



**OIC/IPHRC-2/2012/SG-SP**

**Statement by  
H.E. the Secretary General at the Second IPHRC  
Session**

**Ankara, Republic of Turkey  
August 27, 2012**

**Statement by H.E. the Secretary General at the Second IPHRC Session  
(Ankara, Republic of Turkey - August 27, 2012)**

**Hourable Minister,  
Distinguished Members of the OIC Independent Permanent Human Rights  
Commission,  
Distinguished Heads of Missions, Member of the Diplomatic Corps,  
Excellencies,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,**

I welcome you all to this second session of the OIC Independent Permanent Human Rights Commission – IPHRC.

I thank Minister Davutoglu for his gracious presence. I thank the Government of the Republic Turkey for the generous offer to host this session. It is yet another sign of Turkey's strong commitment to human rights. Turkey stands out as an OIC Member State for subscription to the highest standards of human rights. This strong commitment to human rights has rightfully earned respect as a functioning and performing democracy in the Muslim world. In setting enviable standards of good governance Turkish Government - under the dedicated and inspiring leadership of President Abdullah Gul and Prime Minister Erdogan - has indeed sustained an impeccable record at fostering human rights in the country.

**Excellencies,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,**

Establishment of IPHRC is a singularly significant accomplishment in the history of OIC. The collective will of Member States to mainstream human rights is reflected in establishing the Commission in half the time stipulated by the Ten Year Program Of Action. It is timely in the backdrop of the recent monumental changes in today's world - with particular reference to parts of the Muslim world. It is the first ever cross-regional human rights mechanism on the international scene. Accordingly, it has been a major focus of international attention. It has enhanced the visibility of OIC. Its true potential lies in enhancing the credibility of OIC.

Let me say that that the Commission aptly represents the new OIC experiencing transformation into an Organization propelled by the vision of moderation and modernization'. The recently held Fourth Extraordinary Summit in Makkah is a case in point. It signified OIC's ability and potential towards a timely and unified response to the existing and emerging challenges faced by the Member States. I have noticed that some of the key issues addressed by the Summit form part of the draft agenda of this session. It augments my confidence in this Commission. Situations in Syria, Myanmar and Mali constitute human rights hot spots. The follow up action on these issues, at the Ministerial level, stands to gain from the input and expert advice from the human rights perspective.

**Excellencies,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,**

The manner in which the Commission has approached its challenging task is promising. I commend the constructive and active engagement of the Commissioners during the first year of operation. This newly established expert body is confronted with multiple challenges in bringing about conceptual clarity, devising a sound methodology of work and prioritising its areas of work. Focusing on the rules of procedures at the first session enabled the Commission to evolve a shared and consensual understanding of the scope of activities and powers conferred by the statute. An inter-sessional working group was established to meet the statutory time-line for finalizing rules of procedures. It met in Jeddah and I have seen the output of their thorough job. I am confident that it aptly reflects the positive potential and added value of the Commission. It would certainly facilitate swift adoption of the rules by this session in time for consideration by the forthcoming 39<sup>th</sup> Session of the Council of Foreign Ministers.

I am pleased to note that the five elements of complementarity, introspection, prioritization, incremental approach and credibility which I submitted for consideration at the first session in Jakarta were endorsed by the Commission as the guiding principles for its work. The fact that the Commissioners succeeded in evolving a priority list of issues to be addressed is commendable. These include the rights of women and children and the right to development as reflected in the draft agenda for this session. Allow me to offer brief comments in each case for consideration by the Commission.

I firmly believe the Commission can play a pivotal role in removing some of the misconception and disinformation surrounding the question of the status of women within Islamic tradition and societies. It will have to be a long drawn out and challenging endeavor. It may be useful if the Commission could further prioritize in terms of what concrete results may be achieved in the short and medium term.

In the sphere of Rights of the Child, the Commission may play a role by examining the compatibility between the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) and the OIC Covenant on the Rights of the Child in Islam. In fact the added value of this body lies in expert advice towards refinement of existing as well as evolution of prospective OIC endeavors in the area of Human Rights.

On right to development, the Commission has an important comparative advantage. It resides in the fact that it would not be operating in the North- South context that has barred progress in this important area. This is could help transcend the deadlocks or divergence of views to take concrete action. I can see the potential for other relevant institutions within the OIC system as well as Member States joining in such an undertaking. Capitalization of OIC's advantage towards operationalizing right to development through joint Islamic action could form a most significant contribution by this body. It would be a contribution towards the long cherished

goal of placing human beings at the center of the human rights discourse and translating it into concrete action with tangible results. It is for the Commission to come up with a working model.

**Excellencies,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,**

The establishment of the Commission has been widely acknowledged as a positive step particularly in the human rights circles. Despite its meager human and financial resources the interim Secretariat at the OIC has spared no effort towards facilitating the work and activities of the Commissioners. Last month members of the IPHRC participated in a weeklong workshop jointly organized with the UN OHCHR in Geneva. The visit offered a technical overview of the UN human rights system and the opportunity to interact with important stakeholders, including the OIC Ambassadorial Group in Geneva. The Commission was also represented during the SOM preparatory to the 4<sup>th</sup> Extraordinary Islamic Summit, held in Makkah Al-Mukarramah. The Secretariat pledges full support in ensuring that the Commission is able to participate in all important and relevant OIC Meetings - The Annual Coordination Meeting in New York and the CFM in Djibouti being the next in line. This participation is warranted to acquire first hand information on the OIC agenda with a view to evolving ways and means to contribute in mainstreaming the human rights dimension.

I invite this session to designate three Commissioners to attend the ACM. It would also be useful towards developing a better understanding of the political side of human rights. It would additionally help opening communication channels with important UN mechanisms and agencies like the Third Committee, UN Women and UNDP.

**Distinguished Commissioners,**

You are a major focus of international attention at the center of a pioneering act. The work and activities of the Commission will be scrutinized with high expectations from some quarters and with doubts and skepticism from others. It is, however, in your hands to “make or break” the credibility of the first independent voice on human rights in the Muslim World. Your independence is of paramount importance and must be safeguarded. Human rights aspects are cross cutting with regard to the whole range of issues on the OIC agenda. You must be mindful of your role as the human rights conscience of OIC. Let there be no doubt that the Organization stands to gain from your unvarnished opinion. The advisory capacity lends you with the space for positive interpretation of the statute. The Commission must not waste time in addressing substantive issues in a prioritized fashion to realize this potential. The need to develop a strategy for an early harvest constitutes an imperative. I would reiterate my suggestion of a remedial approach as a solution provider for the benefit of Member States.

Let me conclude by expressing the hope that this Ankara session will be remembered in history for finalization of the rules of procedure as well as other impactful decisions towards charting out the right course for this pioneering body of independent experts at the OIC.

I thank you all