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"WAY FORWARD FOR THE OIC"

Bismillahirrahmanirahim,

HE Abdullah Gul
Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs of the
Republic of Turkey

HE Kamal Kharazzi
Minister of Foreign Affairs of the
Islamic Republic of Iran

HE Abdelouahed Belkeziz
Secretary –General of the OIC

Honourable Ministers, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Assalamualaikum,

Alhamdulillah, All Praise be to Allah the Almighty, by whose Grace and Blessings, we are able to gather here in this magnificent city of Istanbul, a city straddling two continents, rich in history, culture and architecture.

2. I wish to record our profound thanks and sincere appreciation to the Government and people of the Republic of Turkey for the warm welcome and generous hospitality accorded to me and members of my Delegation. We are also highly inspired by the Statement made by the President of the Republic of Turkey at the Opening Ceremony, which will certainly be an invaluable guide to our deliberations.

3. Our thanks and appreciation also go to H.E. Dr. Abdelouhed and the staff of the General Secretariat for their indispensable contributions, including in facilitating our Meeting here.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

4. We meet once again amidst far-reaching developments taking place in the world – developments which present grave challenges to the international community. It is

most disturbing that despite the rapid human advancement in numerous fields, including in science and technology, we are living in a world that is increasingly inequitable and insecure. Indeed, many peoples across the globe continue to live in poverty, fear, injustice, oppression, violence, and conflict.

5. Equally disturbing is the fact that we, the international community, seem unable or unwillingly to agree on approaches as well as the basis in addressing the many challenges confronting us. This has not only undermined international peace and security, but also eroded the established basis for conduct of relations between nations. Clearly, an equitable world order based on respect for the principles of international law and the UN Charter remains elusive.

6. Unfortunately, Muslim countries and the Ummah, more often than not, have been adversely and unduly affected by these disastrous developments. Worse, we have been blamed for the anguish and woes that have befallen the world and its inhabitants. Muslims, our religion and our governments are held as the guilty parties responsible for the ills of the world – ills ranging from intolerance, violence, terrorism and poor governance. Consequently, we have to pay a high price for these perceived failings.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

7. Certainly, this assault on our values is mostly undeserved. But plainly we have to strive in a more concerted manner to strengthen solidarity among ourselves, to defend the dignity of our religion and promote the interests of our Ummah. Only by realizing our strength in numbers, human and natural resources within us, will we then be in a better position to shape international agenda and play our due role on issues affecting the international community.

8. It is thus essential that we continue with our efforts to enhance better understanding of Islam as a religion that promotes peace and harmony among mankind, not only within our Ummah, but also among peoples of other cultures and civilisations. We must also create a more conducive environment that will enable our Ummah to contribute to the development of human society. A restructured General Secretariat of our Organization will provide us with a more effective, efficient and responsive mechanism in promoting cooperation among ourselves.

9. Here I wish to applaud the Secretary General and his staff for their commitment and cooperation in pursuing the restructuring of the General Secretariat. I am happy to learn that on the basis of the Interim Report by Accenture, the Consulting Firm funded by the Islamic Development Bank to undertake the Restructuring Study, the General Secretariat has approved the Interim Report and several initiatives have already been put in place. These relate to human resources infrastructure, document management system, an enhanced OIC Website and Resolution Tracking Prototype.

10. I understand that at the suggestion of the Secretary General, Accenture has recently concluded a study visit to the UN Secretariat after comparative studies had been made with the ASEAN and Commonwealth Secretariats. Accenture should now focus on incorporating such findings in the Draft Report which should be considered by the Intergovernmental Experts Group as a matter of priority. I hope in the interest of continuity, the current Consultants would be able to see through the recommendations of the Report.

11. In the context of the complex world of our time, it is imperative for us to ensure the continued relevance of the OIC to member countries. It is thus not sufficient for us only to undertake a comprehensive review of the General Secretariat. We have also to review issues pertaining to the OIC Charter, including the question of global partnership. Indeed, the Putrajaya Declaration adopted by 10th OIC Summit agreed in its Plan of Action, that the ICFM should look into this matter. It is thus my sincere hope that this agreement would be urgently translated into a decision in the form of a Resolution.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

12. I wish to report to the Meeting on some measures Malaysia had undertaken in our capacity as the Chairman of the OIC Summit in promoting the interest of the Ummah. We all may recall that one of the basic objectives for existence of the OIC is to support the struggle of the people of Palestine, to help them regain their rights and liberate their land. Sad to say, despite all our efforts in this direction in the last fifty years or so, we have failed to end the conflict. As a result, heavy toll is increasingly exacted on the Palestinians on a daily basis. Israel's ever more repressive and violent measures against the Palestinians must be stopped and reversed. These include house demolitions, stoppages and closures of economic activity, confiscation and destruction of property, torture of detainees, extra-judicial killings of Palestinians, illegal expansion of Jewish settlement activities and relentless construction of the "separation wall" on Occupied Palestine as well as efforts in destroying Palestinian institutions, including marginalizing and threatening the life of President Arafat.

13. Tragically, there does not seem to be any prospect of an end in sight. Instead the Israelis have, with impunity, persisted not only with their illegal, inhuman and terrorist acts, but have in the process derailed the Road Map. This has negative implications on international peace and security, including fuelling the underlying cause for the violence in the Middle East and elsewhere in the world. It will continue to make efforts in combating terrorism that much more difficult.

14. Nonetheless, we must remain resolute in supporting the Palestinian struggle. In this connection, Malaysia appreciates highly the efforts of our brethren, who either individually or jointly with others, have on their own acted to try to mitigate the dire plight of the Palestinians.

15. Malaysia is deeply distressed by the situation. On our part, the Prime Minister of Malaysia had written to the leaders of the Quartet to register the deep concern of Malaysian Government, its people as well as that of NAM and the OIC. While expressing support for the efforts of the Quartet to bring into being a Palestinian state that is viable, sovereign and independent, we conveyed our deep concern over the implications of President Bush's support for Prime Minister Sharon's unilateral engagement plan. We have also underlined the importance of giving the Palestinians, the party most directly concerned, a role in any future discussions or negotiations.

16. We had also on 22 April this year, convened in Malaysia a Special Meeting on the Middle East to discuss two specific issues, namely, the situation in Palestine and the situation in Iraq. The Meeting had adopted two Declarations on these issues. Pursuant to the Declaration on Palestine, the OIC Ministerial Delegation, as mandated by the Meeting, had already met with three Quartet members, namely the EU, Russia and UN Secretary General, to garner their support and cooperation in intensifying efforts towards achieving a just and comprehensive peace in the Middle East, in particular with regard to the Israeli-Palestinian conflicts on the basis of the Arab Peace Initiative, the Road Map and relevant agreements and Resolutions concerning the Arab-Israeli conflicts. The Meeting with the US will take place on 23 June.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

17. I was greatly honoured to lead the OIC Ministerial Delegation, comprising the Foreign Ministers of Morocco, of Senegal and of Turkey and the Minister of Negotiations of the State of Palestine as well as the Secretary General of the General Secretariat.

18. I believe these meetings were fruitful and constructive. Quartet members said that they welcomed our initiative and shared the OIC approach in handling the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and the precarious situation in the Middle East. Both the EU and the Russian Federation expressed willingness to remain in consultation with the OIC vis-à-vis the situation in the Middle East. They gave their assurance that they would use their influence to put the Road Map back on track. All agreed that the US is a crucial factor in the peace process in the Middle East.

19. Both also agreed that there must be international supervision in order to ensure the success of the implementation of the Road Map. They recognized the role and importance of the OIC in the pursuit of securing peace in the region. They were against excessive use of force and military exercise by Israel on the Palestinians and agreed that a durable and lasting solution should be through negotiations and dialogues. They also agreed on the need to respect Yasser Arafat as the elected leader of the Palestinians and to end restriction of his movements.

20. The Russian Federation, in particular, supported the proposal by the OIC for the convening of an international conference on Palestine, to be held back-to-back with the 59th Session of the United Nations General Assembly in New York, with the

involvement of all international and regional organizations. This is indeed an excellent opportunity for the OIC to galvanize international support for the Palestinian cause. We have to work closely together to ensure the success of the Conference.

21. On his part, the United Nations Secretary General, Kofi Annan, reiterated the importance of the United Nation's role in resolving the Palestinian question as well as its role in the context of multilateral decision-making process on matters concerning international peace and security. He commended the OIC, and the efforts by the Ministerial Delegation, to engage in dialogue with the members of the Quartet and the usefulness of continuing with such dialogue. He undertook to do all he could, through the Quartet, to ensure the full implementation of the Road Map. He too, welcomed the proposed convening of an international meeting on the Middle East at the margins of the 59th UNGA Session. The OIC Delegation underlined its support for UN efforts as well as the readiness and commitment of the OIC to assist the UN in any way possible.

22. On the situation in Iraq, the Declaration issued by the Special Meeting on this issue, inter alia, underlined several basic concerns and positions of the OIC. These included respect for Iraq's sovereignty, political independence, national unity and territorial integrity, the right of Iraqis to freely determine their own political future and have full control over their natural resources, expeditious restoration of the full sovereignty to Iraq, condemnation of heinous acts of terrorism, including against innocent Iraqi civilians, cultural and religious sites, public and government as well as diplomatic personnel and premises. The Declaration also recognized and stressed the importance of the United Nations playing a central role to establish peace, security and stability in Iraq.

23. The Prime Minister of Malaysia also wrote to his counterparts whose countries are Permanent Members of the UN Security Council, to urge the early adoption of a draft resolution to this effect. Malaysia thus welcomed the adoption of UN Security Council Resolution 1546 on Iraq. We see this as the only possible way for Iraq to move forward to another phase of its political process. In this respect, we welcome the assumption of full responsibility and authority by the Interim Government by 30 June 2004. It is our sincere hope that this Resolution will result in a constitutionally elected government in Iraq by 31st December 2005. Malaysia will strengthen its relations with Iraq and re-established its Embassy once security situation permits.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

24. May I take this opportunity to also report on certain measures taken by Malaysia, either pursuant to OIC decisions or with the view to strengthening our capability in contributing to the development of the Ummah.

25. Malaysia has pursuant to the endorsement of the 10th OIC Summit concerning polio eradication from all affected OIC member countries, pledged US\$1 million to the Global Fund for Polio Eradication Initiative. We hope this will contribute in some

way to the urgent additional resources for polio eradication efforts in the affected OIC member countries.

26. Also pursuant to the endorsement of the 10th OIC Summit, Malaysia is pursuing the implementation of the Kuala Lumpur Programme of Action of the Development and Promotion of Tourism.

27. Malaysia is also taking action to give effect to the Putrajaya Declaration. We have inter-alia established three Working Groups, namely on Trade and Investment, Science and Technology and Education.

28. In the trade and investment area, Malaysia is promoting cooperation among the OIC countries in the areas of financing bilateral trade and investment flows as well as technical assistance and capacity building in the financial sector. In this connection, Malaysia believes the mechanism on Gold based Trade Payment Arrangement (GPTA) would serve as a useful vehicle for this purpose and encourages interested OIC countries to explore cooperation in this area.

29. The Working Group on Science and Technology is exploring strategies to realize Vision 1441 H while the Working Group on Education has been tasked to discuss details on e-learning.

30. Convinced that the Ummah would benefit from cooperation among OIC countries in the area of taxation and zakat arising from the challenges of an increasingly globalized world, Malaysia as the current Chairman of the Association of Tax Authorities of Islamic Countries which presently comprises 13 participating countries invites all interested parties to participate at the first Technical Conference of the Association of Tax Authorities of Islamic Countries scheduled on 4-7 October this year in Putrajaya.

31. Welcoming the entry into force of the Framework Agreement on Trade Preferential System, Malaysia, which certainly believes in the benefits of strengthening economic and commercial cooperation among OIC member countries, is considering appropriate action to enable it to participate in the negotiations among ratifying countries of the Agreement.

32. We would like also to see more progress on the International Islamic News Agency (IINA) and the Islamic States Broadcasting Organization (ISBO).

33. Malaysia also welcomes the 1st Islamic Solidarity Games to be hosted by Saudi Arabia in 2005 and looks forward to participating together with other member countries.

34. On the initiative relating to "Enlightened Moderation", Malaysia, which has been tasked by the 10th OIC Summit, has constituted the Commission of Eminent Persons from member states. Malaysia hopes that those member states concerned which have yet to nominate their respective Eminent Persons will do so urgently to enable the Commission to meet.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

35. There is another important area which Malaysia seriously believes that we can cooperate for mutual benefits, namely the halal food industry. Food industry represents an "evergreen" industry in the world today. And halal food industry is the latest trend in the international market place. Consumers' demand for halal food is increasing not only within Muslim countries but also from countries in Europe and America. This is hardly surprising given that the number of Muslims in the world is expected to increase to 2 billion by 2005 while the demand for halal food will be in the region of US150 billion. We should seize this opportunity to work together to promote halal products for world market, including establishing a set of guidelines on the preparation, management, storage and distribution of halal food. One of the measures we are pursuing is to convene a Working Group Meeting to discuss details on the creation of the Halal Hub Portal.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

36. May I now seek your indulgence to raise a matter of particular importance to OIC countries in general and Malaysia in particular. It may be recalled that the 27th ICFM agreed that Dr. Belkeziz was unanimously elected for a mandate of four years, as of January 1st 2001, before the tenure moves to the Asian Group. Thus, the term of office of our current Secretary General, who has served with such dedication and competency, will expire on 31st December 2004.

37. It was against this background that Malaysia had decided to nominate the Special Adviser to the Foreign Minister, Hasmy Agam as its candidate to the post of the Secretary General. Our candidate is no stranger in the diplomatic fraternity. He was selected after careful consideration and taking into account the encouragement we have received from OIC member countries.

38. Candidate Hasmy Agam has impeccable personal and professional credentials. He is a person of the highest integrity as well as passionately dedicated and committed to his work. He is also one of Malaysia's most senior and experienced diplomats, particularly in the field of multilateral diplomacy. He had served 9 years as Malaysia's Permanent Representative to the United Nations in New York. During this period, he had selflessly further the cause of the Ummah and of developing countries. He has been unwavering in promoting cohesion and unity of OIC member states as well the interests of the Palestinians. He had also participated actively in the work of the OIC Ambassadorial Committee/Islamic Group at the UN, which he chaired during the period of Malaysia's chairmanship of the ICFM. All said, we strongly believe that candidate Hasmy Agam is most highly qualified to assume the

post of the Secretary General for the next term. We humbly commend him to you, brothers and sisters.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

39. Malaysia, as Chairman of the 10th Session of the Islamic Summit Conference, is committed to play the role mandated to us. We know the road ahead is arduous and challenging. However, with your contribution and support, we are confident we can make a difference for the betterment of the Ummah. In this respect, we must also refocus our attention to areas where we could collaborate meaningfully.

40. In concluding, I would like to once again thank the Government and people of the Republic of Turkey for the excellent arrangements made for the 31st ICFM. And on that note and with my prayers for the continued good health and prosperity to all presence here, I thank you for your kind attention.