



First Forum of the Heads of Islamic Cultural Centres and Associations for Muslims outside the Islamic World

ISESCO Headquarters, Rabat, 9-10 November 2010

Final Communiqué

As part of implementation of its three-year action plan for 2010-2012, notably in relation to promoting joint Islamic action for Muslims outside the Islamic world, and in accordance with the recommendations of the eighth meeting of the Heads of Islamic Cultural Centres and Associations in Latin America and the Caribbean (Paraguay, 27-29 July 2009), and the seventh meeting of the Heads of Islamic Cultural Centres and Associations in Asia and the Pacific (Australia, 4-6 November 2009), the Islamic Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (ISESCO), in association with the Ministry of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs of the State of Kuwait, held the First Forum of the Heads of Islamic Cultural Centres and Associations for Muslims outside the Islamic World, from 9 through 10 November 2010 at its headquarters in Rabat, Kingdom of Morocco. The Forum, presided over by ISESCO Director General Dr Abdulaziz Othman Altwaijri, saw the participation of the heads of cultural centres and Islamic associations in the USA, Australia, New Zealand, India, Myanmar, Philippines, Papua New Guinea, Singapore, Fiji Islands, Mozambique, South Africa, Tanzania, Malawi, Mexico, Guatemala, Guyana, Argentina, Venezuela, Chili, Peru, Paraguay, Costa Rica, Colombia, Ecuador, Italy, Albania, United Kingdom, Spain, Switzerland, France, Russia and Spain. Also in attendance were the representative of Kuwait's Ministry of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs and the representative of the Secretary General of the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC).

The Forum's opening ceremony was also attended by the members of the diplomatic corps accredited in Rabat, the delegations of regional and international organizations and bodies, politicians, intellectuals and representatives of various media outlets.

Speaking at the Forum's opening ceremony, which commenced with recitation of verses from the Holy Qur'an, Dr Abdulaziz Othman Altwaijri welcomed the heads of Islamic cultural centres and associations for Muslims outside the Islamic world. He thanked them for accepting ISESCO's invitation to the Forum, and expressed appreciation for their activities and programmes in the implementation of the Strategy for Islamic Cultural Action outside the Islamic World. He also thanked the Ministry of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs of Kuwait for fully cooperating to implement the Strategy for Islamic Cultural Action for Muslims outside the Islamic World.

ISESCO Director General also described as timely the convening of this Forum at this critical moment of world history, and considered it a contributory element in confirming Islam's status in the world. He also called for increased efforts to counter Islamophobia and better respond to the incessant needs of Muslims outside the Islamic world in the areas of education, culture and information.

Also speaking at the Forum's opening ceremony was Dr Walid Abdulaziz Al-Ammar, the representative of the Ministry of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs of Kuwait. He expressed his joy at participating in this Forum and satisfaction with the level of cooperation between ISESCO and the Ministry on implementing the programmes of the Strategy for Islamic Cultural Action for Muslims outside the Islamic World.

For his part, Dr Mohamed Yahya Pallavicini, President of the Supreme Council for Education, Culture and Science for Muslims outside the Islamic World, described as outstanding ISESCO Director General's efforts to promote Islamic cultural action in the interest of Muslims outside the Islamic world, and foster dialogue and peaceful coexistence between peoples. He also stressed the commitment of the members of the Supreme Council for Education, Science and Culture outside the Islamic World to pursuing efforts to materialize the Council's objectives.

At the conclusion of the opening ceremony, ISESCO signed two cooperation agreements with the Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR) and the Arab Information and Resource Centre (AIRC), both based in Washington. Also significant, Mr Iqbal Mohamed Adam Patel, president of the Australian Federation of Islamic Councils (AFIC), presented ISESCO Director General with the Federation's Shield in appreciation of his efforts to enhance educational and cultural conditions of Muslims outside the Islamic world.

During the Forum's work sessions, the President of the Supreme Council for Education, Science and Culture briefed the participants on the outcome of the Council's 11th session, which took place at ISESCO headquarters on 8 November 2010. For their part, the coordinators of the Strategy for Islamic Cultural Action in Europe, Latin America and the Caribbean, Southeast Asia and the Pacific presented progress reports on the implementation of the Strategy's plan of action.

Also introduced, during the Forum's work sessions, were the experiences of institutions active in the field of Islamic cultural action outside the Islamic world, such as the Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR), the Arab Information and Resource Centre (AIRC), both based in Washington, and the Australian Federation of Islamic Councils. The participants also talked about Muslim conditions in the countries they each represent.

Over two days of intensive work, the participants discussed all the items put on the Forum's agenda and made the following decisions:

1. Adopting ISESCO Report on its Activities and Programmes under the Strategy for Islamic Cultural Action for Muslims outside the Islamic World, and calling upon it to carry on efforts in this direction.
2. Adopting the Draft Strategy for Developing Education at Arab Islamic Schools outside the Islamic World; inviting the Islamic cultural centres and associations to draw on this strategy in their effort to foster education at Arab Islamic education schools outside the Islamic world; and calling on ISESCO to prepare applied model curricula for the Strategy and continue conducting training sessions for teachers of Islamic Arab schools, in cooperation and coordination with the Islamic cultural centres and associations outside the Islamic world.
3. Approving the Draft Broad Lines of the Guide for Imams and Religious Preachers outside the Islamic World, and inviting ISESCO to put it into its final form and distribute it to Islamic cultural centres and institutions outside the Islamic world, as well as conduct training sessions to this end in the interest of women religious counselors.
4. Adopting ISESCO Draft Programme to Qualify Journalists at Islamic Media Institutions in the West to Counter Media Distortions of Islam and Islamic Civilization, and inviting ISESCO to pursue its implementation, jointly with

relevant Islamic cultural centres and associations, and in coordination with media professionals' training institutions inside and outside the Islamic world.

And in its recommendations, the Forum:

1. Commended ISESCO both for its effort to effectively address the issues of concern to the Muslim Ummah inside and outside the Islamic world, and for its active involvement in the international conferences and symposia held jointly with regional and international partners in celebration of the International Year of Youth and the United Nations Year of Rapprochement of Cultures.
2. Thanked ISESCO and Kuwait's Ministry of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs for their cooperation and support for the Islamic cultural centres and associations outside the Islamic world, as well as for contributing to the convening of the scientific symposium on the "Arabic Alphabet in Balkans" in Tirana, Albania, the publication of an internationally academic study on Islam's view on major issues raised by modern science, in 2011, in collaboration with the Astronomical Observatory of Lyon, France, as well as to the launch of the Ghazali Project on the Revivification of Religious Sciences, on the occasion of the 900th anniversary of the death of one of Islam's revered religious figures, and the Conference of Muslim Women in the West.
3. Urged Arab Islamic schools outside the Islamic world to adopt the educational, cultural vision outlined in the Draft Strategy to Promote Education at Arab Islamic schools outside the Islamic world.
4. Commended the holding of Imam training sessions on the values of dialogue, moderation and middle stance, jointly between ISESCO and Kuwait's Ministry of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs, and invited ISESCO and the Ministry to establish an institute for Imam training in Europe in association with relevant associations and institutions, as part of the programme to train Imams and religious preachers on the values of dialogue, moderation and middle stance and renewing the Islamic discourse outside the Islamic world.
5. Called on Islamic institutions and bodies concerned with dispatching Imams for Muslims outside the Islamic world to adopt the visionary approach of the Draft Broad Lines of the Guide for Imams and Religious Preachers outside the Islamic World.

- 6.** Commended the strategic direction taken by ISESCO to conduct activities and programmes for women, the youth and civil society outside the Islamic world, as part of the International Year of the Youth and the UN Year of Rapprochement of Cultures, and highly appreciated the proposals of the Council's sub-committees, notably as regards activities and programmes to better qualify women and the youth and fully engage the civil society.
- 7.** Invited ISESCO to set up a media training centre, in coordination with Avicenna Institute for Humanities, the Higher School of Journalism of Lille in France and La Haye Global University for Journalism and Media, with the view to host annual training sessions to upgrade the professional skills of staff serving at Islamic media institutions in the West in using modern communication technologies to counter smear campaigns against Islam and Muslims in Europe.
- 8.** Stressed the necessity of conducting training sessions for journalists serving at Islamic media institutions outside the Islamic world on how to better benefit from the education programme on dispelling the stereotypical image of Islam at media outlets, which ISESCO has launched as part of follow-up of the general framework to refute media distortions of Islam and Islamic Civilization.
- 9.** Invited media institutions across the Islamic world to dedicate programmes and activities in wide-spread languages to introduce the educational, cultural and human right issues of Muslims outside the Islamic world.
- 10.** Welcomed the establishment, at Lille-based Ibn Sina Institute for Humanities, of ISESCO Training Chair on Dialogue and Redressing Misconceptions about Islam, with due focus given to enlarging its scope to redress stereotypical views of Islam at media outlets, in collaboration with media institutes and colleges outside the Islamic world, and in coordination with the Supreme Council's Media and Public Relations Committee.
- 11.** Praised the experiences of institutions active Islamic cultural action outside the Islamic world, and invited the Islamic cultural centres and associations outside the Islamic world to benefit from such notable experiences as that of the Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR), the Australian Federation of Islamic Councils (AFIC) and the Arab Information and Resource Centre (AIRC).

12. Thanked Granada Editions for joining up with ISESCO in conducting training sessions to teach Arabic as a foreign language, invited the Islamic cultural centres and associations outside the Islamic world to adopt the “Al-Amal” and “Simplified Arabic” textbook series for Muslim children outside the Islamic world, and especially thanked Granada Editions Director for handing out copies of both series to the participants.
13. Expressed thanks to the regional coordinators, in Latin America and the Caribbean, Southeast Asia and the Pacific, and Europe, for cooperating and coordinating with ISESCO General Directorate in the implementation of the Strategy for Islamic Cultural Action outside the Islamic World.
14. Described as highly commendable ISESCO’s initiative to hold the First Forum of the Heads of the Islamic Cultural Centres and Associations outside the Islamic World, in association with Kuwait’s Ministry of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs, at its headquarters in Rabat, Kingdom of Morocco, and called for convening the Forum on a regular basis to better review and assess the outcome of cultural, educational and media action for Muslims outside the Islamic world, and push through consultation and expertise exchange between officials at Islamic cultural centres and associations outside the Islamic world to best respond to the challenges facing the cultural identity of Muslims outside the Islamic world.
15. Thanked the Ministry of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs of Kuwait for its continuous and fruitful support to implement the programmes of the Strategy for Islamic Cultural Action for Muslims outside the Islamic World.
16. Commended the substantive address made by His Excellency President Abdou Diouf, Chairman of the International Organization of the Francophonie, as part of his visit to ISESCO, wherein he highlighted the same values embraced by ISESCO, namely as regards promotion of justice, peace and preservation of human dignity and human development in general.
17. Expressed appreciation for the tireless efforts ISESCO Director General Dr Abdulaziz Othman Altwaijri deploys within the Organization’s spheres of competence, and his good endeavors to promote the cultural, educational and human right conditions of Muslims outside the Islamic World.

Done and unanimously approved on 10 November 2010, at ISESCO Headquarters, Rabat.