

**Third Coordination Meeting of Heads of Delegation
of the Organization of the Islamic Conference's Member States
to the 30th General Conference of UNESCO
(Paris, 27 October 1999)
Hall X, UNESCO Headquarters**

Working Document

Introduction :

The substantial and rapid changes taking place in the world today require on our part, more than any time past, to promote our personal capabilities and exert every effort to control technology and harness it to serve the present and future interests of Muslim peoples. It must be underscored, nonetheless, that any development effort should be built on sound planning and be conducted in consonance with the perennial values of our Islamic civilization.

The Islamic Organization -ISESCO- opened, in the meantime, new vistas and developed novel and viable means to achieve its objectives, in addition to promoting strong cooperation relations with parallel organizations. Those cooperation ties resulted in substantial qualitative and quantitative evolution of the Organization's activities, consolidating thereby the credibility of the Organization and widening the purview of its action at both regional and world levels. The number of cooperation agreements linking the Islamic Organization with parallel regional and international organizations and institutions thus rose to one hundred (100) (See list in annex 5).

The benefits of the cooperation action undertaken by the Islamic Organization are not only reckoned in terms of financial benefits, but also in terms of the quality achieved by the Organization's programmes and projects, owing to fruitful contacts with parallel international organizations and the exchange of expertise. Cooperation action also spread far and wide the renown of the Organization on the Arab, Islamic and International arenas. Further still, cooperation action was instrumental in strengthening the distinct participation of the Organization in international conferences and meetings. In this connection, the Islamic Organization cosponsored several regional and international conferences, most important of which are: the *Intergovernmental Conference on Cultural Policies* (Stockholm, April 1998), the *World Conference on Higher Education* (Paris, October 1998), the *World Conference on Technical and Vocational Education* (Seoul, April 1999), the *World Conference on Science* (Hungary, 1999). The Organization is currently preparing, along with UNESCO, the *Itinerant Arab-Islamic Scientific and Technological Fair* (Granada, 2000) (See folder and introductory note in annex 4).

The success met by the Organization added to its responsibilities and engaged its enterprise in new international horizons. The programmes under the action plans are now most geared towards disseminating just peace and comprehensive security for all of humanity, achieving social and economic progress and fighting illiteracy, poverty and racial discrimination. Indeed, the flourish of any culture is commensurate with the standard of economic advancement and political stability achieved by its people. That is why ISESCO has placed special emphasis on programmes conducive to a better command of modern science and technology, the aim being to move the Islamic world to an advanced stage of knowledge production, instead of mere knowledge consumption.

If industrial development remained, up until recently, dependent on availability of huge natural resources, it has, now, become more and more accessible, owing to the novel technologies generated by the tremendous development of modern science. Any people may now take the lead in development, provided they take proper advantage of the scientific and technical developments and secure adequate education. We, as a nation, are, therefore, duty-bound to capitalize on the intelligence and competencies of our human resources, male and female, and lead them to self-reliance in a world governed by interests and macro-economic groupings.

On account of the developments and changes taking place on the world arena, ISESCO is intent on gearing its future efforts towards further progress and development, by giving new impetus to multilateral cooperation with regional and international institutions. In this connection, the Islamic Organization will promote even further its cooperation with those organizations and will spare no effort to knit new cooperation ties and conclude new cooperation agreements with other organizations, especially the Funds, Programmes and Agencies of the United Nations and Islamic Conference systems, and many other international, regional, governmental and non-governmental organizations, regional development banks and private and public funding institutions.

It is worthwhile mentioning that the forthcoming Action Plan (2001-2003) is a distinct plan, characterized by its viability in terms of rationality, sound planning and fair geographical distribution, within the framework of Islamic brotherhood and solidarity. Further still, the prospective Plan is geared to promote joint Islamic action as well as cooperation with international bodies sharing common objectives with ISESCO. The purpose is to rationalize expenditure, coordinate action, secure fruitful exchange among the Muslim peoples, on the one hand, and between Muslims and the rest of world peoples and nations, on the other, and introduce a new development component in its new programmes.

It is, indeed, a matter of satisfaction that the Organization should take the lead in incorporating such advanced programmes into its forthcoming Action Plan (2001-2003) as education for development, democracy and human rights, disseminating peace culture, and harnessing scientific and technological progress for the benefit of mankind. In so doing, the Organization gave proof of its readiness to share the concerns of the international community as they are reflected in the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization's draft action plan for the years 2000-2001. Consonance between the international organization -UNESCO- and the Islamic organization -ISESCO- is much more perceptible when we compare major programmes under the 1998-2000 Action Plan of ISESCO and the draft action plan of UNESCO for the years 2000-2001. Four main axes could be identified in this connection:

I- Liflong education for all

Action under this common field is intended to renovate the educational systems of the Islamic Member States to allow them to secure education for all, promote literacy programmes and curricula and develop their basic education strategies to benefit maximum people, especially children, women, girls, adults and some other disadvantaged social categories. The axis is also involved in enhancing the quality and performance of education, in terms of continuous education, at all levels, whether secondary, vocational or higher education. Further still, the axis focuses on training trainers in different fields, funding education, promoting educational planning and highlighting such educational issues as international education, environment, health and population education, human rights and

democracy programmes, educational research, scientific and technological education, executive staff training, consolidating the position of trainers, benefiting from ongoing cultural development in this area, and assisting Member States in developing their educational strategies to allow them to be innovative in their educational activities, especially in the field of higher education to enable universities to discharge their distinct mission in promoting society and achieving comprehensive development.

II- Harnessing science for development

Action under this joint axis is aimed at inducing progress and transfer of scientific and technical knowledge for the benefit of development, promoting scientific and technical education, developing curricula, enhancing skills of scientific manpower, taking advantage of scientific, technological and industrial development, supplying technical and material assistance to help develop higher education in the field of experimental and applied sciences and gear education, academic institutions and university research to fulfill societal needs, fostering linkage among academic institutions in the fields of scientific and technical data collection and publication and the preservation of environment and natural resources, developing scientific capabilities of the Member States, in addition to promoting the programmes on social sciences and addressing scientific issues having ethical and religious implications. Furthermore, the axis focuses on utilization of novel and renewable energy resources, management of natural resources and fisheries, study of natural phenomena, utilization of technology for the benefit of production and human resource management. It, likewise, addresses the mutations taking place within the modern societies, especially the changes related to scientific and technological progress on the eve of the 21st century.

III- Cultural development: heritage and innovation

The Islamic Organization will endeavour to conduct action under this joint field on implementation of the *Cultural Strategy for the Islamic World* through the implementation mechanisms adopted by the Second Islamic Conference of Culture Ministers held in Rabat, in November 1998. Its cooperation with UNESCO will cover the following areas: securing cultural interaction among the Member States, safeguarding and revivifying heritage, promoting culture and highlighting its role in development, exchanging expertise in the field of cultural policies for development, encouraging artistic innovation, book and cultural industries and handicraft, promoting dialogue and understanding between Islam and the rest of world civilizations, cultures and revealed religions. Besides, cooperation between the two organizations will focus on protection of copyright and intellectual property, edification of a peace culture based on respect for human rights and basic freedoms, fight against all forms of discrimination, defence of the principles of justice, solidarity, tolerance and understanding, protection of women, youth and children rights, and highlighting their important role within the society at large.

IV- Communication and informatics for all

This joint axis focuses on setting up communication and informatics structures, harnessing communication for the benefit of culture dissemination, training of specialized executives in the field of audio-visual and written press, promoting human resources in this area to maximise benefit, by the largest possible public, from modern communication technologies, supplying technical and material assistance to communication institutions and supporting the free data circulation. Programmes under this axis will also address the challenges posed by the information society, information super highways and Internet, stress the crucial educational and cultural role of these information means and highlight the importance of their sound exploitation for the advantage of international cooperation. Emphasis will also be placed, in this domain, on enhancing the capabilities of the Member States, especially the least developed and the disadvantaged ones.

Furthermore, the programmes will stress the novel role played by libraries and manuscripts and will set up such plans and structures as would help promote information and documentation in the Member States. Skills of staff involved in this area will be improved and necessary updated equipment and techniques will be supplied.

In short, these are the main challenges lying ahead at present. We should, therefore, brace up to those challenges and redress the enormous shortcomings of our educational, cultural and cultural institutions. One possible way is to boost cooperation with specialized international and regional organizations, on the forefront of which is the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization -UNESCO-.

Within the same framework, and as part of ISESCO's keen interest to carry on cooperation relations with UNESCO, and in order to avoid duplication of efforts and waste of energy upon setting up action plans and implementing programmes, and, further, in consideration of the distinct presence of the international and Islamic organizations on the international scene in their common areas of action, in view of their humane and civilizational mission and the convergence of their objectives which necessitate consultation and exchange of expertise, views and information to help promote comprehensive development in the Islamic world, in the light of the large success met by the two organizations in implementing joint cooperation programmes as set up by the Second 1997 Coordination Meeting and the Joint 1998-1999 Cooperation Programme signed on 1st November 1998 at UNESCO headquarters, in Paris, by the Directors General of the two organizations, whose budget totalled more than US\$ 2,000.000 (see copy of agreement in annex 2) and the majority of activities were carried through (see status of activity implementation), and lastly, in response to requests by a number of ministers of higher education in the OIC Member States, ISESCO convened the present third coordination meeting, which has, now, become a tradition so much dear to us that we will carry on with it on the occasion of the forthcoming conferences of UNESCO, God willing. During the coordination meeting, the main common fields, axes and programmes between ISESCO and UNESCO will be identified. The stance vis-à-vis major issues addressed by the Conference will be consulted together.

In pursuit of the foregoing, the Islamic Organization is honoured to submit to the honourable heads of delegation of OIC Member States the present working document which sets out the objectives and purposes of the meeting, evaluates joint cooperation activities between the two organizations in recent years, and identifies the main axes and programmes of common interest to both organizations, falling within the scope of OIC Member States' priorities, and contained in ISESCO Three-Year Action Plan 1998-2000 and UNESCO Draft Action Plan (2000-2001) so that they be examined and prepared for adoption when UNESCO

Draft Plan will be considered by the 30th General Conference (see joint action fields in annex).

ISESCO Director General hopes the meeting will be devoted to coordinating stances with respect to the main issues that would give new impetus to joint Islamic action, such as the illegal resolution taken by the International Federation of Library Associations on convening the Sixty Sixth General Conference in the year 2000 in the occupied city of Al-Quds. It is worthwhile mentioning that the Islamic Organization made the necessary steps and contacted the Secretary General of the Federation and the Member States with a view to having the resolution cancelled, especially that it contradicts with the international legality and the relevant United Nations resolutions (see annex 6). Furthermore, the meeting will also be an opportunity for coordinating stances among the Member States in connection with a number of questions raised at the General Conference.

The attendance of Their Excellencies the heads of delegation of OIC Member States in this coordination meeting testifies to the importance assigned by the Muslim countries to education, science, culture and communication, and, above all, to their Islamic Organization which spares no effort to promote coordination of action in these fields for the general well-being of the Muslim countries.

May Allah grant us success

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