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Cooperation between the United Nations and regional and other organizations

Cooperation between the United Nations and the Organization of the Islamic Conference

Report of the Secretary-General*

I. Introduction

1. The present report is submitted pursuant to paragraph 12 of General Assembly resolution 55/9 of 30 October 2000.

II. Consultations between representatives of the United Nations and the Organization of the Islamic Conference and representation at meetings

2. At the invitation of the Emir of the State of Qatar, the Secretary-General participated in the ninth session of the Islamic Summit Conference of the States members of the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC), which took place from 12 and 13 November 2000. Qatar assumed the chairmanship of the Islamic Summit Conference for a three-year term, succeeding the Islamic Republic of Iran.

3. On 18 September 2000, the Ministers for Foreign

Affairs of the States members of OIC held their annual coordinating meeting at United Nations Headquarters to discuss the agenda of the General Assembly at its fifty-fifth session. The coordinating meeting reviewed the international political situation, with special emphasis on issues relevant to the States members of OIC, including the Middle East and the question of Palestine, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, the situation in Jammu and Kashmir, the situation in Afghanistan, Somalia, the situation relating to the Nagorny-Karabakh region of Azerbaijan and the consequences of the Iraqi occupation of and aggression against Kuwait.

4. The Secretary-General of OIC took part in the fourth High-level United Nations-Regional Organizations Meeting, which was held at United Nations Headquarters on 6 and 7 February 2001. This meeting was convened to discuss cooperation for peace-building. OIC submitted a working paper to facilitate discussion at the meeting.

5. The twenty-eighth session of the Islamic Conference of Foreign Ministers was held from 25 to 27 June 2001 in Bamako. The Assistant Secretary-General for Political Affairs represented the Secretary-General at the meeting and made a statement on his behalf.

* In accordance with General Assembly resolution 54/248, section C, paragraph 1, the present report was submitted on 24 September so as to include all contributions from the United Nations system.



6. During the period under review, the United Nations and OIC continued their consultations on political matters, especially concerning ongoing peacemaking efforts, which have become an important dimension in the cooperation between the United Nations and OIC.

7. On the issue of the Middle East, OIC designated a ministerial committee, chaired by the Foreign Minister of Qatar and comprising the Foreign Ministers of the Islamic Republic of Iran, Malaysia, Morocco and Senegal, to participate in a meeting of the Security Council on the item entitled “the situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question”, held on 27 November 2000, and to confer with the Secretary-General. On 26 May 2001, OIC convened in Doha an extraordinary meeting of foreign ministers in order to discuss “the grave situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territories”. The Secretary-General was represented by his special envoy, Ambassador Lakhdar Brahimi, who addressed the meeting on his behalf.

8. Ambassador Yuliy Vorontsov, the Secretary-General’s High-level Coordinator on Iraq, appointed pursuant to paragraph 14 of Security Council resolution 1284 (1999), has remained in close contact with OIC. During his mission to the region in March 2001, he visited OIC headquarters in Jiddah, Saudi Arabia, and conferred with OIC Secretary-General Abdelouahed Belkeziz.

9. With regard to the conflict in Afghanistan, both organizations remained in close contact. The Secretary-General’s Personal Representative for Afghanistan also attended the ninth Islamic Summit Conference and took part in a number of the Secretary-General’s bilateral meetings with high-level interlocutors. In New York, the Department of Political Affairs and the Permanent Observer Mission of the Organization of Islamic Conference to the United Nations remained in close contact on the issue of Afghanistan.

III. Follow-up action on recommendations of the meetings between the United Nations system and the Organization of the Islamic Conference

10. Outlined below is a summary of contributions received for the present report from the United Nations system.

A. Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations

11. During the period from June 2000 to May 2001, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) continued its cooperation with some of the specialized and affiliated institutions of OIC, in particular the Islamic Development Bank (IDB) and the Statistical, Economic and Social Research and Training Centre for Islamic Countries (SESRTCIC). Cooperation between FAO and these institutions of OIC focused on food security and rural development, training in agricultural policy analysis, trade of agricultural products, national capacity-building, promotion of agricultural production, protection of the environment and promotion of rural communities.

12. In collaboration with SESRTCIC, FAO organized a workshop entitled “Uruguay Round follow-up and multilateral trade negotiations on agriculture”, which was held in Muscat from 16 to 20 September 2000. Another workshop, convened in cooperation with SESRTCIC and IDB, was held in Kuwait from 5 to 16 May 2001. This seminar addressed sustainability issues in the context of agricultural investment projects. A third regional FAO workshop, jointly organized with SESRTCIC, addressed the issue of water quality and pollution control. It was held in Cairo from 30 October to 2 November 2000.

B. International Fund for Agricultural Development

13. Pursuant to the cooperation agreement signed between the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) and OIC in 1983, the two organizations continued their exchange of information and documents, held periodic consultations to promote

joint cooperation programmes and participated in each other's conferences or meetings.

14. IFAD was represented at the general meeting between the United Nations and OIC in July 2000. The meeting focused, among other issues, on enhancing the mechanism of cooperation between the United Nations system and the OIC and its institutions. More recently, on a visit to Saudi Arabia in June 2001, the President of IFAD called upon the OIC secretariat in Jiddah to discuss ways of promoting closer cooperation between the two organizations. He also visited IDB in Jiddah, where he held talks with its President on ways of strengthening collaborative efforts in promoting social and economic development in developing countries for the benefit of the rural poor. Both IFAD and IDB subscribe to the objectives of the Millennium Declaration (see General Assembly resolution 55/2) to achieve the universal target of reducing poverty by half in 2015. The President of IFAD was also invited to deliver a lecture at IDB headquarters on the challenge of ending rural poverty. The lecture was attended by senior government representatives, development experts and representatives from the diplomatic corps, United Nations agencies and the media.

15. IFAD has maintained close working relations with a number of other organs of OIC, including the Islamic Education, Scientific and Cultural Organization (ISESCO) and SESRTCIC. It should be recalled that IFAD and ISESCO concluded a cooperation agreement in 1995 in order to promote agricultural and rural development objectives. Regular high-level meetings have taken place between representatives of IFAD and SESRTCIC.

C. United Nations Conference on Trade and Development

16. The Islamic Development Bank, which was entrusted with the administration of the Al-Aqsa Fund established by the Arab Summit meeting held in Cairo in October 2000, invited the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) to participate in an informal meeting of Palestinian and international experts convened in Cairo in January 2001 to consider possible modalities for assessing the long-term development needs of the Palestinian economy and prospects for enhancing its economic cooperation with Arab and Islamic States.

17. The meeting made several recommendations to help guide the Bank's work programme in this respect and to ensure coordination with related efforts by the Palestinian Authority and the international organizations concerned. In response to a request by the Minister of Economy and Trade of the Palestinian Authority, the Secretary-General of UNCTAD and the Executive Director of the International Trade Centre UNCTAD/WTO launched an initiative to establish a trust fund to provide urgent technical assistance to the Palestinian Authority to support the Palestinian external trade sector in the light of the economic crisis it had faced since October 2000. In January 2001, a project proposal outline was addressed to donor States and multilateral organizations, including OIC and IDB.

18. During the general meeting between the United Nations and OIC, held in Vienna in July 2000, discussions were held between UNCTAD and the Islamic Centre for the Development of Trade, a subsidiary organ of OIC, on possibilities for establishing a technical assistance cooperation programme, including workshops and seminars in the area of trade. The UNCTAD secretariat prepared a provisional programme for such cooperation which would require raising the necessary funding. The programme was submitted to the Centre.

D. United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

19. Throughout the reporting period, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) continued to pursue its cooperative relationship and activities with OIC and its subsidiary bodies, particularly ISESCO, the counterpart of UNESCO in the OIC system.

20. This cooperation reached a very important dimension over the crisis related to the Afghan cultural heritage, which was precipitated by the decision of the Taliban movement to destroy all statues in Afghanistan, including the two giant Buddhist sculptures in Bamiyan. The intensive efforts of the Director-General of UNESCO to save the cultural heritage of Afghanistan were exerted in close cooperation and consultation with the Secretary-General of OIC, as well as with Qatar, the current Chairman of the Islamic Summit Conference, and other States members of OIC.

21. Although these joint efforts did not succeed in dissuading the Taliban leadership, the crisis succeeded in mobilizing international public opinion against their decision, and focused attention on the need to protect cultural heritage worldwide. UNESCO, in cooperation with ISESCO, is organizing a meeting of experts in Qatar under the auspices of OIC to discuss issues related to Islamic and/or pre-Islamic cultural heritage. This is a new and timely area of cooperation between UNESCO and OIC.

22. UNESCO and ISESCO continued to implement their jointly financed activities for 2001, which are part of the joint programme for 2000-2001. These activities reflect the common priorities of the two organizations, especially in basic education, the management of water resources and environmental protection, the eradication of poverty and technical and vocational training, cultural diversity and new information technologies.

E. Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

23. Under the agreement of cooperation between the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and OIC, signed in 1988, joint efforts have continued in priority areas relating to refugees and global humanitarian problems of common interest during the period under review. Regular meetings have taken place between representatives of the two organizations at their respective headquarters. UNHCR has participated regularly in OIC conferences of foreign ministers, notably one in Malaysia in June 2000 and the ninth session of the Islamic Summit Conference.

24. UNHCR cooperation with the specialized institutions of OIC has included measures to implement the provisions of the agreement signed in May 1991 by UNHCR and ISESCO, which provides for the exchange of expertise as well as regular meetings of a joint commission. Progress has also been achieved in cooperation with IDB. The cooperation agreement between UNHCR and IDB was renewed in 1999 for a period of five years. Several meetings were held between the two organizations to explore the feasibility of involving financial institutions in the Gulf States in funding projects for refugees, thus increasing the resources available to meet the humanitarian needs of the refugees while strengthening the relations between OIC, IDB and UNHCR.

25. With the appointment in 2001 of a UNHCR special representative for the Arab League and OIC countries, efforts are currently under way to strengthen cooperation through monthly meetings on issues of mutual interest. These include establishing closer links with OIC, IDB and the Islamic Solidarity Fund in order to identify specific areas of support and joint action on behalf of refugees.

F. United Nations Industrial Development Organization

26. Since the adoption of resolution 55/9 on 30 October 2000, the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) has initiated a number of activities to promote cooperation with OIC, its subsidiary organs and specialized and affiliated institutions. In cooperation with IDB, UNIDO has organized a seminar on project appraisal as well as a training workshop with IDB staff. UNIDO has also cooperated with the Research Centre for Islamic History, Art and Culture on a project entitled "development of arts and crafts and promotion of heritage".

27. Regular consultations have been held with OIC to promote cooperation in such areas as investment and technology, private sector development and training seminars on project preparation and appraisal, as well as in other related fields.

G. United Nations Population Fund

28. As planned and discussed during the last general meeting of the United Nations and OIC, the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) continued to cooperate with OIC through the funding of joint activities with ISESCO. Those activities have resulted in the development of culture-sensitive material for use in Islamic teaching schools and other educational institutions. The teaching material covers various topics, such as gender, women's rights, responsible parenthood and prevention of drug use and HIV/AIDS. These were developed through workshops, conferences, symposia, expert meetings and the printing and translation of relevant documents on the goals of the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development.

H. United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East

29. The United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) continues to enjoy the support of OIC in its efforts to provide essential services and humanitarian assistance to Palestine refugees. Cooperation over the past year included the continuation of contacts with IDB with a view to mobilizing additional resources for UNRWA.

I. World Food Programme

30. Pursuant to the cooperation agreement signed by the World Food Programme (WFP) and OIC in October 1999 and as a follow-up to the latest general meeting of the United Nations with OIC, WFP is actively seeking to promote collaboration with OIC and its affiliated organizations in the context of concrete measures in countries of common coverage. WFP visited the headquarters of ISESCO in Rabat. A draft memorandum of understanding formalizing the collaboration with ISESCO is under consideration. The focus of future joint action would be on women's and girls' education in OIC countries where WFP is implementing development programmes.

31. Concrete measures to strengthen cooperation between WFP and IDB have been implemented. Three proposals for joint action in Tajikistan and Pakistan are under consideration by IDB. The first proposal aims at assisting the agricultural sector in Tajikistan, which is suffering from severe drought and the deterioration of basic infrastructure, through improving seed multiplication capacity and irrigation systems. In Tajikistan, it is also proposed that IDB and WFP implement joint activities that aim at improving the income-generating capacity of poor and unemployed heads of households, particularly those relying on illicit drug trafficking for their income. The joint action proposes the establishment of a revolving fund that can make seed capital available to beneficiaries, enabling them to start microenterprises. The third proposal is a pilot project on nutrition in Pakistan, where three of the five major causes of death associated with pregnancy and childbirth are related to malnutrition. The pilot project will help to improve the nutritional status of pregnant and nursing women.

32. Areas of common interest and cooperation between WFP and SESRTCIC have been identified. Priority has been given, where WFP has a strong capacity, to extending the vulnerability analysis and mapping methodology and techniques to national staff in selected OIC countries to improve their targeting ability in the context of poverty alleviation programmes. A joint workshop is under consideration by SESRTCIC. In compliance with a provision in the cooperation agreement to grant observer status in the respective governing bodies of the two organizations, WFP has accorded the OIC secretariat observer status at the WFP Executive Board as from February 2001.

J. World Health Organization

33. The World Health Organization (WHO) continues to collaborate with ISESCO. During the reporting period, a comprehensive plan of collaborative activities for the period 2001-2003 was adopted. These activities will be carried out in such areas as: (a) strengthening of research capabilities; (b) promotion of the use of appropriate technology; (c) promotion of the use of biotechnology; (d) enhancement of the role of youth and women in social development; (e) education for the handicapped; (f) environmental health protection and promotion; (g) distant learning; (h) promotion of health of special groups; and (i) action-oriented school health curriculum.

K. Other organizations, programmes and departments of the United Nations system

34. A number of other organizations, programmes and departments of the United Nations system, including the International Telecommunication Union, the Universal Postal Union, the United Nations University, the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, the Department of Public Information and the United Nations International Drug Control Programme, also conveyed information to the United Nations Secretariat on their programmes and activities in cooperation with OIC and its specialized institutions.