperative for Muslim states to unify all efforts exerted to confront them. The premier said one of the most serious dangers facing the Islamic world is the attack on Islam and the distortion of its teachings and noble values. He underlined the Kingdom's efforts to confront such abuses.

21. Excerpts from the Statement by the Chairman of the Ministerial Council Republic of the Republic of Lebanon, H.E. President Fouad Seniora:

(...) We are here to renew our solidarity in the defense of these values and in upholding the real image of Islam, the Islam of a uniting civilization that has gained richness through the contributions of coexisting peoples and religious groups, which was further enriched by the Islam of openness, moderation and active presence in the world.

We hold up to the authentic Islamic values and look with regret and concern at the distorted stereotypical images of Islam and Muslims which have been paddled over the past few years and which are concocted and spread by fanatics and extremists. All this makes it incumbent upon us to strive diligently to project the real and just image of Islam, as a faith that remains open to the other, of a different religion or culture, with whom we share universal human values and exchange mutual recognition and respect.

What is said, written or portrayed about Islam, its Holy Book and its Prophet (PBUH) is causing serious offense to the feelings of Muslims. These statements, writings or portrayals are often

ignorant and uncognizant. They feed hatred and discrimination and breed radicalism and violence. The tensions resulting from such prejudice to Islam and Muslims does not affect one single country or region but often spreads and interlaces with other political tensions that have deep historical roots that could compromise the peaceful relations between peoples and nations. Our duty is therefore all the more critical. We need to enlighten, confront and orient on the one hand, and to control extremist reactions and reign in radicalism on the other. We must not cause others to fear us, nor should we fear them. We should rather engage in dialogue and cooperation with the people of noble faith and high morals and all those who reject fanaticism and conflicts and disavow those who try to use religious feelings to exacerbate differences and widen the gaps...

22. Excerpts from the Statement by Prime Minister of Malaysia, Hon. Dato' Seri, Abdullah Ahmad Badawi:

We need to strengthen the OIC to serve as the voice of Muslims in international fora. The OIC is not only a platform for cooperation among the Ummah but also the stage for the Ummah to launch its defense against extremism and Islamophobia at the international level.

23. Excerpts from the Statement by Vice-President of Republic of Iraq, H.E. Mr. Tareq Hashemi:

As for abusive pronouncements against the Prophet of Mercy and the deliberate in considerations towards his noble person, they have come to form almost a recurrent phenomenon raising its ugly head from time to time. It is quite evidently the result of a relentless disorientation campaign at the international level, aimed at causing prejudice to Islam. The concerned Western countries would not have allowed that, had the Islamic States dealt with this plague from the beginning in a unified rank, with the same diligence, and high degree of alertness.

As for the attempts to accuse Islam with terrorism and spread the culture of fear from Islam, it is part and parcel of the unjust campaign against it as a religion, a culture and an approach to life. Such a campaign calls for redoubled efforts to respond to the propagated distortions and to give the world the real image of our noble faith, which came as a blessing for humanity and which will remain so till the Day of Judgment.

24. Excerpts from the Statement by Deputy Prime Minister of the Republic of Uzbekistan, H.E. Rustam Kasimov:

It is unfortunate and causes concerns that in some countries the cases of intimidation of people with the religion of Islam (Islamophobia) and nurturing the feelings of hatred towards the people who profess this religion are continuing. In this respect, it should be mentioned the attempts to link Islam with terrorism, as much as the publication of groundless and unfair articles in the Western press that insult the national and religious feelings of Muslims. The President of the Republic of Uzbekistan H.E. Mr. Islam Karimov states that such notions and terms as "terrorism" and "fundamentalism" have existed in many countries at all periods of time, and he stands against relating them to the sacred religion of Islam.

The threats and challenges against Islam can be addressed only by way of broadly and continuously propagating the peace-loving and enlightening essence of our holy religion.

25. Excerpts from the Statement by the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Azerbaijan, H.E. Dr. Elmar Mammadyarov:

A new wave of malicious attacks against Islam in some European countries confirms the vital necessity to strengthen our joint efforts to counter Islamophobia. It is also important that we act in a proactive way, rather than just responding to such manifestations. In this context, the use of official diplomatic channels could be effectively augmented through involvement of media and Muslim communities in non-Muslim countries. Efforts to present the true and correct image of Islam and its values to the non-Muslim world need to be coordinated through appropriate OIC structures. We should also encourage more active dialogue with individual countries and international organizations to correct misconceptions. Preservation of the unity of Ummah and prevention of ideological conflicts among us is becoming indispensable in context.

26. Excerpts from the Statement by Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, H.E. Inam ul Haque

He called for a collective front against extremism, terrorism and Islamophobia, and the malicious campaign to defame Islam and its sacred personalities, stating that “there can be no excuse for defaming a religion and its Prophet on the pretext of freedom of speech”.

27. Excerpts from the Statement by Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, H.R.H. Prince Saudi Al Faisal:

In the context of our review of the principles contained in the Ten-Year Programme, we have to note that the call for moderation, tolerance and openness towards other cultures and civilizations is not intended to ignore abuses directed against Islam and Muslims and disregard the waves of hatred and antagonism originated by the forces of extremism and blind fanaticism prevalent in some Western circles, which was expressed recently by various means of audiovisual media. Our call for tolerance among civilizations and cultures can be achieved only through the exchange of respect among themselves to ensure parity of dialogue. In this regard, we call upon the international community and all its civil and official institutions, and its media to respect Islam in its capacity as a divine religion and the most widespread.

Though the international charters have guaranteed the human right of freedom of expression, they did not pardon him from his responsibilities and obligations in return for enjoying this right. The United Nations Charter and international human rights laws called for encouraging dialogue, understanding and cooperation among religions and cultures in defense of peace and prevention of intolerance, discrimination and instigation for hatred of individuals of any of the sects or followers of a religion or a faith. The charters and media also called for the creation of an environment conducive to better understanding among all faiths, cultures and peoples. Therefore it is impossible in any way to accept that the freedom of opinion could go too far to the extent that it infringes the rights and freedoms of religious beliefs of individuals.

28. Excerpts from the Statement by the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Republic of Suriname, H.E. Lygia L.I. Kraag:

Suriname, a multi-racial and multi-religious society, attaches great values to the principles of tolerance, solidarity and respect. Therefore, we believe in a collective responsibility to advance these principles as part of a genuine effort to achieve peace and security.

29. Excerpts from the Statement by the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Uganda, H.E. Hon. Sam K. Kutesa:

We in Uganda in particular, and in East Africa in general, reject terrorism in all its forms and manifestations and reiterate our resolve to work with the international community to bring this scourge to an early end. We strongly oppose attempts to associate terrorism with a particular religion.

30. Excerpts from the Statement by Delegation of the Republic of Togo:

Conversely, we need to be aware of the need for us to build a bridge between societies, to promote dialogue and understanding among peoples and to forge a collective political will to combat intolerance and extremism which are the breeding ground of terrorism.

OBSERVERS:

31. Excerpts from the Statement by President of Russian Federation, H.E. Vladimir Putin:

The president sent a message which reads, inter alia, "The Dakar summit represents an important milestone for both Muslims and the entire international community. And this is logical in light of the increasing contribution the Organisation of the Islamic Conference (OIC) has made to the resolution of contemporary global and regional problems. Partnership between Russia and the Islamic world is particularly in demand as tensions between different civilizations increase. We are both concerned about the danger represented by potential divisions in the international community on religious or civilizational grounds and are ready to carry out joint efforts to mitigate this threat."

32. Excerpts from the Statement by the Chairman of the Presidency of the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, H.E. Dr. Haris Silajdzic:

The Muslims, and not only the Muslims of Bosnia and Herzegovina have successfully passed the test of civility and tolerance during the most difficult of times in 1992-1995 period. So, if their goal of building the bridges of productive coexistence is supported by the world community this important dialogue between Muslims and others will show a sign of real progress. If, on the other hand, the ideologues and perpetrators of genocide and ethnic cleansing are rewarded by endorsing a culture of ethnic "purification", ghettos and division then it would send a different message to the world. If ever the world community needed an example of restored coexistence, it is today.

INVITEE:

33. Excerpts from the Statement by Secretary General of the United Nations, H.E. Ban Ki Moon:

The UN and the OIC stand side by side in rejecting forcefully and wholeheartedly any linkages between terrorism and Islam. You have spoken up against those who seek to justify violence in the name of religion. Your efforts reinforce the UN's own steps to promote tolerance and understanding through the Alliance of Civilization initiative, and I look forward to increasing UN-OIC collaboration in this area.