

**OUTCOME DOCUMENT OF THEMATIC DEBATE ON  
“RIGHT TO FAMILY LIFE: ISLAMIC AND HUMAN RIGHTS PERSPECTIVES TO COUNTER  
CHALLENGES TO THE INSTITUTION OF MARRIAGE”  
20<sup>th</sup> REGULAR SESSION OF OIC – IPHRC**

**Jeddah 22<sup>nd</sup> December 2022:** The Independent Permanent Human Rights Commission (IPHRC) of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) held a thematic debate titled: *“Right to Family Life: Islamic and Human Rights Perspectives to Counter Challenges to the Institution of Marriage”* during its 20<sup>th</sup> Regular Session on **18<sup>th</sup> December 2022**. OIC Secretary General, H.E. Hissein Brahim Taha, H.E. Mr. Majed Alghanmi, Vice Minister of Human Resources and Social Development for Social Development in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA) and OIC-IPHRC Chairperson Dr. Haci Ali Acikgul inaugurated the debate. Coordinator of the OIC Ambassadorial Group in Geneva, OIC Permanent Observer to the UN in Geneva, Executive Director of Women Development Organization (WDO), President of Family Watch International, Chairman of Malaysian National Human Rights Council and representatives of Statistical, Economic and Social Research and Training Centre for Islamic Countries (SESRIC), and International Islamic Fiqh Academy (IIFA) participated as panelists. A large number of Member and Observer States also participated and contributed to the discussion. Based on the comprehensive discussion, the Commission adopted the following as the outcome of the thematic debate:

Guided by the Noble Quran, and as stipulated in the verse: *“O, people! We created you from a male and a female, and We made you races and tribes, so that you may come to know one another. The best among you before Allah is the most righteous. Allah is Knowing and Aware<sup>1</sup>”*, and traditions of the Prophet Muhammad (Peace be Upon Him) that prescribes that a society can only prosper through a stable family achieved through marriage between man and woman as husband and wife based on ‘Sakina, Mawwada and Rahma’<sup>2</sup> comfort, love and mercy.

**Underscored** the inherent dignity, equality and universality of inalienable rights of all human beings which are indivisible, interdependent and inter-related. These rights are realized bearing in mind the national and regional particularities and various historical, cultural and religious backgrounds, as prescribed by Islamic principles and expressed in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Vienna Declaration and Program of Action, and the Cairo Declaration of OIC on Human Rights, for creation of peaceful and human rights respecting societies.

**Upheld** the principles and values enshrined in the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR-Art 23), International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR-Art 10), OIC Charter, Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), recently adopted Cairo Declaration of the OIC on Human Rights, OIC Ten Years Program of Action (TYPOA), Jeddah Declaration on Marriage and Family Institution’s Empowerment and Value Preservation in Member States, ‘*OIC Strategy for the Empowerment of the Marriage and Family Institution*’, and UN Res 26/11 on protection of the family, which reaffirm the vital role of family in society, and unambiguously oblige all States to provide protection and support for the family to foster social well-being, cohesion and integration and harmonious development for building responsible and peaceful societies.

**Recognized** that family is the oldest and most fundamental institution that have survived in its original shape, since Adam and Eve, from primitive formations of human settlements to developed societies.

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<sup>1</sup> Noble Quran (49:13)

<sup>2</sup> Noble Quran (30:21)

Historically, family, both nuclear<sup>3</sup> and extended structures<sup>4</sup>, has served and continue to serve as the primary social institution to fulfill reproductive, educational, socio-classificational, value-spiritual, cultural, and economic functions in all human societies.

**Defined** family as the '*natural and fundamental group unit of society and is entitled to protection by society and the State*'<sup>5</sup> as established in several international documents on human rights.

**Underscored** that, in Islam, as well as in Abrahamic and many other faiths, marriage is a social and/or religious contract, between man and woman bound by reciprocal rights and responsibilities, which transcend beyond sexual contact to psychological and spiritual fulfillment. It is designed for procreation, care, and harmonious development of children and society. The Noble Quran explains that marriage, a union between man and woman, is a combination of love, tenderness, and care so that each finds completeness, tranquility, and support in the other<sup>6</sup>. In this regard, reiterated that wife and husband enjoy equal human dignity and fundamental human rights but have different roles and responsibilities within the family and society.

**Highlighted** that marriage forms sole basis for sexual relations, cohabitation and parenthood. The family, is among the major social institutions that dispense enormous 'social goods' for the benefit of society as a whole and to individual members. Strong families based on man-woman marriage 'serve as fundamental institution for transmitting to future generations the moral strengths, traditions, and values that sustain civilization'<sup>7</sup>. All societies, therefore, have a compelling interest in preserving the institution of marriage for the sake of stable families and resultantly peaceful and resilient communities.

**Emphasized** that equal opportunities for all family members, including women and girls, in developing their physical, mental, spiritual, intellectual, and other human capacities are to be ensured within the family. Besides, protection to family members from all forms of physical, emotional, and psychological violence or abuse is essential.

**Further emphasized** that marriage provides a set of rights, responsibilities, and protections for husband and wife. Any form of promiscuity, sexual permissiveness, or living relationships or cohabitation outside marriage, in the name of 'freedom of choice,' that potentially threatens the integrity of the family is harmful for the fabric of the society, hence is categorically rejected.

**Stressed** that marriage between man and woman is the only valid way for a couple to acquire the true satisfaction and high dignity without disturbing social order. It is because of this Divine wisdom that all Abrahamic faiths Judaism, Christianity, and Islam view homosexuality as detestable and forbidden. In this regard, strongly condemned the attempts to redefine marriage to include 'same-sex unions,' a deviant narrative of 'genderless marriage,' 'alternative form of the family.'

**Strongly rejected** the framing of Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity (SOGI) related discussion on the so called right of LGBTQ individuals to practice their way of life as a human rights issue. In this regard, stressed that new and controversial notions of SOGI and so-called LGBTQ unions are neither universal nor recognized by international human rights standards.

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<sup>3</sup> Nuclear family includes wife and Husband and their children.

<sup>4</sup> Extended family includes nuclear family plus relatives.

<sup>5</sup> Universal Declaration of Human Rights Art. 16 (3)

<sup>6</sup> Noble Quran: (30:21)

<sup>7</sup> <http://www.familywatchinternational.org/fwi/documents/FWIpolicybrieftraditionalmarriagefinal.pdf>

Recognized the challenges posed to the family values of Muslim minorities which include Comprehensive Sexuality Education (CSE), SOGI and rising trend of adopting relationships out of wedlock. With a view to tackle these challenges, Muslim minorities must be supported to provide religious education both at the school and home level.

**Called upon** UN entities, including Human Rights Council, treaty bodies, Special Procedures, agencies and regional bodies, not to overstep their mandates to include promotional content on controversial so-called LGBTQ values and CSE and making legal observations, including General Comments beyond the scope of original Convention/treaty, in utter disregard of the position of a large number of UN countries.

**Condemned** that some publications from various UN agencies such as UNICEF, UNESCO, WHO and UNFPA, UNAIDS, UNDP, UN treaty bodies, regional organizations and all other entities, promote SOGI norms which are contrary to universal human rights, offensive to religious values as well as potentially harmful for the physical and psychological health of the child. In this regard, urged these UN bodies to refrain from using such advocacy material that has not been approved or adopted by consensus, thus undermining the spirit of the universally accepted human rights values, norms and instruments.

**Acknowledged** that OIC position is supported by a number of non OIC countries from Asia, Africa and Europe, which has called for: (a) importance of respecting the national, regional and religious values and sensitivities; (b) avoiding external pressures or coercive measures to influence position of developing countries; and (c) rejection of controversial UN Resolutions on SOGI. Such an alliance of like-minded groups has helped to bring amendments to blunt the impact of the original resolution but still a sustained and well-coordinated effort is required to completely neutralize the attempt of the so-called LGBTQ lobby to redefine the concept of marriage.

**Called upon** all OIC Member States to adhere, protect and strengthen unified position of the OIC on the institution of marriage and family, which is based on supporting internationally recognized definition of family, well established UN norms and consensus language, that respect rights and responsibilities of various members of family such as single parents, guardians, elder or members of the extended family.

**Stressed** the need for full implementation by all stakeholders of norms and principles enshrined in international human rights instruments concerning protection of the institution of family and its members. In this regard, called upon all governments to extend maximum support for this fundamental unit of society for promoting virtue, social justice and development that are important elements to achieve Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Meanwhile, strongly condemned the attempts to force SOGI norms by some donor countries and organizations on developing countries through media, exploiting financial needs for development, and political pressure on countries that are in need of humanitarian and development assistance.

**Called** on all stakeholders, including UN, OIC mechanisms and regional organizations, national human rights institutions (NHRIs) and NGOs to put family at the core of their agendas as well as avoid misconceptions and controversies, which contradict universal family values. In this regard, underlined the importance of undertaking advocacy activities at relevant forums, including working

with pro-family NGOs for holding conferences and seminars with the view to promoting and advancing family values.

**Emphasized** need for imparting culturally sensitive and appropriate awareness for children on sexual and reproductive health in accordance with their evolving mental capabilities. But condemned the practice of promoting disruptive norms through CSE and 'gender transitioning' to children, which include morally reprehensible concepts, behaviors and practices which are detrimental to physical and mental health and are in conflict with the beliefs of religious communities and societies, including Islam.

**Noted** with concern that evolving demographic, technological and informational paradigm pose serious challenges to test the resilience of old millennial institutions of family and marriage. The macro societal and economic transformations combined with intensification of technology and globalization have started to significantly influence the structure, pattern, and values of marriage and family institution. Consequently, weakening of marriage and family institution has widespread detrimental effects on economic growth, demographics, the health of individuals and societies and children's future. Western societies have particularly been hit hard by challenges to marriage and family, which has caused a "family crisis."<sup>8</sup>

**Commended** OIC efforts for formulating a comprehensive '*OIC Strategy for the Empowerment of the Marriage and Family Institution*', and for efforts by the OIC Group of Ambassadors in Geneva and New York to counter the growing attempts that are being made to redefine marriage and family institution in various international fora, and **urged** them to continue playing crucial role of presenting coherent and robust concepts of family and marriage from Islamic and human rights perspective to the world.

**Stressed** to promote the Islamic perspective on protection of the right to family life in the context of marriage and how it can strengthen the existing protections provided in the international human rights law, while avoiding to create new concepts that are divisive, not universally acceptable and do not conform to international human rights standards.

**Urged** Member States to address various challenges faced by members of families in the sphere of socio-economic constraints such as poverty and under-development, and emphasized the multidimensional benefits of including family centered policies and programs in the national and international development agenda, to achieve sustainable development goals.

**Called upon** OIC Member States to create an OIC 'Child and Family Protection Core Group' at the UN, both in NY and Geneva, to proactively advocate pro-family policies and reinforce well established universal human rights. Including by developing series of HRC Family Protection Resolutions in Geneva, proposing family oriented Universal Periodic Review recommendations, celebration of the International Day of Families on 15 May and organizing UN side events in partnership with like-minded countries and NGOs.

**Urged** OIC Member States, in line with their obligations to enact and implement family focused friendly policies and measures in different fields to protect the institution of marriage and family from both external and internal challenges. In this regard, recommended that member States may consider to:

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<sup>8</sup> Baskerville, S. (2009). Freedom & the family: The family crisis and the future of western civilization. *Humanitas*, 22(1/2), 168.

<sup>9</sup> <https://www.oic-oci.org/docdown/?docID=7606&refID=2251>

- (a) undertake administrative and legislative measures, including national action plans, for building stable and productive families aimed at nurturing well-balanced citizens, in light of Islamic teaching and cultural and civilizational value system without any prejudice to the interests of the minorities living under their jurisdiction;
- (b) share legislative experiences and policy developments in Member States on pro-family issues with a view to allow each member of family to develop and utilize their potential to the fullest;
- (c) empower family and marriage institution eco-system through education, training, knowledge and capacity building activities to build family resilience and ensure dynamic participation of family members in national development activities;
- (d) Develop strong and proactive media strategies to counter the ‘normalization’ of SOGI at the national level, with a special focus on the younger generation, media and entertainment professionals, to create an attractive knowledge base for substantive engagement with all stakeholders.
- (e) align implementation of OIC-2025 Program of Action with the SDGs in a manner that family should be made an enabling agent for realization of these goals.
- (f) adopt effective policies to curb violence against women and girls within the framework of the marriage and family institution, and enact laws aimed at ensuring gender justice;
- (g) integrate women in the decision-making process and evolving of policies related to family empowerment and labour market flexibility to allow women to balance their work and family related commitments;
- (h) devise educational kits for children to counter the misguided notion of SOGI and provide training to school teachers, politicians, and civil servants on family values in order they can effectively counter anti-family or sexual rights agenda in all relevant spheres;
- (i) Include higher learning courses on the role and protection of the family, as a component of educational curricula at various school levels.
- (j) undertake concerted actions as part of an integrated comprehensive approach to human rights and development to eliminate abject poverty within families, disburse grants and micro-credits to enable the beneficiary families to set up income-earning projects to create sustainable means of income;
- (k) integrate family empowerment as an integral part of national development plans and mainstream the topic in national discourse through media and human rights education. Also, to initiate the process of evidence-based policy making through reliable disaggregated data collection, quality research on family issues and design implementation and evaluation;

**Called upon** the media, educational institutions, and official religious institutions, to play their due positive role which is crucial in safeguarding and promoting the institutions of marriage and family. Urged to integrate their role in raising awareness and mobilizing local communities and families, influencing thinking and behavior change and promoting Islamic values to build strong and healthy families.

**Proposed** to the OIC General Secretariat to launch an international competition among OIC Member States to design an artistic symbol or logo that highlights the great diversity yet the Islamic unity on the traditional family values to counter the rainbow pride flag on the cultural and entertainment spheres. Strong family values as exemplified by the Moroccan football team in the recently concluded World Cup should be emulated and highlighted as a model.

**Called upon** the Council of Foreign Ministers to establish an “OIC Family and Child Protection Core Group” with a mandate to create strategies and OIC policy positions to protect the natural family and

children at the international and regional levels. Particularly, to develop clear guidance on the policy issues supported by the OIC s; inter alia, protection of national sovereignty, health and innocence of children and their protection from porn and CSE, protection of religious and cultural values, protection of life, parental rights, respect for religious and cultural values, child sexual risk avoidance/abstinence, and youth empowerment in pro-family advocacy.

**Urged** IIFA to engage in raising awareness about the harm of SOGI from an Islamic perspective, and provide jurisprudence guidance on how to address the various policy precursors for SOGI, including CSE, Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR), etc.

**Further urged** all donor organizations and funds in OIC Member States to expand their role in providing assistance to eliminate abject poverty among families in vulnerable situations, such as single parent families, poor families with elderly members, and those affected by child abuse and domestic violence, in order to activate their role in the achievement of economic development and social integration. Particularly, the role of Islamic Development Bank would be critical to provide technical support and also make available microcredit to support families who struggle, with a special focus on the OIC least developed countries.

**Recognized** need to find ways and means to effectively protect the family and family integration in conflict and post-conflict situations as well as other emergencies and situations such as internally displaced persons, migrant and refugee families. To that end, it urged OIC Member States to ensure provision of basic human rights and legal protection to these affected families in particular the right for education and health, particularly, to refugee and displaced families.

**Decided** to expand its collaboration with all relevant stakeholders to enhance national and international capacities in the field of protecting the right to family, including Muslim minorities, against the challenges posed by the SOGI agenda, including through providing NHRI and pro-family NGOs trainings, youth pro-family empowerment, IPHRC joint statements and letters to OIC governments that reveal hidden sexual rights agendas, and warning letters to UN agencies and human rights mechanisms that violate their own mandates to propagate SOGI narratives. Also, **decided** to hold seminars/workshops on the side lines of UN fora in NY and Geneva to raise awareness about the importance of protecting the natural family.

Further **decided** to initiate a new study analysing the contours of SOGI debate purely from an international human rights law perspective, and to bring the best human resources on board to craft legally valid argument to find resonance with western and allied groups.

**Reaffirmed** full commitment to strengthen the institution of marriage and family with the overall aim of nurturing human rights respecting and preserving societies. In this regard, expressed readiness to further expanding its working relationships with all interested stakeholders worldwide with the purpose to extend maximum protection to family values in line with Islamic principles and in accordance with international human rights law.

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