



ADDRESS

OF

H.E. DR. YOUSEF AL-OTHAIMEEN
OIC SECRETARY GENERAL

TO

THE 39TH SESSION OF UNESCO'S
GENERAL CONFERENCE

PARIS, 6 NOVEMBER 2017

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

**Hon. Lady, President of UNESCO's General Conference,
Hon. Lady, UNESCO's General Director
Ladies and Gentlemen**

The Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) attaches particular interest to its cooperation with UNESCO with which we aspire to even greater interrelating in future.

UNESCO's role in today's world has acquired even greater importance than at any time in the past, particularly in the domains of peace-building, cultural heritage protection in conflict zones, ensuring access to qualitative education, empowerment of girls and women and inter-cultural dialogue.

May I here seize the opportunity to congratulate Mrs. Audrey Azoulay on her election to the office of Director General of UNESCO which, I am confident, will inject even more vigour in the

bilateral cooperation between the OIC and UNESCO.

Key among the topics of interest to the OIC is the combat against the phenomena of terrorism and violent extremism along with the tackling of religious and sectarian fanaticism. The OIC has condemned terrorism in all its forms and manifestations, and is in absolute agreement with all civilized nations as to recognizing that terrorism has no religion, no race, no colour and no creed. It is rather a phenomenon that must be combated wherever it may manifest and whatever its source.

In this respect, the OIC has launched its “Voice of Wisdom” project which seeks to stand up to extremist discourse and to spread the concepts of tolerance and moderation. In addition, the OIC seeks to raise awareness among the youth as to the dangers of joining ranks with terrorist groups, and to orient them to what may better benefit their countries and the general public’s interest.

Also, the OIC has adopted a Ten-Year Program extending up to 2025 to face up to the challenges of the contemporary era and work towards the achievement of the OIC’s prospective vision in

terms of commitment to effecting a greater role in peace and security-building and in dispute and conflict prevention and resolution.

In recent years, the world has been through a sharp increase in intentional destruction and illegal trafficking of the cultural heritage in the countries affected by armed conflicts, and the OIC strongly condemns these crimes incited by destructive ideologies. The OIC, on the other hand, applauds UNESCO's call for cultural heritage protection to be included in world programs and in the tasks of the peace-keeping missions, and expresses hereby its readiness to cooperate with UNESCO in the protection of the said targeted Cultural heritage.

On another front, the OIC attaches great importance to science and technology, with its first ever Summit Conference on Science and Technology having been held last September in Kazakhstan, and with the adoption of a special working program up to 2025 for its Organization for Science, Technology and Innovation, around which we hope to cooperate with UNESCO for an optimal execution of its recommendations.

Likewise, the OIC strongly condemns the policies of the Israeli occupation power and its persistent attempts in occupied East Jerusalem to alter and disfigure its demographic layout with a view to isolate it from its authentic Palestinian environment. In this context, the OIC expresses the hope that UNESCO will take the necessary and appropriate steps, within its mandate and responsibility, to ensure the protection and preservation of the historical and cultural heritage of the State of Palestine and to impress upon Israel the need to put an end to its ongoing violations.

We hereby reiterate the imperative need to see to the implementation of all of UNESCO's resolutions and decisions relevant to the occupied Palestinian territories.

In concluding, I would like to offer my best wishes to this meeting for fruitful deliberations that would add value to UNESCO's achievements and worldwide efforts in favour of peace and security and towards justice, equality and peaceful coexistence.

Thank you for your attention.