



First Meeting of the Islamic Heritage Committee

The Final Report

ISESCO Permanent Headquarters, Rabat, Kingdom of Morocco:

15-16 September 2010

On the invitation of ISESCO, the Islamic Heritage Committee held its first meeting at ISESCO on 15-16 September 2010 to discuss the Committee's working means, functions, action mechanisms, rules of procedure and other material that best enable it to accomplish its mission and meet Member States' needs to preserve the time-honoured Islamic cultural and civilizational heritage.

The meeting was attended by the representatives of the states that are members of the Islamic Heritage Committee: namely, the Arab Republic of Egypt, the Tunisian Republic, the Republic of Senegal, the Republic of Niger and Malaysia. The representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran was absent.

The Committee opened its first meeting on Wednesday 15 September with recitation of verses of the Holy Koran. Following was the address of ISESCO Director General Dr Abdulaziz Othman Altwaijri, which was read out on his behalf by Deputy Director General Dr Hadi Azizzadeh. The Director General welcomed the Committee's members and thanked them for cooperating with the General Directorate to facilitate the Committee's work. He also stressed the Committee's crucial role as a means of preserving the Islamic Ummah's heritage and civilizational landmarks, and a key element in the action led by ISESCO to safeguard and showcase the Islamic heritage to secure a prominent position on the World Heritage List. Dr Altwaijri also said he is confident that the Committee will accomplish its great mission and attain its objectives of preserving cultural sites and property across Islamic member states. The Committee's mandate, the Director General pointed out, consists among other things in undertaking restoration and maintenance works, assessing the present status of Islamic heritage, and making an inventory of endangered archaeological, historical, cultural and religious sites. He went on to explain that the documents presented to the Committee's first meeting serve as groundwork for action, and set out priorities and objectives as well as the working mechanisms to attain them. At the close of his address, the Director General invited the Committee's members to coordinate with ISESCO's General Directorate and present their views and proposals to translate into action those key documents to achieve the sought goals.

During the procedural session, the Committee's Bureau was composed as follows:

- Chairperson: Dr. Mourad Ramaah, from Tunisian Republic.

- Two Vice-Chairpersons: Dr. A Ghafar Bin Ahmed, from Malaysia and Mrs. Ramatoulaye Niang, from the Republic of Senegal,.
- Rapporteur: Dr. Gihaan Zaki, from Arab Republic of Egypt.

The Committee's members also adopted the meeting's programme.

During the working sessions, the background document was presented and examined as part of the Committee's scope of action. The following remarks and proposals were made before the document was adopted.

- Stressing the preservation of cultural property in all member states with endangered heritage.
- Extending scope of action for the Committee to include documentation of Islamic heritage in non-Islamic member states.
- Enhancing coordination, complementariness and exchange of expertise between the member states in the area of cultural property maintenance.
- Raising awareness about the importance of Islamic heritage through documentary books and permanent and temporary exhibitions.
- Focusing efforts on preparing national regulations and legislation to restrain random excavations and illegal trafficking of cultural property.
- Paying further attention to protecting and promoting **intangible** and natural heritage.

Afterwards, the meeting reviewed the draft Rules of Procedure of the Islamic Heritage Committee and the draft form for inscription of archeological sites in the member states. During discussions, the Committee's members made the following observations:

- To introduce the required amendments to the first article of the Rules of Procedure, concerning incorporation of the definition given by the relevant international conventions and laws to cultural heritage.
- Amending the item relating to the travel expenses of the Committee's members, and inviting ISESCO to bear the travel and accommodation expenses of those members during the convening of periodic meetings.
- Setting criteria and standards for the inscription of archaeological sites, as well as historical and religious landmarks on the Islamic Heritage List.

At the close of its meeting, the Islamic Heritage Committee adopted the following documents:

1. The background document as part of the missions of the Islamic Heritage Committee.
2. The Rules of Procedure of the Islamic Heritage Committee.
3. The form for the inscription of archeological sites in the member states.

Likewise, the Committee recommended the following:

- To stress the importance of drawing up the Islamic Heritage List and the List of Endangered Heritage.
- To invite ISESCO to step up its efforts aimed at highlighting Islamic heritage in the member states.
- To urge the member states to cooperate with the Islamic Heritage Committee in the protection of endangered civilizational heritage to enable the Committee to undertake its mission in the best conditions; and to invite officials in Archaeology departments, directorates and bodies to cooperate with the Islamic Heritage Committee in the inscription of heritage sites on the Islamic Heritage List.
- To invite the member states to raise the budget allocated to the preservation of heritage and consider new ways for securing additional funds.
- To invite rich member states to help poor ones in the documentation of their civilizational heritage and its inscription on the Islamic Heritage List.
- To stress the importance of cooperation and coordination between ISESCO and the Islamic Heritage Committee by making proposals and visions on the ways to preserve Islamic heritage as part of ISESCO's action plans.
- To invite the member states hosting festivities of Arab and Islamic culture capitals to actively engage the Islamic Heritage Committee in these festivities.
- To laud ISESCO's efforts to preserve and protect heritage in the member states, by ensuring implementation of the Committee's missions; and to call upon ISESCO to carry on these efforts as part of the Islamic joint action to preserve the Islamic identity.
- To extend thanks to the Arab Republic of Egypt for offering to host the second meeting of the Islamic Heritage Committee, in Cairo, at a date which will be decided later.

- To express thanks and appreciation to His Excellency Dr Abdulaziz Othman Altwaijri, the Director General of the Islamic Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, for his outstanding efforts to set up the Islamic Heritage Committee and for his leading role in the preservation of Islamic civilizational heritage in the member states.