



# **Sixth Islamic Conference of Culture Ministers**

## **FINAL COMMUNIQUÉ**

*Baku, Republic of Azerbaijan, 13-14 October 2009*

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1. With the help of Allah, the Islamic Conference of Culture Ministers held its sixth session in Baku, under the high patronage of His Excellency Mr Ilham Aliyev, President of the Republic of Azerbaijan, from 24 through 25 Shawwal 1430 A.H. / 13 through 14 October 2009, on the theme “Cultural Tourism: Safeguarding Heritage and Promoting Cultural Communication between Peoples”.
2. The conference’s opening session, presided over by H.E. Prof. Elchin Efendiev, the Deputy Prime Minister of Azerbaijan, was attended by H.E. Dr Abdulaziz Othman Altwajri, the Director General of ISESCO; H.E. Mr Abulfas Garayev, the Minister of Culture and Tourism of the Republic of Azerbaijan; H.E. Dr Nouri D.A. Hameidi, the Secretary of the Management Committee of the General Institution for Culture of the Great Socialist People’s Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, President of the 5<sup>th</sup> Islamic Conference of Culture Ministers; and H.E. Ambassador Abdel Moez Boukhari, the OIC Assistant Secretary General for Science and Technology. Also in attendance were a host of Azeri ministers, representatives of Islamic, Arab and international organizations, heads of delegation of the Council of Europe, Member States’ ambassadors to the Republic of Azerbaijan, and a panel of prominent personalities.
3. In the opening address of the Conference patron H.E. Ilham Aliyev, President of the Republic of Azerbaijan, Azerbaijan’s Deputy Prime Minister Prof. Elchin Efendiev first welcomed the participating delegations and wished them full success in their proceedings. Also in his address, the President pointed out that the celebration of Baku as a capital of Islamic culture for 2009 is a momentous occasion to introduce the glorious past of Azerbaijan and its rich historical and cultural heritage through a wide range of cultural programmes which helped enhance cultural relations with sister countries, thus capturing the spirit of solidarity in the Republic of Azerbaijan.

In his address to the Conference, the President of the Republic stressed that the Republic of Azerbaijan, which has become a club of intercultural dialogue, is determined to preserve the the tangible and intangible heritage, and keen to

safeguarding its cultural and historical landmarks, and that the ongoing aggression since many years against Nagorno Karabakh has destroyed a lot of the Azeri cultural and historical landmarks, which led the Republic of Azerbaijan to submit complaints in this regard to the different international bodies.

His Excellency also reaffirmed the readiness of Azerbaijan to strengthen relations with ISESCO, through Azeri competent parties, with a view to promoting joint Islamic action and unifying the efforts of the Member States in the field of dialogue among cultures and the alliance of civilizations, thereby contributing to the redressing of the Islamic image in the world and the shaping of strong relations resting on mutual trust and respect among the various nations and peoples. In this respect, he commended ISESCO's outstanding role both in devising various activities, strategies, programmes and in implementing them in coordination and consultation with the Member States.

By way of conclusion to his address, His Excellency expressed his conviction that the 6<sup>th</sup> Islamic Conference of Culture Ministers will contribute to the promotion of dialogue among cultures and rapprochement between peoples, will open new avenues for developing cultural relations between the Member States, and will achieve all its expected outcome.

4. For his part, ISESCO Director General H.E. Dr Abdulaziz Othman Altwaijri made an address in which he first placed on record his appreciation for the support given by His Excellency Mr Ilham Aliyev to ISESCO, and expressed wishes for further progress and prosperity to the Republic of Azerbaijan under the President's sound leadership. He also pointed out that special focus is placed on cultural projects and programmes under ISESCO's Three-year Action Plan and Budget for the years 2010-2012, thus marking a quantum leap forward in the Organization's cultural action. This, Dr Altwaijri further explained, will provide ISESCO with an integrated groundwork for action to promote culture in its broadest sense and offer a better opportunity for the Conference, in its future sessions, to fully discharge its mission.

Dr Altwaijri also pointed out that the general academic and theoretical framework for cultural management at ISESCO, which consists of a range of strategies, plans and commitments, will be completed with the adoption, by the current session, of the Draft (Strategy for the Development of Cultural Tourism in the Islamic World). This achievement, which ISESCO Director General described as a breakthrough in the area of joint Islamic action, will provide solid groundwork for ISESCO-led joint Islamic action.

He also explained that ISESCO has succeeded in expanding the scope of its activities devoted to the promotion of dialogue among cultures and the alliance of civilizations. ISESCO's efforts to this end, the Director General added,

consisted in further developing the programme of ISESCO Ambassadors of Dialogue among Cultures and Civilizations, and enhancing cooperation with parallel international organizations, bodies and institutions such as the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations, UNESCO, the Council of Europe and the International Organization of the Francophonie (OIF), through a number of successful conferences and symposia held in cooperation with such institutions on these issues. The Director General also underlined that this sixth session of the Islamic Conference of Culture Ministers will enhance the presence of Islamic culture on the international cultural scene, and give strong impetus to cooperation and synergy between Islamic countries in this vital field.

Besides, Dr Altwaijri expressed deep concern about the ongoing, unjust Israeli aggression on sanctities and cultural property in Al Quds, Gaza and all Palestinian territories. He therefore invited the conference members to adopt a resolution endorsing the efforts of ISESCO in this regard, as it has the legal status, cause of action and legal representation to prosecute those responsible for criminal aggressions on the Islamic sanctities and cultural property in Palestine.

He also affirmed the intent of the General Directorate to enhance and enlarge the scope of constructive cooperation and full coordination between ISESCO and the OIC General Secretariat. In this sense, he expressed appreciation for the unstinting efforts and constructive initiatives undertaken by OIC Secretary General Prof. Ekmeleddin Ihsanoglu. He also affirmed ISESCO's readiness to share in the action directed by the OIC Secretary General towards the Muslim Ummah, under the Ten-Year Action Plan and relevant Islamic resolutions.

5. Afterwards, His Excellency Dr Nouri D.A. Hameidi, Secretary of the Management Committee of the General Institution for Culture, President of the 5th session of the Islamic Conference of Culture Ministers, delivered an address which he began by extending thanks and gratitude to the leadership, government and people of the Republic of Azerbaijan for their hospitality and for the good organization of the conference. Then, His Excellency reviewed the good achievements made by the Great Jamahiriya during its presidency of the 5th session, building on the Tripoli Commitments on Renewing Cultural Policies in the Islamic World. These notably include the establishment of a regional centre for traditional arts and crafts at the of Islamic Arts and Crafts School in Tripoli; highlighting models of Islamic heritage through national museums in the Sahel and Saharan countries; organization of a fair of the Holy Quran; award of Gaddafi's Prize for Human Rights to Ahmed Baba Institute for Historical Studies and Islamic Research in Timbuktu and to libraries in the city in order to establish a centre for the preservation and restoration of manuscripts.

Dr Hameidi called for a unified cultural Islamic discourse, especially when dealing with the West, to present the shining image of Muslims, their history and their culture, and entrench communication with and respectful treatment of other civilizations. Likewise, he called for renewing such a discourse through a clear methodology resting on self-criticism, analysis of the current situation, pursuit of rational solutions and the establishment of a cultural system that would eliminate the effects of backwardness and cultural alienation.

At the close of his address, Dr Hameidi commended ISESCO as well as the leading and constructive achievements made in the interim between the 5th and 6th sessions of the Conference. He also expressed his appreciation for the efforts led by ISESCO Director General towards developing joint Islamic action and promoting cooperation and partnership between the Member States within ISESCO's competence. Finally, he underlined the resolution concerning the commissioning of ISESCO to organize the sessions of Islamic Conference of Culture Ministers, on a regular basis, and to take all measures necessary for holding these sessions in the best conditions, in cooperation with the Member States and the General Secretariat of the OIC.

6. In his speech read out on his behalf by H.E. Ambassador Abdel Moez Boukhari, Assistant Secretary General for Science and Technology, H.E. the Secretary General of the OIC expressed his delight at the convening of the sixth Islamic Conference of Culture Ministers in Azerbaijan which, he said, has historically constituted a crossroads of cultures and civilizations, home to Islamic culture and to a number of outstanding landmarks of Islamic heritage and history, and praised the choice of convening the conference in the beautiful city of Baku being celebrated as Islamic Culture Capital for 2009.

He pointed out that this year coincides with the commemoration of the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the OIC, which constitutes an occasion to renew commitment to achieving the goals of the Organization, to enhance rapprochement and joint action between the Member States, and to adopt positive orientations likely to help the Muslim Ummah rise to the challenges it is faced with, and stressed the importance of enhancing coordination between ISESCO and the OIC General Secretariat to effectively coordinate the work of the various bodies of the OIC system, without infringing upon the mandate and role given to ISESCO within this system.

He also pointed out that the OIC has always reiterated its stance favoring the values of moderation and tolerance and refuting Islamophobia. He also underlined that the new Charter of the OIC and its Ten-year Programme of Action illustrate its commitment to promoting a balanced dialogue among different religions and civilizations, as well as its determination to foster

cultural and religious diversity through dialogue, and to achieve rapprochement and reconciliation between the Islamic world and the West, and between Islam and Christianity.

At the close of his address to the Conference, H.E. the Secretary General expressed his full support for the efforts being made to devise a strategy for developing cultural tourism, which will contribute to presenting the true image of Islam to the world. He also voiced his support for ISESCO and praised the tremendous progress it has achieved since its inception in 1982.

7. Afterwards, the Bureau of the Conference was then elected as follows:

- **Chair:** Republic of Azerbaijan
- **Vice-chairs:**
  - Sultanate of Brunei Darussalam
  - Republic of Yemen.
  - Republic of Niger
- **Rapporteur:** Great Socialist People's Libyan Arab Jamahiriya

Then H.E. Dr Abulfas Garayev, Minister of Culture and Tourism in the Republic of Azerbaijan delivered an address wherein he expressed his deep gratitude and appreciation to ISESCO Director General and the ministers of the Member States who selected Baku to host the sixth session of the Conference, during the previous session held in Tripoli, in the Great Libyan Jamahiriya.

He also stressed that cooperation between ISESCO and the Republic of Azerbaijan is based on strong integrated relations in which ISESCO Goodwill Ambassador, Mrs. Mehriban Aliyeva, plays an important role. In the same vein, he pointed out that the celebration of Baku as Islamic Culture Capital for 2009 has enhanced cooperation in implementing various cultural activities and events, as well as festivals and exhibitions.

His Excellency pointed out the radical reforms being conducted by the Republic of Azerbaijan in the field of culture, building on the experience of Islamic and European countries, particularly in terms of the protection of Islamic popular heritage. He also affirmed that Armenia, which occupies 20 percent of Azerbaijani territories, has destroyed a lot of Islamic landmarks, noting that this constitutes an aggression against humanity at large.

At the close of his address, His Excellency reiterated his thanks to ISESCO Director General and to the OIC Secretary General, for their worthwhile efforts and coordination roles towards achieving sustainable development in the Islamic world.

- 8.** Afterwards, a ministerial roundtable on “Fostering Dialogue and Cultural Diversity – Baku Process: New Challenge for Dialogue between Civilizations”, was held, which was moderated by H.E Mr Abulfas Garayev, Minister of Culture and Tourism in the Republic of Azerbaijan, and H.E. Dr Abdulaziz Othman Altwajri, Director General of ISESCO. In this roundtable, the representative of the Council of Europe expressed the European Community’s desire to enhance North-South cooperation through concrete initiatives, and invited ISESCO and its Member States to further their cooperation relations with the Council, to attend the meetings and conferences it organizes and to contribute to the cultural projects favouring the materialization of the objectives specified in the Working Document of the ministerial roundtable and relevant documents. On the same occasion, the rest of speakers in this roundtable stressed the vital need to continue holding such meetings between the Islamic group and the European Community, to involve governments, peoples, states and cultures in this dialogue, to make the youth as the main target group of cooperation projects of the two blocs, and to focus the international efforts in this regard on caring for cultural heritage, cultural works and cultural property wherever they are endangered, particularly in Palestine and Al Quds Al Sharif.

At the close of this ministerial roundtable, a communiqué was issued in which the participants reiterated their support for the joint efforts aimed at spreading the culture of cooperation, fair dialogue and mutual respect.

- 9.** At the beginning of the first working session, the Conference adopted the address of H.E. President Ilham Aliyev as a keynote document of the Conference, at the request of ISESCO Director General. Subsequently, the Conference’s draft agenda and the draft programme were approved.
- 10.** Afterwards the heads of the participating delegations delivered their addresses and presented the reports on their countries on their efforts towards the implementation of the Cultural Strategy for the Islamic World.
- 11.** In their addresses, the heads of delegation lauded the efforts made by ISESCO in implementing the Strategy, developing Islamic cultural action for the benefit of Muslims outside the Islamic world, promoting dialogue and cultural diversity, safeguarding sanctities and preserving the landmarks of the Islamic civilization and culture in the Member States.
- 12.** The Meeting expressed its deep appreciation for the statement of the Secretary General of the Organization of the Islamic Conference, H.E. Prof. Ekmeleddin Ihsanoglu for his commitment to project Islamic culture and also commended him for his initiatives in promoting dialogue among civilizations and for engaging the West for this purpose.
- 13.** The Meeting highly commended the OIC Secretary General and the General Secretariat for taking strong and appropriate measures in combating Islamophobia as well as for sensitizing the international community on the issue

of incitement to hatred and stereotyping of Muslim and their negative profiling. It appreciated the recommendable work done by the Islamophobia Observatory at the OIC General Secretariat in monitoring Islamophobic incidents, taking necessary counter measures and bringing out the Annual Reports.

- 14.** The Conference also lauded the General Secretariat and its specialized subsidiary and affiliated organs for the activities and programmes they conducted as part of the celebration of the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the OIC.
- 15.** The conference, having taken cognizance of these reports, called on the Member States to continue activating the Strategy and implementing its provisions with due consideration of the needs and general policies of each country. It also called on the competent authorities in the Member States to submit to the General Directorate of ISESCO periodic progress reports regarding their efforts in the implementation of the Cultural Strategy for the Islamic World, so as to exploit them in the follow-up of the cultural action in these the Member States. It also thanked the Member States as well as regional and international organizations for their efforts in this area.
- 16.** The Director General of ISESCO presented his report on the implementation of the Cultural Strategy for the Islamic World. In this respect, he underlined that ISESCO has sought to implement the Strategy through four levels of action. In the first level dealing with procedural matters, ISESCO distributed the final communiqué, resolutions and recommendations of the fifth Islamic Conference of Culture Ministers over the competent parties in the Member States, in order to translate into action the provisions contained therein in association with civil society organizations and bodies. In a bid to broaden the scope of international cultural cooperation, ISESCO took part in the Conference of Ministers Responsible for Culture of the Council of Europe (Baku, 2008), which involved 15 countries of the Islamic World. As well as partnering in several cultural activities and joint programmes, ISESCO extended invitations to a number of European culture ministers to participate in the current session of the Islamic Conference of Culture Ministers, in order to promote North-South cooperation.

The Director General pointed out that, at the second level, more than 320 cultural and communication activities have been conducted by ISESCO under its Action Plan for the years 2007-2009. At the third level, he went on, the General Directorate of ISESCO reinforced the parent strategy with two key documents: the “Draft Strategy for the Development of Cultural Tourism in the Islamic World”, and the “Project on Cultural Communication Routes among Peoples: the Hajj Routes as a Case in Point”. Concerning the fourth level, the Director General pointed out that ISESCO held the eighth meeting of the Consultative Council for the Implementation of the Islamic Cultural Strategy in the Islamic World, at ISESCO headquarters in November 2008. During its ninth meeting held only three days before the convening of the present

conference in Baku, as part of its celebration as Capital of Islamic Culture for 2009, the Consultative Council adopted the final draft **Strategy for the Development of Cultural Tourism in the Islamic World** and the **Draft Action Plan to Revive and Activate the Routes of Cultural Communication among the Peoples of the Islamic World (Hajj Routes as a case in point)**, with a recommendation to submit them to the current Conference for adoption.

- 17. The conference adopted the Report of the Director General on the Implementation of the Cultural Strategy for the Islamic World**, taking into consideration the observations made by the participating members. Also significant, the conference **re-commissioned ISESCO to pursue the implementation of the Cultural Strategy for the Islamic World and to follow up the implementation of its mechanisms** in consultation with the Consultative Council; in coordination with the OIC General Secretariat and its specialized subsidiary organs; and in cooperation with the Member States and the relevant regional and international organizations. **The conference also endorsed the recommendations of the Consultative Council in its meetings held between the fifth and sixth sessions of the Conference**. It also thanked the Council for its efforts to concretize this Strategy, and invited it to pursue these efforts in coordination with ISESCO General Directorate.

As well as calling on the Member States to allocate fixed financial resources to fund the cultural projects pertaining to the Cultural Strategy for the Islamic World, in order to provide creative mechanisms to support cultural action and its related projects and programmes in general, the Conference invited the Member States to devote more attention to the integration of cultural policies in the developmental process and activate the role of the cultural sector in the national plans for sustainable development. Moreover, the conference commended the efforts of ISESCO to promote the Muslim world's cultural development, coordinate joint Islamic cultural action, devise leading cultural programmes and projects, and assist the Member States in promoting the cultural sector. The conference also thanked ISESCO for its keenness on holding the sessions of the Consultative Council for the Implementation of the Cultural Strategy for the Islamic World on a regular basis, and expanding its ambit to cover issues of cultural development in the Islamic world and the study of the strategic documents submitted to it, and invited the Director General to submit a report on the subject to the 7<sup>th</sup> session of the Islamic Conference of Culture Ministers.

- 18. The conference adopted ISESCO Director General's report on the Organization's activities in the fields of culture and communication between the fifth and sixth sessions**, taking into account the observations of the conference members. As well as commending the cultural and

communication programmes and activities contained in this report, the conference invited ISESCO to pursue the preparation and implementation of cultural and communication programmes and projects in accordance with the contents of the Cultural Strategy for the Islamic World, while taking account of the priorities and needs of the Member States and Muslim communities outside the Islamic world. The conference also invited ISESCO Director General to pursue holding conferences, symposia and workshops in the different fields of culture and communication, especially as regards addressing issues of cultural heritage preservation and culture for all, encouraging artistic and literary creation, promoting dialogue and cultural diversity, concretizing cultural takaful, bringing Islamic schools of thought closer together, and exploring ways to possess and use information and communication technology. The Conference also thanked the Director General for devoting programmes and activities to the benefit of cultural institutions in Palestine, Al Quds Al Sharif in particular, as well as in Iraq and Afghanistan, and invited him to dedicate more programmes and activities to those institutions. The Director General was also called to submit to the 7<sup>th</sup> Islamic Conference of Culture Ministers in its seventh session a report on the activities undertaken by ISESCO in the areas of culture and communication.

**19. The conference adopted the Report of ISESCO Director General on the Organization's efforts in the field of dialogue and cultural diversity as well as in refuting media smear campaigns targeting Islam and Muslims,** taking into account its members' observations. It also stressed the importance of highlighting the Muslim world's stances and efforts to promote intercultural and interfaith dialogue and the alliance of civilizations, based on the perennial tenets of Islam which advocate peace, tolerance and mutual respect for the cultural and civilizational specificities of nations and peoples and reject all forms of extremism and violence. It also commended ISESCO's efforts and contributions in the field of dialogue among cultures, civilizations and religions, redressing the image of Islam and Muslims in the West and addressing the phenomenon of Islamophobia, invited ISESCO to pursue these efforts inside and outside the Islamic world, in cooperation with its partners among regional and international organizations. It also reiterated its appeal to the Member States to seek inspiration in the **Islamic Declaration on Cultural Diversity** and its objectives when devising their national cultural policies.

The Conference also called on the member states and specialised organizations to take innovative initiatives and adopt effective mechanisms for countering the fierce campaign targeting Islamic sanctities and cultural symbols of Muslims, and emphasized the importance of coordination between the media and communication institutions in the Member States to this end.

He also invited ISESCO Director General and to put this item on the agenda of the 7<sup>th</sup> session of the Islamic Conference of Culture Ministers.

- 20. The conference adopted the Report of ISESCO Director General on the Organization's efforts in the follow-up of the implementation of the Islamic Culture Capitals' Programme**, taking into account the observations of the Conference members. It also thanked ISESCO Director General for dedicating and implementing a number of national, regional and international activities in the Islamic and Arab culture capitals as part of the relevant celebration programmes, and invited him to pursue this support. It equally commended the efforts the Member States hosting capitals of Islamic culture over the period of 2007 through 2009 have put in preparing and implementing the celebration programmes and properly coordinating with the General Directorate in this connection.

**The Conference selected Najaf and Sharjah as Islamic Culture capitals in the Arab region, for 2012 and 2014 respectively, and adopted the list of Islamic Culture Capitals for the period from 2015 to 2024, as specified in the table adopted.** In addition, the conference invited ISESCO Director General to enlarge the scope of the Islamic Culture Capitals' Programme so as to include Islamic historical capitals and cities from outside the Member States of the OIC, and invited the states to be hosting capitals of Islamic culture in the forthcoming years to take stock of and benefit from the experience of the states having hosted capitals of Islamic culture, and to seek coordination and consultation with the General Directorate of ISESCO in this connection. In this regard, the conference called on ISESCO Director General to submit a report on the subject to the 7<sup>th</sup> session of the Islamic Conference of Culture Ministers.

- 21. The Conference also adopted the Report of ISESCO Director General on the Organization's efforts in the field of the implementation of the Strategy for Islamic Cultural Action outside the Islamic World**, taking into account the observations of its members. **It reaffirmed the Resolution of the 9th Islamic Summit Conference on entrusting ISESCO with implementing the Strategy for Islamic Cultural Action outside the Islamic World, and coordinating the action of Islamic cultural centres outside the Islamic World.**

**It endorsed the resolutions and recommendations contained in the final reports of the sessions of the Supreme Council for Education, Culture and Science for Muslims outside the Islamic World and the meetings of Islamic centres and associations in Europe, Asia and Latin America between the fifth and sixth sessions of the Islamic Conference of Culture Ministers, and**

invited ISESCO to follow up the implementation of these resolutions and recommendations in coordination with the relevant parties.

The Conference lauded the quality of the educational, cultural and information activities carried out by ISESCO for the benefit of Muslims outside the Islamic World, namely in terms of redressing the image of Islam and Muslims, addressing the phenomenon of Islamophobia, activating dialogue among cultures, civilizations and religions and preparing programmes of the Arabic language and Islamic education specific to Muslims outside the Islamic world, and invited it to pursue its efforts and further contact with Islamic cultural centres and associations in Europe, Asia and Latin America, through the **Supreme Council for Education, Culture and Science for Muslims outside the Islamic World**, with a view to enforcing the **Implementation Plan of the Strategy for Islamic Cultural Action outside the Islamic World and the Strategy for Benefiting from Muslim Competencies outside the Islamic World**.

Similarly, the Conference praised ISESCO programme on the training of Imams working within Muslim communities outside the Islamic world on spreading the values of dialogue, middle stance and moderation, and invited it to pursue holding training sessions and intellectual symposia in this field. In the same vein, the Conference invited Member States as well as regional and international organizations interested in and concerned with Islamic cultural action outside the Islamic world to cooperate with ISESCO to implement the largest number possible of programmes and projects for Muslims outside the Islamic world. It also commended the methodology of ISESCO's General Directorate to strengthen cooperation relations, coordinate with governmental authorities in European, Asian and Latin American countries and involve them in the implementation of its activities geared to Muslim communities in these countries.

It also invited ISESCO Director General to submit a report on the subject to the 7<sup>th</sup> session of the Islamic Conference of Culture Ministers.

22. **The Conference adopted the Report of ISESCO Director General on on the Organization's Efforts in Protecting Endangered Cultural and Civilizational Heritage in the Islamic World**. It also commended the procedural steps taken by the General Directorate towards the establishment of the Islamic Heritage Committee under the supervision of ISESCO to address the issues of tangible and intangible Islamic cultural heritage and natural heritage, and coordinate Member States' efforts and stances in relevant international and regional meetings, and re-entrusted ISESCO Director General to carry on taking the necessary procedures and steps to enable this committee

to assume its mission in the best conditions. By the same token, the Conference appointed the members of the Islamic Heritage Committee from the following Member States:

- The Arab Republic of Egypt and the Tunisian Republic (Arab region);
- Malaysia and the Islamic Republic of Iran (Asian region);
- The Republic of Senegal and the Republic of Niger (African region);

Moreover, it invited the Member States to appoint their representatives in the aforesaid committee.

The Conference condemned the Israeli practices in Al Quds Al Sharif, and urged the Israeli occupation authorities to immediately stop the archaeological excavations being carried out beneath or around Al Aqsa Mosque, the construction of synagogues and Jewish museums nearby Al Aqsa Mosque, and the erection of the racist separation wall as all these projects constitute a blatant violation of the international law. In addition, the Conference strongly condemned the barbaric acts committed by the Armenian aggressors in the Republic of Azerbaijan with the aim of total annihilation of the Islamic heritage in the occupied Azerbaijani territories and vigorously demanded the strict and unconditional implementation by the Republic of Armenia of UN Security Council Resolutions No. 822, 853, 874 and 884. Furthermore, the Conference commended the constant efforts as well as the international and regional contacts being undertaken by ISESCO Director General to urge the international community to press Israel into abiding by the decisions of international legality pertaining to the necessity to preserve the religious landmarks as well as civilizational and cultural heritage in Al Quds Al Sharif, in accordance with the relevant international resolutions. In this respect, the Conference urged UNESCO, the World Heritage Committee, the International Coordination Committee for the Safeguarding of the Cultural Heritage of Iraq, IRCICA, as well as the international and regional organizations operating in this field to adopt immediate measures to preserve the universal heritage in Palestine, Iraq and Afghanistan.

It also invited ISESCO Director General to submit a report on the subject to the forthcoming session of the Conference.

- 23. The Conference adopted a resolution on the protection of cultural and property in Al Quds Al Sharif and Palestine**, and expressed its support for ISESCO's efforts to document the war crimes and crimes against humanity which were and are still being perpetrated by the Israeli occupation authorities in Al Quds Al Sharif, Gaza and all Palestinian territories, with the view to prepare legal files to bring those Israeli war criminals, military and civilians

alike, before international justice. The Conference also invited the different parties active in the educational, scientific and cultural fields, along with political actors in Palestine, in general, to join efforts, coordinate stances, and reconcile views in order to counter the threats and challenges posed to Al Quds Al Sharif and the Palestinian just causes.

- 24. The Conference adopted the Report of ISESCO Director General on the Follow-up of the Implementation of the Strategy of Cultural Takaful to Serve Muslim Developmental and Civilizational Causes**, taking into consideration the observations of its members. It invited ISESCO to take further interest in the implementation mechanisms of the Strategy of Cultural Takaful, through regular programming of activities and projects inspired by this Strategy and its orientations. It also called upon the Member States to draw on the guidelines of the Strategy of Cultural Takaful, seek to integrate the principles of cultural Takaful into the plans of governmental sectors and civil society institutions concerned with cultural affairs, and activate the role of cultural Takaful to serve the developmental and civilizational causes of the Member States. Similarly, it invited charitable associations and civil society organizations operating in the field of Takaful to gear their activities towards activating cultural Takaful to serve the developmental and civilizational causes of the Member States.

It also invited ISESCO Director General to submit a report on the implementation of this Strategy to the 7th session of the Islamic Conference of Culture Ministers.

- 25. The Conference adopted the Report of ISESCO Director General on the Follow-up of the Implementation of the Strategy for the Development of Information and Communication Technologies in the Islamic World**, taking into consideration the observations of its members. It lauded the volume and quality of activities and programmes implemented between the two sessions of the Conference by the General Directorate in the areas of communication and information as part of the Strategy for the Development of Information and Communication Technologies in the Islamic World. Likewise, it invited ISESCO to direct further interest towards the training of executives specialized in communication and information, providing technical advice and expertise to Member States to enable them to strengthen relevant infrastructure, and giving due care to the ethical and cultural aspects of ICTs and their application in educational and scientific areas, particularly in literacy, agriculture, water resources management and mitigation of natural disasters.

In addition, it called upon the competent parties in the Member States to draw on the contents and orientations of this Strategy in devising relevant national

strategies. It also urged the Member States to carry on their efforts towards developing and updating the legislation and regulations relating to the sector of ICTs in the Islamic world.

Similarly, the Conference commended ISESCO's participation in international and regional conferences dealing with ICTs to enhance the presence of Islamic world therein and contribute to the formulation and implementation of their resolutions, and invited ISESCO Director General to submit a report on the subject to the 7th session of the Islamic Conference of Culture Ministers.

**26. The Conference adopted the Report of the Director General of IRCICA on the Activities conducted by the Center in its fields of competence**, took note of the various activities of the Center aimed to redress the image of Islamic civilization and Islamic culture and to publicize the landmarks of the Islamic civilization and its arts, through awareness raising and adopting a policy favoring a better understanding among cultures of the world, and through organizing international symposia, artistic exhibitions, establishing databases, electronic networks and publishing studies and research pertaining to the Center's fields of competence. It also expressed its appreciation of the Center's production of a number of reference books in the fields of culture, history, arts, and crafts of the Muslim world, under its various programmes and research activities, and organization of conferences, awards and diverse exhibitions.

Moreover, the Conference commended the progress made in the ongoing work aimed at establishing the Prince Sultan bin Salman Islamic Architectural Heritage Database, sponsored by HRH Prince Sultan bin Salman, Secretary General of the Supreme Council for Tourism and Antiquities, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, and invited the Member States which have not done so yet, to provide IRCICA with the required data and information on their Islamic sites and monuments and to designate their respective focal points to collaborate permanently with the Database unit at IRCICA in this respect. In the same vein, it noted with gratitude the generous donation of H.H. Sheikh Mohammed Bin Rashid Al Maktoum, Vice President and Prime Minister of the United Arab Emirates and Emir of Dubai towards establishing a digital library on Islamic civilization at IRCICA, and commended the progress of activities at the Center in this regard.

It also expressed its thanks to the Member States for the moral and material support they are extending to IRCICA, thus enabling it to fulfill its mission, and for their regular payment of their contributions to the Center's budget and invited the other States to do so and settle their arrears to IRCICA's budget.

The Conference then invited the Director General of IRCICA to submit a report on the subject to the forthcoming session of the Conference.

**27. The Conference adopted Draft Strategy for the Promotion of Cultural Tourism in the Islamic World,** taking into consideration the observations of the Conference members. It called on Member States as well as concerned regional and international organizations to cooperate with ISESCO in implementing the contents and orientations of this Strategy, stressing the significant role of cultural tourism in stimulating cultural action in particular, and the development process in general, and inviting the Member States to give due care and attention to this vital sector.

The Conference highlighted the Member States' considerable tourism potential, including intangible and tangible heritage, including the unique archaeological sites and old architectural buildings etc., and called on Member States to harness this potential in such a way as to promote cultural action and benefit society and the Muslim Ummah in general.

In the same vein, the Conference called on ISESCO Director to submit this Strategy to the Islamic Conference of Tourism Ministers to include it as a reference document of the Conference, urged the competent and concerned parties in Member States to draw on its contents in the relevant areas, invited ISESCO to prepare additional practical models as part of the Strategy for the Promotion of Cultural Tourism in the Islamic World, and to submit them to the forthcoming sessions of the Consultative Council and the Conference, and invited ISESCO Director General to submit a report on this subject to the 7th session of the Islamic Conference of Culture Ministers.

**28. The Conference adopted the Draft Action Plan to Revive and Activate the Routes of Cultural Communication among the Peoples of the Islamic World (Hajj Routes as a case in point),** taking into consideration the observations of the Conference members, invited the Member States, relevant ministries and regional organizations to cooperate with ISESCO in reviving and activating the routes of cultural communication among the peoples of the Islamic world through development of specialized programmes and projects in line with the objectives of the Plan and the priorities and needs of States and specialized bodies. It stressed the role of Hajj routes in highlighting the cultural unity of the Islamic world, advertising the shared civilizational heritage and the social specificities in Member States and consolidating the bases of cooperation and cultural exchange.

The Conference invited ISESCO to prepare new models as part of the Action Plan to Revive and Activate the Routes of Cultural Communication, and to submit them to the forthcoming sessions of the Consultative Council and the Conference. It also invited ISESCO Director General to enhance cooperation with UNESCO to carry out joint programmes and activities as part of reviving

and activating the routes of cultural communication among peoples and to place this item on the agenda of the forthcoming session of the Conference.

**29. The Conference elected the members of the Consultative Council for Implementing the Cultural Strategy for the Islamic World, according to the composition adopted in the relevant resolution, for a two-year term renewable only once.**

The Conference invited the Member States to nominate their representatives to the Council.

**30. The Conference reaffirmed the competence of ISESCO to hold the Islamic Conference of Culture Ministers on a regular basis.**

The Meeting agreed that all forthcoming sessions of the Islamic Conference of the Culture Ministers organized by ISESCO be convened in full coordination with the General Secretariat of the Organization of the Islamic Conference as provided in the relevant resolutions. The Conference also welcomed the invitation of the People's Democratic Republic of Algeria to host the 7th Session of the Islamic Conference of Culture Ministers in Tlemcen, on the occasion of its selection as the 2011 Islamic Culture Capital for the Arab region, and invited ISESCO to take the necessary measures in this connection, in coordination with the host country and the General Secretariat of the OIC.

**31.** At the close of its proceedings, the Members of the Conference expressed their thanks and appreciation to the President, government and people of the Republic of Azerbaijan for hosting this conference and for the generous facilitations offered by the Azeri Ministry of Culture and Tourism, which contributed to the success of the Conference. It also decided to address a message of thanks and gratitude to His Excellency Mr Ilham Aliyev, the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan.

**32.** The Conference decided at the start of the closing session to adopt the Draft Final Communiqué. The floor was then given to H.E. Ambassador Moez Boukhari, OIC Assistant Secretary General for Science and Technology, to congratulate participants and organizing parties on the results achieved. For his part, H.E. Dr Abdulaziz Othman Altwaijri, ISESCO Director General, praised H.E. Mr Ilham Aliyev, President of Azerbaijan, for being such a generous patron of the Conference. He went on to thank and commend H.E. the OIC Secretary General and the participating delegations. He also expressed satisfaction at the Conference's positive outcome.

The Conference closed with H.E. Dr Aboulfaz Garayev, Azerbaijan's Culture and Tourism Minister, expressing pride for hosting the Conference in the Republic of Azerbaijan, and appreciation to ISESCO Director General and

Conference's members for their remarkable performance. Dr Garayev also emphasized readiness to continue cooperation with ISESCO to enhance joint Islamic action within the Conference's ambit.

Upon close of the Conference, a motion of thanks and appreciation was read out from the Conference's members to H.E. Mr Ilham Aliyev, President of the Republic of Azerbaijan.