Under the high patronage of H.E. Mr Ibrahim Boubacar Keïta, President of the Republic of Mali

Eighth Islamic Conference of Ministers of Higher Education and Scientific Research

“Higher Education: Quality and Suitability”

Bamako Declaration

Bamako, Republic of Mali, 14-15 November 2016

Bamako, Republic of Mali, 14 Safar 1438 A.H / 14 November 2016
Bamako Declaration

We, the heads of delegation of the Member States of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), participating in the Eighth Islamic Conference of Ministers of Higher Education and Scientific Research, held in Bamako, capital of the Republic of Mali, under the high patronage of His Excellency President Ibrahim Boubacar Keïta, on 14 Safar 1438 A.H / 14 November 2016, on the theme “Higher Education: Quality and Suitability”,

In accordance with the declarations and resolutions of the previous sessions of the Islamic Conference of Ministers of Higher Education and Scientific Research, held respectively in Riyadh, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, in 2000; in Tripoli, Libya, in 2003; in Kuwait city, State of Kuwait, in 2006; in Baku, Republic of Azerbaijan, in 2008; and in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, in 2010; in Riyadh, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, in an extraordinary session in 2011, in Khartoum, Republic of the Sudan, in 2012; and in Rabat, Kingdom of Morocco, in 2014;

In continuation of the implementation of the Strategy for Science, Technology and Innovation in the Islamic World, adopted by the Tenth Islamic Summit held in Putrajaya, Malaysia, in October 2003, along with its revised version and implementation mechanisms as approved by the Fourth Islamic Conference of Ministers of Higher Education and Scientific Research, held in Baku, Republic of Azerbaijan, in October 2008; the Strategy for Promotion of Nanotechnology in the Islamic World, adopted by the Fifth Islamic Conference of Ministers of Higher Education and Scientific Research, held in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, in 2010; the Strategy for Development of Biotechnology in the Islamic World, adopted by the Tenth Islamic Summit Conference held in Putrajaya, Malaysia, in 2003; and the Strategy for the Promotion of University Education in the Islamic World, adopted by the Third Islamic Conference of Ministers of Higher Education and Scientific Research, held in Kuwait, 2006;

Appreciating the leading achievements the Islamic Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (ISESCO) has made towards enhancing cooperation and promoting partnership between Member States in education, science, culture and communication and advancing these sectors, within the civilizational reference framework of the Islamic world and in the light of the Islamic universal values and ideals;

Being guided by the OIC-2025 Programme of Action, adopted by the 13th Islamic Summit Conference, held in Istanbul on 14-15 April 2016; and by the OIC Vision 1441 A.H for Science and Technology, adopted by the Tenth Islamic Summit held in Putrajaya, Malaysia in October 2003;
Taking into account the effective role being carried out by the specialized scientific institutions in the fields of science, technology, quality and innovation, and being cognizant of the vital importance of these areas for advancing higher education and scientific research in the Member States;

Being aware of the close bonds existing between the countries and peoples of the Islamic world as epitomized by their civilizational unity cemented by its value system and its spiritual, moral and cultural ideals, and being attentive to achieving common interests at the international level;

Being aware of the multiple and multifaceted challenges of higher education, in particular those of aligning training with the needs of the economy for the integration of young jobseekers into the priority development sectors of the Member States.

Being aware of the major challenges of innovation in the competitive context of the economy, which has reached unprecedented degrees of intensity, thus making innovation a vital necessity.

Being cognizant of the importance of research and innovation as major requirements for meeting the challenges of the present economic and social balances and anticipating those that might emerge in the future, while enabling ISESCO Member States to develop the necessary competitiveness for their economic and social balance.

Having considered the reports and documents submitted to the Eighth Session of the Conference; and

Commending the constructive discussions and deliberations which have taken place throughout the Conference working sessions, and the valuable presentations and comments of the representatives of the Member States and delegates of regional and international organizations;

1. Adopt the speech addressed to this session of the conference by the Conference Patron, H.E. Mr Ibrahim Boubacar Keïta, President of the Republic of Mali, as a reference document of the conference, and call for taking it as a source of guidance and inspiration in addressing relevant issues.

2. Recommend promoting scientific research and strategic studies on sustainable development and major societal challenges preoccupying the peoples of Member States, such as health, demographic growth and well-being; in addition to the bio-economy challenges, including food security; safe, clean and efficient energy; smart, green and integrated transport; countering climate change, efficient use of resources and raw materials, and addressing biodiversity loss.

3. Urge more attention to the industrial sector by strengthening such key technological fields as ICTs, nanotechnology, materials and manufacturing processes, facilitating the creation of financial instruments to support private investment in research and
innovation, particularly loans with their various levels, investment in venture capital; and encourage innovation programmes of small, medium and big businesses.

4. **Recommend** the invigoration of science diplomacy as an efficient mechanism of international joint action for achieving common scientific goals, strengthening dialogue and international cooperation, and consolidating deliberation and negotiation tools to catalyze regional and international collaboration efforts around common issues in IST areas.

5. **Stress** the need for devising common policies, establishing joint institutions and creating mutual networks to encourage scientific research in innovative disciplines and in novel fields in order to advance higher education, scientific research and innovation, in line with Member States’ policies, priorities and needs.

6. **Recommend** increased application of ICTs in teaching and research to ensure enculturation of quality in higher education and bring excellence in innovation and R&D in universities, and **stress** the need to give attention to ICT-based applications like Distance Learning, Learning-Management Systems, or Scoreboards/Dashboards for Innovation and development.

7. **Call on** Member States to pay more attention to the issues of private higher education by supporting and promoting it, while endeavoring to provide effective mechanisms and appropriate systems to ensure quality, accreditation, governance and suitability in this education pattern, and taking interest in aligning its specializations and outputs with society’s developmental needs, in such a way as to entrench its interaction and complementarity with public higher education and strengthen national policies in this connection.

8. **Underline** the importance of addressing the issues of the youth and women in science and the necessity of establishing and invigorating academies and networks in the various areas of science to support these two important social categories and encourage them to pursue their scientific vocations and fulfill their research aspirations, and securing a favorable environment to help them play a vital role in the promotion of scientific knowledge, technology and innovation in the Islamic world.

9. **Call for** increased partnership between specialized organizations and regional bodies concerned with quality assurance in the higher education system in the Member States, particularly in terms of bilateral and multilateral cooperation between university institutions and scientific research centers, and with developed countries’ university institutions pursuing similar goals, the aim being to share expertise and experiences in the main relevant fields, especially in governance, innovation and employability.

10. **Underscore** the importance of boosting growth models based on the knowledge and innovation economy and encouraging entrepreneurship and its related smart initiatives, by enhancing the role of science parks and technopoles, and boosting their potential to stimulate productivity, enhance competitiveness, launch new partnerships and increase interest in the relevant institutions of the private sector.
11. Welcome the installation of the “Integrated Platform for Promoting Quality-Accreditation and Exchange-Cooperation in the Universities of the Islamic World”, urge the Member States and university institutions to support the Platform, and invite the regional and international organizations, along with the specialized institutions concerned, to collaborate on its implementation and contribute to the fulfillment of its goals.

12. Invite specialized institutions and relevant bodies to support the “Islamic World Observatory of Science, Technology and Innovation” in order to contribute to developing a strategic roadmap to boost Member States’ STI capabilities and provide decision and policy makers with the relevant national and global scientific and technological trends and statistical data.

13. Welcome the implementation steps made at the level of the “TAFAHUM” Programme on Exchange of Students, Faculty and Researchers among Universities in the Islamic World; and call for supporting this programme financially and technically, enlarging its geographical range, generalizing its institutional scope, improving its scientific services, and endeavoring to give African universities, in particular, the opportunity to benefit from it and participate in its implementation, like their peers in the Maghreb, as from 2017, in such a way as to develop the human capital, improve university networking and provide job opportunities, in such a way as to develop the capabilities and qualifications of students in the Islamic world.

14. Urge the private sector to increase partnership with higher education and scientific research institutions, step up its support to smart initiatives and innovative projects, and seek the assistance of scientific research centers and applied laboratories for developing production sectors, improving productivity and boost the economic dynamism in the Member States.

15. Recommend increased investment in Innovation & Design Thinking, a new approach to innovation which, by addressing the challenges of technology and marketing simultaneously, becomes a sine qua none for the success and steering of innovative projects in the future, given the growing role of the Design-Thinking-based steering of innovation projects, and thanks to its strategic role in rethinking economic models and societal commitments.

16. Adopt the project on the Establishment of the OIC Collaborative Efforts in Commercialization and Entrepreneurship Education (OIC-CECE), and recommend the adoption of all measures likely to hone entrepreneurship skills of students, researchers, stakeholders, through developing entrepreneurship education curricula and identifying successful models in this field among universities’ research bodies.

17. Stress the need to create the necessary mechanisms and appropriate conditions to stimulate innovation in universities and higher education institutions, call for developing an implementation programme for greater investment, partnership and performance in scientific research commercialization, and easier collaboration between universities and the industrial sector, through the creation of technology licensing
offices and university-owned specialized offices, in consultation and coordination with the competent authorities in the Member States.

18. Urge the Member States to actively participate in the OIC Summit on Science and Technology, to be held in Astana in 2017, which will seek to increase involvement in the consolidation of coordination and cooperation ties between the Member States in STI areas, coordinate the efforts of the OIC-affiliated institutions and promote integration of their resources and capabilities, and thank the Republic of Kazakhstan for having played host to the Summit.

19. Emphasize the growing role of university institutions in promoting peace and security in society, and invite the Member States to harness the knowledge potential of universities for entrenching the values of dialogue and peace and discarding extremism, violence and zealotry, through the creation of specialized academic chairs and adoption of appropriate educational pathways.

20. Invite ISESCO to take the necessary steps towards invigorating the “Scientific Research Fund” that the Conference’s previous session called for establishing, entrusted ISESCO to supervise and to coordinate the implementation of its projects, and invited the Member States and donors to support it and contribute to its budget, in coordination with the OIC General Secretariat and the Conference Chair.

21. Welcome the project to establish the University of Timbuktu, launched by H.E. Mr Ibrahim Boubacar Keïta, President of the Republic of Mali, and invite the Member States as well as regional and international organizations, financing agencies and donors to back this initiative and to financially and technically support this leading civilizational project to ensure its success.

22. Congratulate the winners of this year’s ISESCO Prizes in Science & Technology, and underline the necessity to improve the status of researchers and scientists in society by establishing mechanisms to incentivize them and stimulate interest in science.

23. Endorse the outcome of the Ministerial Roundtable on Modern Technology for Enhancing Higher Education and Scientific Research, held as part of the Conference, on strengthening higher education mainstays consisting in governance, innovation and employability, and call for leveraging them to develop the higher education system and scientific research in the Islamic world.

24. Adopt the new appellation of the Consultative Council for Science, Technology and Innovation in the Islamic World, along with its Rules of Procedure, invite the Member States to support its efforts in its areas of competence, and thank ISESCO for the services and facilitations it provides to the Council to perform its functions.

25. Commend the role the OIC General Secretariat plays in strengthening joint Islamic action, particularly in the fields of science, technology, innovation and higher education, and urge the Member States and specialized organizations to effectively contribute to the efforts being made in these areas, in such a way as to meet challenges at the level of Member States, in particular, and at international level, in general.
26. **Commend** the efforts the ISESCO-affiliated Federation of the Universities of the Islamic World (FUIW) makes towards advancing cooperation between universities in the Member States, **welcome** the Federation’s involvement in the university programmes adopted by the Conference, **invite** the competent parties in the Member States to support the Federation, and **urge** universities in the Member States to join it, contribute to achieving its goals and adhere to its mission.

27. **Express** our great appreciation to His Excellency Dr Abdulaziz Othman Altwaijri, Director General of the Islamic Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (ISESCO), for the efforts he exerts towards advancing scientific research, developing technological capacities, enhancing higher education quality, fostering the principles of peace and solidarity in the Islamic world, and disseminating the values of intercultural dialogue and the alliance of civilizations.

28. **Express** our deep gratitude to His Majesty King Mohammed VI of Morocco, the Seat Country, for the special attention His Majesty pays to joint Islamic action issues, and for the support he extends to ISESCO, which has a great impact on its endeavor to bring its civilizational mission to full fruition.

29. **Express** our deep gratitude to His Excellency Mr Ibrahim Boubacar Keïta, President of the Republic of Mali, for having placed the Conference under his high patronage, as well as for his interest in the issues of higher education and scientific research in Mali, his encouragement of joint Islamic university action and his support to the OIC and ISESCO, and for the services and facilitations provided by the Republic of Mali, represented by the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific research, for the convening of this Conference in the best conditions possible.

Done in Bamako, Republic of Mali, on 14 Safar 1438 / 14 November 2016.