

**By : DATUK SERI SYED HAMID ALBAR**  
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**Title : TWENTY-NINTH SESSION OF THE ISLAMIC CONFERENCE OF  
FOREIGN MINISTERS (ICFM)**

Bismillahirrahmanirahim

His Excellency Dr. Mustafa Osman Ismail  
Chairman of the 29th Session of the ICFM and Minister of External Relations of the  
Republic of The Sudan,

His Excellency Abdelouahed Belkeziz  
Secretary General of OIC

Distinguished colleagues,  
Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen...

Assalamualaikum warahmatullahi wabarakatuh...

At the outset, let me convey my delegation's felicitations to you, Mr. Chairman, and to say how pleased we are to see you presiding over the Twenty-ninth Session of the Islamic Conference of Foreign Ministers (ICFM).

2. I would like to extend our heartfelt gratitude to the Government and people of the Republic of the Sudan under the leadership of His Excellency Omar Hasan Ahmed Al-Bashir, for the excellent arrangements made for the Conference and for the warm hospitality accorded to me and members of my delegation. We appreciate His Excellency the President's opening address which should inspire us to strive for the betterment of the Ummah.

3. I would also like to record our utmost appreciation to His Excellency the Foreign Minister of Mali and Chairman of the Twenty-Eighth Session of the ICFM for the valuable work and able stewardship during his Chairmanship of the Session.

4. Malaysia is deeply saddened by the recent earthquake tragedy in the Islamic Republic of Iran. I would like to join other delegations before me in extending Malaysia's deepest condolences to the Government and people of the Islamic Republic of Iran.

Mr. Chairman,

5. The challenge facing us is to translate our statement of objectives and intention into a plan of action that will bring us honour and dignity. We have been ignored and marginalised for too long because of our failure to remain united and consolidate our

position. As all of us realised, it is through our deeds that we will be able to realise our vision and bring out the true image of Islam. "The tirades of anti-islamic sentiments in the West are mounting with intellectuals like Italian writer Oriana Fallaci advocating elimination of Muslims from the face of the earth and New York Times columnist, Tom Freidman, giving an opinion that the solution to the problem of terrorism is to destroy the Islamic culture by tarnishing its image and frightening people away from it. " The sentence which I have just quoted is from the Sudanese International Journalist newspaper dated 25 June 2002. The challenge is now for us to provide the necessary response.

6. In the interest of brevity, I would like to focus on the following issues as reflected in the Agenda of the Conference:

- i. The OIC as an Organisation;
- ii. The Issue of Terrorism;
- iii. The Question of Palestine;
- iv. The Restructuring of the OIC General Secretariat;
- v. The Issue of Afghanistan; and
- vi. The relation between India and Pakistan.

7. On the question of the OIC as an Organisation, I would like for us to ponder on the current perception of this august body. Malaysia is sad that the OIC continues to be perceived as an Organisation that indulges more in rhetoric and devoid of action, an Organisation that adopts numerous resolutions and decisions but unable to effectively implement them. Instead of being able to seize the initiative, we appear to have been marginalised.

8. Rapid changes are taking place in the international scene, many of which directly affects the interest of OIC members. A major challenge for all of us is to enable the OIC to influence the course of global events. It is with this in mind, that efforts should be taken to make the OIC into a more credible and respectable organisation. The OIC needs to be more action oriented. We need to be a major player in world affairs. We need to make an impact and to contribute to world peace, prosperity and stability.

9. The OIC also needs to guard itself from being undermined from within the Organisation itself. My delegation is seriously concerned with the admission of new members without recourse to the Charter of the OIC. Unfavourable trends have emerged. If not arrested, we run the risk of having an organisation that would even lose its Islamic character and identity, thereby, further weakening the OIC in the eyes of the international community.

10. My delegation is also concerned with the accumulation of arrears of mandatory contributions by member states that affect the smooth and efficient performance of the OIC General Secretariat, as mentioned in the Report of the Secretary-General. This is a major handicap of the Organisation that needs to be addressed with the full support and cooperation of all OIC member states. It is important that the OIC be

treated in the same manner as other organisations with regard to mandatory contributions by member states.

Mr. Chairman,

11. On the issue of terrorism, I would like to refer to the Kuala Lumpur Declaration, adopted at the Extraordinary Meeting of the Islamic Conference of Foreign Ministers on Terrorism held in Kuala Lumpur. The Declaration demonstrates our collective resolve to combat terrorism and to respond to the developments affecting Muslims and Muslim countries in the aftermath of the September 11 attacks. Under the Plan of Action included in the Kuala Lumpur Declaration, we have agreed to launch practical measures to address the issue of terrorism in a comprehensive and effective manner. An important component of this Plan of Action is the establishment of an open-ended 13-member Ministerial Committee on Terrorism, which would, inter alia, recommend measures in response to developments affecting Muslim countries arising from action to combat terrorism, as well as, enhancing cooperation among OIC member countries in combating this scourge. I hope that this ICFM would adopt the draft resolution on the establishment of this Committee and the mechanism which needs to be emplaced in order to allow the Committee to carry out its mandated tasks effectively. In this regard, Malaysia is pleased to host the first Ministerial Meeting of the Committee with a view to implementing the Plan of Action as agreed to by all member states.

Mr. Chairman,

12. With regard to the question of Palestine, Malaysia supports the call for the creation of an independent Palestinian State and the call on Israel to pull out its forces from the occupied territories, to stop building new settlements in the West Bank and Gaza, to restore freedom of movements of Palestinians and to free Israelis' strangulation of the Palestinian economy. However, my delegation rejects any attempts to put the blame and to demonise the Palestinian leadership, especially President Arafat, who, for all intents and purposes is democratically elected and has been accepted as an undisputed leader of the Palestinian people. It is also unacceptable for Israel to be rewarded for their aggression and for imposing conditionalities before resuming the peace process. We recognise Israel's right for its security. But such security can only come about through a political and not a military solution. Malaysia also supports the Arab Peace initiative and the Quartet initiative to find a lasting solution to the Palestinian problem.

13. I wish to emphasise, in this regard, that the OIC was established principally to address the Palestinian question including the liberation of Al-Quds Al-Sharif. It is important that the OIC exercise its role in this regards, in representing the collective will of the Ummah.

Mr. Chairman,

14. Malaysia fully supports the efforts made by the OIC General Secretariat to reform the Organisation, pursuant to the ICFM resolution No. 5/27-ORG on the Reorganization of the General Secretariat and Its Role in Meeting the Challenges in the New Millennium. As stated by His Excellency the Secretary-General in his statement yesterday, my delegation is happy to note that significant progress has been made in this endeavour. We hope that the desired results could be achieved to positively reflect the solidarity of member states in galvanising our efforts to enhance the work of the Organization. We also welcome the submission of the report of the Secretary-General on the reorganization of the General Secretariat and its role in facing the challenges of the new millennium. In this regard, Malaysia would like to urge all OIC members to give our full support and mandate to the Consultant to carry out the study on the restructuring of the General Secretariat of the OIC at this Conference, and to complete the study by the Tenth Islamic Summit in Kuala Lumpur in October 2003.

15. May I also take this opportunity to commend the proposal made at the Senior Officials Meeting held in Jeddah last May, to reform the approach and working method of the OIC, to shorten the number of draft resolutions submitted to the Conference and to bring together combinable subjects in order to improve the work of the OIC. This is certainly a right step to take so that the OIC can be more focussed. Issues that are no longer relevant or require serious attention should be dropped and be replaced by more important issues of interest to member countries like education, trade and economic cooperation. I hope this could be endorsed at the Ministerial level.

Mr. Chairman,

16. On the situation in Afghanistan, my delegation welcomes the establishment of the newly appointed Cabinet under President Hamid Karzai. We hope that the new Government would be able to successfully carry out its daunting task of the rehabilitation and reconstruction of Afghanistan. Malaysia will join others in extending its helping hand. My delegation also welcomes Afghanistan's return to its rightful place as a full member of the OIC following the acceptance of its membership during the recent OIC Extraordinary Meeting on Terrorism held in Kuala Lumpur.

17. The situation between India and Pakistan is still a matter of concern to my delegation. Both countries are friends of Malaysia. It is our hope that peaceful dialogues instead of military confrontation be pursued by both countries to reach an amicable settlement of their dispute in the interest of peace and stability in the South Asian region.

Mr. Chairman,

18. The Muslim Ummah continues to face poverty, injustice and oppression. Sanctions are still being imposed on Iraq. It is important that we address such issues as well as the peculiar problems faced by Muslims in Azerbaijan, Chechnya, Kosovo, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Cyprus, the Southern Philippines and Sierra Leone. In this regard, Malaysia is committed towards providing assistance to the Trust Fund to Expedite the Return of the Refugees and Displaced Persons for Bosnia and Herzegovina and towards the establishment of the Trust Fund on the Reconstruction, Rehabilitation and Humanitarian Assistance of Sierra Leone.

Mr. Chairman,

19. Finally, Malaysia congratulates the Islamic Republic of Iran for being accepted to host the Thirtieth Session of the ICFM next year. We look forward to working closely with Sudan and Iran in our capacity as the forthcoming Chairman of the OIC Summit. There is much hope and expectations that OIC Conferences and Summits should have a more positive and direct impact on the Ummah. This is a major challenge for us. Malaysia is confident that such a challenge can be met given the support, commitment and cooperation of all member states.

Thank you.