

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

Algiers Declaration on Cultural Diversity and the Preservation of Peoples' Identities and Heritages

At the closing of its 4th session, held under the high patronage of His Excellency Mr. Abdelaziz Bouteflika, President of the People's Democratic Republic of Algeria, on 3-4 Zul Qi'da 1425 A.H/ 15-16 December 2004, in Algiers, **the Islamic Conference of Culture Ministers,**

Based on the Charter of the Organization of the Islamic Conference; guided by the Makkah Al-Mukarramah Declaration; taking into consideration the resolutions of the specialised Islamic committees and conferences ; in accordance with the Charter of the Islamic Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization; and in keeping with the relevant international instruments, declarations and covenants;

Asserting the need to cling on to and stand up for our cultural and civilizational identity, while interacting with the other civilizations and cultures, and advocating the reviewing of our perception of the other, casting away the stereotype views of peoples, along with their culture and civilization; emphasizing, likewise, that equal dialogue among nations and peoples cannot abide unless we honestly judge ourselves without in any way cutting loose from our religious and cultural identity, and that without sticking to our common inherent values it will not be easy for us to understand fully the values of the Other and fathom his culture;

Being infused with the belief that Islam is a divine path which embodies a human way of life, and that culture is the expression of the genius of a people, as there is no justification for differentiating between cultures and civilizations if they have a humanist basis since each culture has its own genius, and is, therefore, distinctly prolific, enlightened and endowed with its own historical wisdom and since cultural and civilizational diversity is a blessing from Allah;

Being confident that the Islamic world's humanistic mission is one that seeks to lay down the bases of world peace, bring Muslims together in joint collaboration with the world's universal civilizations in the service of the whole humanity and contribute to the enrichment of the universal cultural heritage;

Expresses its remorseless commitment to bridge the gap of misapprehension among civilizations and contribute to warding off the hostile tendencies running counter to the values of tolerance, coexistence and dialogue, and the smear campaigns that persist in distorting the image of Islam and the Islamic civilization.

The Conference also **reaffirms** its belief that asserting cultural diversity and working towards preserving it within the framework of an international policy founded on the principles of dialogue, peace, as well as on rejection of the logic of power and hegemony, implies a condemnation of all forms and sources of violence and terrorism. It involves also the respect of the right to life, dignity, freedom as well as the legal claim of occupied peoples to resistance in defence of their entity and culture. Cultural diversity also integrates the need to distinguish legitimate resistance from terrorism.

Further still, the Conference **states** that cultural diversity is a fundamental stimulus of development, mutual understanding, peaceful coexistence, economic and social progress; indeed, a factor of redressing disparities and disorders existing in the international order, respecting and protecting the environment, in addition to preserving the material and immaterial heritage of all peoples whose cultural and civilizational heritage is subjected to attempts of distortion, forgery, obliteration, destruction and confiscation. Cultural diversity also contributes to fighting against poverty, raising development standard and production rate, consolidating democracy, extending popular participation in decision-making in all administrative, cultural, economic and social sectors and encouraging intellectual and creative initiatives.

The Conference **asserts**, likewise, that the process of globalization requires ones to consider cultural diversity and civilizational plurality as a positive stimulus of interaction and exchange, not as an obstacle thereto, and that it would be interesting to respect and take account of the cultural and civilizational particularities in a world that has become a global village, thanks to the information and communication technology, and tends towards homogeneity. It is also confident that the values of plurality and cultural diversity are not a justification to exclude the Other; on the contrary, the opportunities and possibilities offered by globalization should be exploited in order to further solidarity, exchange and coexistence between peoples.

Moreover, the Conference **calls upon** the international community to join efforts towards building a world based on communication, information and mutual understanding and wherein the diversity of cultural values that abide by moral principles leads to the establishment of a true culture of peace; and further **invites** it to support international efforts directed towards elaborating a world convention on the respect of the creative human diversity, with a view to warding off any attempt aimed at exterminating a language, a culture or a race, on the understanding that the said convention will be bound for reference use to developmental strategies in the future.

The Conference **asserts** that stability in the Arab region cannot be achieved unless comprehensive and fair peace, resting on the decisions of international legality and the resolutions of the Security Council, is secured, since there can be no development and security as long as Israel occupies Arab lands, and unless prompt action is undertaken to enable the Iraqi people to acquire their full sovereignty and secure their national and territorial integrity.

The Conference **is confident** also that the Islamic culture is a culture that has been the advocate of progress, creativity, knowledge and action, and has always respected and dealt with diversity. Indeed, the fact that the Islamic world has been a seat wherein diverse cultures, civilizations and languages have been coexisting is the best historical evidence of the culture of dialogue and tolerance that Islam has always been advocating, regardless of changes and junctures.

The Conference **is committed** to activate communication with the world, through attaching importance to Islamic cultural centres abroad, supporting international research centres that treat objectively of the Islamic issues, setting up further similar institutes and centres in the world's major capitals, holding joint symposia, organizing cultural caravans and fairs, stepping up cooperation with active international satellite and electronic networks, encouraging great publishing houses in the world to translate masterpieces of the universal culture and serious Islamic studies into internationally renowned languages, supporting the circulation of such works and encouraging the joint production of TV programmes, documentaries and reference works on the diversity and the immense breadth of the sources of Islamic culture and its rich contribution to enriching universal civilization, promoting mutual understanding and learning about the Other.

The Conference **proclaims, in the most assertive way**, its adherence to the culture of justice, peace and tolerance, since peace is a prerequisite to the development of peoples and coexistence between civilizations, and as it is impossible to dissociate peace from justice, given that peace, in fact, implies respect for human rights, the conjoined, genuine will to coexist on the basis of the common values shared by humans, and for the peoples' rights to safeguard their respective identities, cultures and civilizations, which only enriches the cultural and civilizational heritage of humankind altogether.

Moreover, the Conference **is committed** also to work towards disseminating the principles enunciated in this Declaration, publicize them and see to it that they are observed and complied with by the governmental and local community bodies. It also urges the states of the Islamic world to integrate these principles into their cultural and developmental policies, taking them into account within the framework of their inter-Islamic relations and their relations with the other peoples and nations, and calls upon these states to redouble efforts directed towards promoting cultural interaction and inter-civilizational dialogue, encouraging cultural diversity inside and outside the Islamic world, and developing cooperation and partnership with the national, regional and international cultural institutions and bodies, so as to further coordinate views and unify goals and objectives, with a view to promoting culture, consecrating such principles as justice and peace, and sensitizing the public opinion and international community to the adverse effects of globalization.

The Conference also **commends** the efforts of the Islamic Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization and its Director General in implementing the resolutions of the Islamic Conference of Culture Ministers, and in supporting the joint Islamic cultural action as well as contributing to shoring up the efforts of the Member States in the Organization's fields of competence.

Finally, the Conference **expresses** its innermost gratitude to the People's Democratic Republic of Algeria, its President, government and people, for having generously hosted the 4th Islamic Conference of Culture Ministers, and for having seen to it that it is crowned with success. It also endorses the Resolutions and Recommendations it has issued, and adopts the guiding address to the Conference by His Excellency the President of the Republic as an official working document, and reaffirms its keenness on implementing its contents.