



**Ministry of Education  
Republic of Azerbaijan**

# **The Fourth Islamic Conference of Ministers of Higher Education and Scientific Research**

## **Final Report**

**Baku- Republic of Azerbaijan: 6-8 October 2008**

**Final Report of the Fourth Islamic Conference  
of Ministers of Higher Education and Scientific Research**

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1. With the help of Allah, the Islamic Conference of the Ministers of Higher Education and Scientific Research held its 4th session, in Baku, under the high patronage of His Excellency Mr Ilham Aliyev, President of the Republic of Azerbaijan, from 7 through 9 Shawwal 1429 A.H., corresponding to 6-8 October 2008, on the theme of **“Bringing Change through Scientific Youth Force”**.
2. The opening session of the conference was presided over by His Excellency Mr Elchin Efendiyev, Deputy Prime Minister of the government of Azerbaijan, with the presence of Her Excellency Mrs Fatma Abdullazadeh, representative of His Excellency Mr Ilham Aliyev, the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan, His Excellency Dr Abdulaziz Othman Altwajri, the Director General of ISESCO, His Excellency Dr Misir Mardanov, the Minister of Education in the Republic of Azerbaijan, His Excellency Dr Dato Seri Mohamed Khaled Nourdin, the Minister of Higher Education in Malaysia and Vice-Chairman of the 3<sup>rd</sup> session of the Islamic Conference of the Ministers of Higher Education and Scientific Research, His Excellency Dr Ali Akbar Salehi, the OIC Assistant Secretary General, together with a number of Ministers of the Republic of Azerbaijan, the representatives of Islamic, Arab and international organizations, the Member States’ Ambassadors accredited to the Republic of Azerbaijan, and a host of prominent personalities.
3. After a brief welcome address delivered by His Excellency Dr Misir Mardanov, the Minister of Education in the Republic of Azerbaijan, Her Excellency Mrs Fatma Abdullazadeh, representative of His Excellency the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan, read out the message addressed by His Excellency the President to the conference members, wherein he underlined that partnership with the countries of the Islamic world in the field of science and technology and the development of cooperation with the OIC organs are among the key trends of the Azeri government, which has followed a policy resting on the prioritization of optimum development of national human resources, and introduced great reforms in various areas, thanks to the local human resources and the national competences.

His Excellency the President also called upon the Member States to step up their efforts to foster the exchange of expertise among intellectuals and scholars, as well as the universities and the scientific research institutions in their countries, in order to achieve the objectives hoped-for in the conference, particularly the advancement of the scientific competences and professional performance of the individuals, and the development of technical capacities of institutions and the economic and social structures in the OIC Member States.

In his message to the conference, His Excellency the President also expressed his hope that the current session of the Islamic Conference will contribute to the development of new formulas for cooperation and practical initiatives in order to achieve the sought development and fulfill the common aspirations of Muslim peoples.

4. Thereafter, His Excellency Dr Abdulaziz Othman Altwaijri, the Director General of ISESCO, made an address which he started by expressing his gratitude and appreciation to the President, government and people of the Republic of Azerbaijan. Similarly, he expressed his satisfaction with the achievements made between the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> sessions in the development of science, technology and scientific research in the Member States.

ISESCO Director General underscored the importance of the subjects and projects considered by the current conference, especially in a world heading towards the globalization of knowledge which starts from the globalization of curricula in universities. In this respect, he noted that ISESCO gives special focus to the development of higher education, for it is the starting point for any development in the scientific, technological, economic, industrial, information and administrative fields. He went on, "At the forefront of the objectives that ISESCO is seeking to achieve are the localization of knowledge in the Islamic world, the edification of the solid base of the scientific society, the development of the Member States' capacities in the field of scientific research and development of scientific curricula in universities. The ultimate goal is to boost comprehensive, integrated, balanced and sustainable development in its natural courses so that the Islamic world can keep abreast of the latest developments in science and technology."

Dr Altwaijri pointed out that the current session shoulders particular responsibilities under the major challenges facing up the Islamic world in numerous interconnected areas. He underlined that the Conference takes on an added importance as it is expected to achieve a positive outcome that would enhance joint Islamic action in the area of higher education, science and technology.

5. Afterwards, His Excellency Dr Dato Seri Mohamed Khaled Nourdin, Minister of Higher Education in Malaysia, Vice-Chairman of the 3rd session of the Islamic Conference of the Ministers of Higher Education and Scientific Research, made an address in which he stated that the progress made by a number of States during the last few decades clearly demonstrates the vital role of science and technology in driving economies, developing new industries, fostering job creation and improving the quality of life. He remarked, on the other hand, that the fact a number of economic policy and decision makers have overlooked this important role has undermined the efforts towards achieving national development and finding solutions to their social and economic problems.

He also expressed his deep satisfaction with the decisions taken by the previous session of this conference as well as with the initiatives launched by the Member States to further improve the development and growth of science. Likewise, he commended ISESCO for its efforts to implement a number of critical initiatives such as the Islamic World Science Net and the Islamic Ethical Network.

Similarly, His Excellency stated that the conference members at this current session are required to further emphasize the role of science and technology in the economic development, to orient the youth in the Member States towards scientific professions and activities and qualify them for the job market through high quality training programmes, and to show the government authorities and decision-makers the ways in which science can best meet the expectations and needs of society as well as the most efficient means to enhance the role of science in the achievement of development.

6. Afterwards, His Excellency Dr Ali Akbar Salehi, OIC Assistant Secretary General, delivered the address of the OIC Secretary-General. He pointed out that the world is passing through a critical time and its population as a whole is coping with various issues such as climate change, environmental degradation, shortage of energy, epidemics, conflicts and most lately melt down of financial institutions. He believed that these challenges could only be dealt with through a forward-looking strategic vision that would empower the Muslim world to tackle them by bolstering its collective will and joint action.

His Excellency pointed out that the social and economic growth emanates mainly from science and technology and innovation and that the Muslim world has no choice but to rededicate itself to amass knowledge and to gear science and technology towards their development goals in order to gain an advanced position in the world.

He underlined that the development of science and technology in the Member States hinges on the existence of some necessary foundations, such as the improvement of the quality of scientific curricula and programmes in schools and universities, supporting cooperation among the Member States to mutually benefit from the existing expertise and prospect the scientific and technical potentials in the Islamic countries, providing training to the youth and empowering them in the fields of science, technology and innovation, as well as urgently calling the private sector to support the governments' efforts in that field.

7. Thereafter, His Excellency Dr Abdulaziz Othman Altwaijri, the Director General of ISESCO, along with His Excellency the Azeri Deputy Prime Minister, awarded the “**ISESCO 2008 Science Prizes**” for biology, chemistry, geology, mathematics, physics and technology respectively to Dr Hala U. Gali-Muhtasib from the Republic of Lebanon; Dr Sharshenaliyeva Zaryl from the Republic of Kyrgyzstan; Dr Mouhamadou Bassir Diop from the Republic of Senegal; Dr Shaher Mohammad Ahmed Momani from the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan; Dr Mahmatali Ali Safarov from the Republic of Tajikistan; and Dr Mohd Sapuan Salit from Malaysia.
8. The official opening session was followed by a procedural session during which the draft agenda and the draft programme were approved. The Bureau of the Conference was then elected as follows:
  - **Chairman:** Republic of Azerbaijan
  - **Vice-chairmen:**
    - ❖ Republic of the Sudan
    - ❖ Republic of Mali
    - ❖ Islamic Republic of Iran
  - **Rapporteur:** State of Kuwait
9. During plenary sessions, the members of the Conference presented each their reports on the efforts deployed by their governments in the fields falling within the ambit of the Conference for the advancement of higher education and scientific research in their countries, and harnessing of material and technical resources available as well as human and scientific capacities needed to achieve educational and scientific resurgence, in line with the national policies and vision of each member state.

The conference took note of the statements and reports made by the Member States and the Arab, Islamic and international organizations, in relation to higher education and scientific research, and urged them to pursue their

endeavors to promote higher education and scientific research, while taking into consideration the priority needs, the general policies and the available resources.

- 10.** The Director General of ISESCO presented his report on ISESCO's efforts in higher education and scientific research and technology. He reviewed examples of the important accomplishments and achievements made by ISESCO or those to which it has contributed at the national, regional and international levels. He pointed to the number of programmes and activities implemented between the two sessions. In this respect, he mentioned that ISESCO attached utmost importance to the development of the policies of scientific research and management in the field of science, technology and innovation. Likewise, ISESCO pursued its action in partnership with UNESCO and other international organizations to foster the role of parliaments in development and orientation of national policies and programmes in the field of science, technology and innovation, through the convening of a number of international specialized forums bringing together politicians, parliamentarians from the Member States and elsewhere, as well as some winners of the Noble Prize and a host of scholars.

The Director General highlighted the important role of coordination ensured by ISESCO to contribute to the strengthening of scientific and technological cooperation between the South and the North countries, and among the South countries. In this regard, ISESCO jointly with its partners in that field organized the founding meeting of the International Centre for South-South Cooperation in Science, Technology and Innovation, in Kuala Lumpur (Malaysia). It has also cooperated with the Vision 1441, a work group set up by the OIC to promote recognition by the political leaderships in the Member States of the close relationship between science and development.

The Director General explained that ISESCO, drawing on an Islamic value-based perspective and in cooperation with a number of regional and international organizations such as UNESCO, World Renewable Energy Network and COMSTECH, continued to stage for the benefit of the Member States activities and events that foster the role of science and the use of such technology as mechatronics, nanotechnology, biotechnology, genetics in the development of industries with vital and direct impact on economic and social development, such as manufacturing and food industries, renewable energy, the pharmaceutical industry. In this regard, ISESCO seeks to support the efforts of the Member States in the fight against social and development scourges and challenges such as poverty, unemployment, famine, illiteracy, acute diseases, pollution and the depletion of natural resources.

The Director General confirmed ISESCO's keenness to support an effective, equitable participation of women from the Member States in all the activities related to science and technology, notably through the establishment of the Network for Women Scientists in the OIC Member States and the Chairs for women scientists. In implementation of a resolution issued by the third conference, ISESCO jointly with COMSATS established the Scientific Network for the Islamic World, which is a portal that allows the exchange of scientific and technological information and provides an increasing amount of data likely to facilitate communication and cooperation among the universities, the scientific research institutes, scholars and researchers from different parts of the Islamic world. ISESCO likewise continued to regularly organize the meetings of the Consultative Council for the Implementation of the Strategy for Science, Technology and Innovation in Islamic Countries, and held at its headquarters in Rabat, during July 2008, the fourth meeting of that Council which issued important recommendations to implement the said strategy.

**11. The conference adopted the Report of the Director General on ISESCO's Efforts in the Field of Higher Education, Scientific Research and Technology**, while taking into account the observations made by the conference members. **It also adopted the report of the Fourth Consultative Council for the Implementation of the Strategy for the Science, Technology and Innovation in Islamic Countries**, and urged the Member States to renew their commitments to bring about scientific and technological development, to give it priority in their national development plans and to allocate at least 1% of their GDP to the promotion of science and technology. The conference recommended the Member States to take practical steps to ensure a speedy transformation of their economies into knowledge-based ones, to promote the integration of information and communication technologies into various fields, to bridge the digital divide and to better prepare themselves to meet the international standards.

The conference stressed on the need for the Member States to take further interest in the development of the scientific path of the youth, especially the girls, through the provision of an adequate training in the social, economic and professional fields, and to empower this category to actively contribute to the scientific and technological development.

**Furthermore, the Conference proclaimed the year 2009 as the year for renewal and innovation in OIC Member States**, and invited ISESCO and the competent parties in the Member States to organize activities and programmes to celebrate this event, especially via youth competitions and olympics in science, technology and innovation. It also welcomed cooperation between

ISESCO and ICYF-DC aimed at engaging youth of the Member States into joint education in common cultural heritage and disseminating historical truths on the "Humanitarian catastrophes in the OIC Countries" in a special publishing series, in particular the first Arabic publication on the mass massacre by Armenian forces of Azerbaijani civilians in the town of Khojaly. Besides, it commended the results of the OIC Inter-governmental meeting of experts organized by ICYF-DC and ISESCO in May 2008 in Istanbul in particular Joint Action Plan, and the international campaign "Justice for Khojaly" as its priority for 2009-2012 to be implemented in the Member States. Moreover, the Conference welcomed the establishment of the Memorial Day for Commemoration of Humanitarian Catastrophes of Muslim Communities throughout the XX century. In the same vein, it recommended the inclusion of the relevant information on massacres against Muslim communities into higher education history textbooks in the Member States. Likewise, it called for including into the curricula of higher education institutions in the Member States a special subject on the issue of the Memorial Day. It also requested ISESCO and ICYF-DC to provide the Member States with relevant basic materials on the subject, urging the Member States and the OIC institutions, in their turn, to actively participate and contribute toward implementation of the Memorial Day Commemoration programs and campaigns.

The conference urged the Member States to foster their cooperation in order to implement the OIC Ten-Year Programme of Action and to provide the facilities necessary for the implementation of the relevant programmes and activities, with a view to implementing the Vision 1441 and earmarking financial resources to that end.

The conference invited the Director General to present a report on ISESCO's efforts in the field of higher education, scientific research and technology to the next session of the conference.

**12. The conference also adopted Transforming Economies into Knowledge based in the Islamic Countries**, while taking into account the observations made by the conference members. In the same vein, the conference called upon the Member States to channel economic mechanisms and production means into the knowledge base and to strengthen the scientific and scholarly foundations of development structures in general. It also urged universities, scientific research centres, specialized scientific bodies, the private sector and the donors to develop partnership and cooperation in order to exchange expertise and activate the knowledge dimensions in the economic fields.

- 13. The conference further adopted the draft document on the Islamic Area of Higher Education.** It entrusted the Director General with preparing the project of technical and legal mechanisms for the Islamic Area of Higher Education and presenting it to the forthcoming Conference. Similarly, the conference urged the official parties in the Member States as well as the relevant universities and research institutions and interested international and regional bodies to cooperate with ISESCO and the FUIW in implementing this pioneering project, inviting the Director General to present the subject to the forthcoming session of the Conference.
- 14.** Having heard the presentation made by the OIC Assistant Secretary General for Science and Technology on the Draft Document on Ranking of the Universities of the Islamic World as well as the clarifications presented by the OIC Director General for Science and Technology, the Heads of Delegation pointed out that they had not received this document, being as they are the parties duly authorized to examine and to decide upon its contents and implementation mechanisms, while stressing the necessity to adopt the projects, plans and strategies pertaining to the issues of higher education, scientific research, technology, renewal and innovation by the Conference before referring them to the other OIC Islamic conferences. Considering the deliberations that took place concerning the document, **the Heads of Delegation decided to refer the draft document on the Ranking of the Universities of the Islamic World to the Member States' ministers of higher education and scientific research to further examine it and give their opinions thereon,** and forward their observations to OIC and ISESCO in order to prepare the document in its version amended by the Member States, examine it by the current committee and put it forward to the fifth session of the Islamic Conference of the Ministers of Higher Education and Scientific Research to take the appropriate decision thereon. Likewise, it invited the Director General of ISESCO to present periodic reports on the subject to the relevant OIC conferences.
- 15. Having heard the presentation made by the OIC Assistant Secretary General and the representatives of partner bodies in the implementation of the project, the conference commended the launching of the project on "Atlas of Islamic World Innovation",** which envisages to map trends of science, technology and innovation across the OIC Member States, through conducting landmark studies, to explore relationship between science, technology, innovation, faith, culture and politics and to make scientific development process more visible for decision and policy makers as well as government sector allowing them to take effective measures for promotion of science, technology and innovation. The conference requested the project

Management Team as well as Project Steering Group to continue their efforts and closely follow up progress under the various phases of the project, keeping in view project methodologies and recommended the Advisory/Peer Review Group to involve all concerned in conducting studies and surveys, including key institutions like universities, government agencies, research centres, think tanks, non-government organizations, private businesses, science parks, entrepreneurial agencies, charities etc. so as to assess all available data and information required for the study.

Likewise, the conference urged the Member States to identify the National Research Partner preferably an institution that is a recognized or emerging centre of excellence with good links to government, industry, academia and the private sector, civil society as well as the research community. It also recommended the National Research Partner to work closely with ISESCO, the OIC and the EU research team to produce a comprehensive, rigorous and independent study of the science and innovation capacity of the country, as well as opportunities and barriers to further progress and help the research team in identifying institutions and individuals who may be able to assist with the research process.

The conference lauded the cooperation and collaboration existing between the OIC, ISESCO, COMSTECH, the IDB, SESRIC, the Royal Society in Britain, Nature magazine, the British Council, the CDTI and DEMOS association, and urged other Islamic organizations as well as European, international, regional and national organizations to support the project both financially and technically in implementation of the project.

**16. The conference likewise adopted the modes and functions of the Islamic Citation Centre** (ISC) which provides access to current and retrospective scientometrics and bibliographic database as well as citation indexing and analysis covering scientific journals from the Member States, including journals in their national languages along with indexing service the Science Citation Index. The Conference also expressed its appreciation of the efforts exerted by ISESCO towards the creation of the Islamic Citation Centre for the Member States, and stressed the need to ensure success for ISC through appropriate networking and supplementing the international systems like ISI in order to make it an important component in the similar efforts deployed at the international level.

In addition, it recommended the Member States to encourage scientific research projections, and internationalize their scientific publications in international, regional and national languages through coordination with the Islamic Citation Centre with a view to updating the quality of their journals in the same way as

Scopus, ISI and Google Scholar and gaining better recognition to their research performances. It also urged the Science Citation Centre to produce an online version of citation index covering the leading journals of science and technology in the Islamic world and make them available online through the Web of Science database, and to facilitate citation based research and evaluation, visualization of scholarly work, availability of accurate and qualitative information for policy makers in order to monitor research performances and scientific development.

**17. Furthermore, the Conference adopted the revised version of the Strategy for Science, Technology and Innovation in Islamic Countries and its Implementation Mechanisms.** It also underlined the necessity to observe the previous resolutions of the relevant OIC Conferences providing for the non-establishment of new OIC-affiliated organs, in order to avoid duplication and duality, as well as waste of money and squandered visions, particularly in the field of science, technology and innovation. It reaffirmed ISESCO's commissioning by the Islamic Summit Conference with the implementation of the Strategy for Science, Technology and Innovation in Islamic Countries and other strategies related to these fields, as it is the organization specialized in the areas of science, technology and innovation for the OIC Member States.

Moreover, the Conference invited the Director General of ISESCO to prepare, in cooperation with concerned and interested organizations and bodies, as part of the Organization's action plans and within the limits of available resources, executive programmes and field projects in the light of the Strategy, while urging the competent parties in the Member States as well as university federations and Arab, Islamic and international organizations and bodies to cooperate with ISESCO in funding and implementing activities, programmes and projects concerned with science, technology and innovation. The Conference further invited the Member States to draw on the contents and guidelines of the Strategy when preparing and implementing the national plans and strategies pertaining to the promotion of higher education and scientific research, while taking into consideration the States' needs and priorities.

Besides, it stressed the importance of highlighting the Islamic perspective on education and scientific research, particularly the fundamental values and ideals underlying the edification of the individual and society as well as ethics in scientific and technological applications and their social, cultural and economic implications.

**18. The Conference also adopted the draft proposal for the creation of the Network of Women Scientists in OIC Member States.** In addition, it invited the Director General of ISESCO to prepare the technical and legal mechanisms

of the project of the creation of the Network of Women Scientists in the OIC Member States. It further invited the competent parties in the Member States as well as regional and international organizations to support the activities of the Network and to further women scientists' role within scientific circles and specialized research institutions. It also commended the efforts of the Consultative Council to initiate this project.

**19. Moreover, the Conference adopted the report of the Director General of ISESCO, Secretary General of the Federation of the Universities of the Islamic World, on the implementation of the activities of the Federation's General Secretariat as contained in the Document.**

It also invited the Secretary General of the Federation to pursue his efforts to expand the fields of cooperation and partnership with parallel federations as well as specialized international, Islamic and Arab institutions, within the framework of programmes' implementation. Besides, it extended its thanks to the International Federation of Universities, the Federation of Arab Universities and the Federation of African Universities for cooperating with the Federation of the Universities of the Islamic World in implementing joint activities, while inviting them to continue and develop this cooperation. Besides, it commended the efforts deployed by the Secretary General of the Federation and his assistants to develop the action of the Federation, increase the number of member Universities and implement the Federation's activities. It equally invited the universities and higher institutes which haven't joined the Federation yet to do so, and urged member Universities to actively contribute to the Federation's activities, programmes and projects and to settle their contributions and arrears.

**20. Then, the Conference elected the members of the Consultative Council for the Implementation of the Strategy for Science, Technology and Innovation in Islamic Countries,** from the following countries:

- **Republic of Azerbaijan:** chairman of the fourth session of the conference;
- **The Arab region:**
  - Tunisian Republic
  - Sultanate of Oman
  - Republic of Yemen
- **The Asian region:**
  - Islamic Republic of Pakistan
  - Sultanate of Brunei Darussalam
  - Republic of Kyrgyzstan

- **The African region:**

- Republic of Burkina Faso
- Republic of Sierra Leone
- Republic of Niger

It also decided that the OIC General Secretariat, the Islamic Development Bank and COMSTECH should be members of this Council and that ISESCO be entrusted with the General Secretariat of the Council. The conference invited the Member States to nominate their representatives to the Council and to bear their travel costs to attend the Council meetings. It further invited Member States submitting scientific projects to the Council to attend the Council's meetings as observers, at their own expense.

- 21.** The conference, following the kind offer made by Malaysia to play host to its forthcoming session, decided to hold its fifth session in Malaysia, in the second half of October 2010. It invited ISESCO, in its capacity as the party in charge of the organization of the session of the Islamic Conference of the Ministers of Higher Education and Scientific Research, to ensure coordination with the competent parties in Malaysia in order to take the necessary arrangements for the convening of the conference.
- 22.** At the close of its proceedings, the conference members expressed their thanks to the President, government and people of the Republic of Azerbaijan for playing host to this conference, for their lavish hospitality and warm reception and for the facilities and support extended by the Ministry of Education in Azerbaijan in order to convene the Conference in the best conditions and to ensure its success. The conference decided to address a message of thanks and gratitude to His Excellency Mr Ilham Aliyev, President of the Republic of Azerbaijan.
- 23.** At the opening of the closing session, the conference decided to adopt its draft final report. Afterwards, His Excellency Dr Misir Merdanov, the Minister of Education in the Republic of Azerbaijan, addressed the conference. Then Dr Abdulaziz Othman Altwajri, in his turn, took the floor and lauded the conference, expressing his satisfaction with the great success achieved by the conference through the very important resolutions it came up with.

The conference closed its proceedings with an address by His Excellency Dr Misir Merdanov, the Minister of Education in the Republic of Azerbaijan, who thanked the conference members for their outstanding performance and reaffirmed his full readiness to discharge his responsibility and carry on the implementation of the conference resolutions in coordination with ISESCO.

At the end of the closing session, a message of thanks and appreciation addressed to His Excellency Mr Ilham Aliyev, the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan, was read out.