



# Press Release

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## IN SPEECH TO OIC SUMMIT, SECRETARY-GENERAL ADDRESSES MIDDLE EAST

### PEACE PROCESS, AFGHANISTAN, IRAQ AND OTHER ISSUES

Following is the text of Secretary-General Kofi Annan's address yesterday to the Summit of the Organization of the Islamic Conference, which is being held in Doha, Qatar:

I wish to begin by congratulating Sheikh Hamad on assuming the Chairmanship of the OIC, and by expressing my admiration for President Mohammad Khatami's wise and visionary Chairmanship which concludes at this Summit.

President Khatami — your personal commitment to détente, openness, tolerance and the rule of law has been an encouragement to all who strive for progress in this region, and throughout the Islamic world.

Let me also take this opportunity to pay homage to Secretary-General Azeddine Laraki, who is attending his last OIC Summit in this capacity, for his dedication to the United Nations/OIC cooperation, both at the institutional and working relations levels, at Headquarters as well as in the field.

I am pleased to join you for a Summit of the Islamic Conference in the hospitable city of Doha at a critical time for the members of your organization, and for the world.

I had the honour of attending your last Summit in Tehran three years ago. That gave me the opportunity to highlight the many ways in which the United Nations and the OIC are working as true partners — in promoting peace, advancing development and protecting human rights.

None of us could have foreseen, however, just how important this partnership would become at the beginning of a new century — a century filled with promise, and yet a century still plagued by many of the conflicts and challenges of the last one.

In the period since your last Summit, many of your members have set an excellent example to the world in how to manage their international relations. This has led to a reduction of tensions and the further development of a spirit of brotherly friendship and cooperation. Boundary disputes have been resolved or are being discussed, outstanding issues are being debated, and, increasingly, you are coming together to address common challenges.

You have done so because you recognize that the promise of the new age can only be fulfilled through cooperation, and through integration with the new global economy, based on knowledge that can now be shared far more widely and rapidly than ever before.

Your peoples look to you to protect them from the sometimes bewildering changes that this new global economy can bring with it. But they also look to you to make sure they are not denied the opportunities of globalization, which offer them their best hope of escaping from poverty and disease.

You understand that the challenges of the future lie not on the battlefield, but in the minds of your young people, who must be given the tools to succeed in the information age. You appreciate the unique and vital role that education can play in promoting a spirit of inquiry, and in opening the minds of the young to new ideas and new visions of the future.

And you have committed yourselves to advancing your peoples' interests -- and to achieving a just resolution of outstanding conflicts -- through peaceful means.

As we meet today, I believe we are all conscious of the terrible consequences of failing to pursue the path of peace. Ever since the founding of the OIC more than 30 years ago, you have expressed your support for the Palestinian people. The past eight weeks have made abundantly clear to all sides that the cause of peace can only be damaged by excessive use of force, indiscriminate violence or terror.

Violence only begets bitterness and resentment, which in turn begets further violence. Feelings run high on both sides. Mutual mistrust is deep. There are wounds in the families and communities concerned that may take a generation to heal. I can only imagine the anguish of the Palestinian

people at their terrible losses in the recent violence. I feel special sorrow at the deaths and injuries of so many young people. I join you in sending my heartfelt condolences to every bereaved family.

The question before the Palestinian and Israeli peoples, before this assembly, and before the world, is how to bring an end to the violence and killing, and how to respect the sanctity of every human life, Palestinian or Israeli, young or old.

The question is how to respond to the legitimate aspirations of the Palestinians to personal dignity and national independence, as well as to the legitimate claims of the Israelis for recognition and security, and how to help both sides achieve a peace that is just, a peace that brings real benefits and real rewards to every individual Palestinian and Israeli.

Both sides need help in reaching an agreement that is just and durable; an agreement between two peoples with equal rights and responsibilities; an agreement that represents what both the late Prime Minister Rabin and President Arafat have termed a "peace of the brave".

Do we achieve such a peace by encouraging violence, promoting hatred, and perpetuating mistrust, or by fostering cooperation and dialogue?

Do we do so by denying one side or the other their right to exist in peace and dignity as sovereign nations, or by accepting the fundamental right of two equal peoples to exist in peace side by side?

Do we do so by teaching our children to hate the children of the other side and deny them the dignity of human beings, or by showing the way to a future in which they can work and thrive together?

I believe the OIC has a role to play in answering these questions, and in ensuring that the Palestinian people -- after so many years of suffering -- are able to realize their dream of an independent State. Such a settlement, I believe, can only be secure when the entire Middle East peace process has reached a successful conclusion -- when the Syrians, the Lebanese, the Israelis as well as the Palestinians, at last enjoy a just and comprehensive peace on the basis set out so long ago in United Nations Security Council resolutions [242 \(1967\)](#) and [338 \(1973\)](#).

Let me now turn to a number of other issues of great concern to this organization.

The situation in Afghanistan remains of grave concern to the international community. The people of this proud and fiercely independent country continue to suffer from the effects of a war that has dragged on for far too many years.

The United Nations will continue to make every effort in the search for a negotiated and peaceful solution between the warring parties in Afghanistan.

I am pleased to say that the endeavours of the United Nations Special Mission to Afghanistan in the last few years have been supported and complemented by the efforts of the OIC, in particular the OIC Committee on Afghanistan.

The importance of this cooperation is underlined by the fact that we cannot hope to succeed in bringing peace to Afghanistan without the support of neighbouring and other interested countries. In this connection, I wish to highlight the important diplomatic efforts of the Group of "Six plus Two" that has supported the United Nations efforts in Afghanistan. Five of Afghanistan's neighbouring States are also members of the OIC and of the "Six plus Two" group.

I am grateful for their contribution and I appeal to them, in particular to the Islamic Republics of Iran and Pakistan, to work even more closely together towards the noble aim of achieving peace in Afghanistan. After so many years of senseless fighting, this unhappy country truly deserves a lasting ceasefire and the establishment of a broad-based, representative government.

I would now like to turn to the situation in Iraq. I deeply regret the continuing suffering of the Iraqi people and share the hopes of everyone present here that the sanctions imposed on Iraq can be lifted sooner rather than later.

I am fully conscious of the perception on the part of OIC member States and others that there is a double standard when it comes to the implementation of United Nations Security Council resolutions. As I have stated in the Security Council, I also believe that the humanitarian situation in Iraq poses a moral dilemma to the United Nations, which has always stood with the vulnerable and sought to alleviate their suffering.

But let me also say that I believe the Iraqi leadership will achieve more through cooperation with the international community, including its neighbours, than through confrontation.

It is my duty as Secretary-General to remind each and every Member of the United Nations of their commitments under the Charter and the obligation to comply with the resolutions of the Security Council. I appeal to the Iraqi leadership to review its position with a view to cooperating with the international community.

In this spirit, I wish to call on every member State of the OIC to remember that even the bitterest of enmities among nations do not last forever. That is a lesson many of you have learned throughout your own history, and a lesson learned by many other regions and faiths, from Europe to Asia to Latin America.

It is therefore incumbent upon each of us to look beyond today's crisis, and, in the longer term, consider broader regional or sub-regional security arrangements. One aim of such arrangements would be to work towards making the Middle East a region free of all weapons of mass destruction, as well as to work towards the universality of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons.

As an organization of States joined in faith, you have a unique ability to draw on all elements of your societies to promote peace within your communities, as well as between them and the world at large. And, as national and religious leaders, you have a special responsibility to foster and promote a spirit of tolerance, coexistence and acceptance of diversity.

I believe firmly that the basis for peace and progress in your lands -- and throughout the world -- must be an honest, constructive and respectful dialogue.

This dialogue should take place within the context of the larger Dialogue among Civilizations to which the General Assembly has dedicated next year, on the proposal of your distinguished Chairman, President Khatami. It must be a dialogue within societies as well as between them. And it must be a dialogue of mutual respect.

The aim is not to eliminate differences between human beings, but to preserve and even celebrate them as a source of joy and strength. That is the world ethic that we need: a framework of shared values within which different traditions can coexist.

People must be able to follow their own traditions without making war on each other. They must have sufficient freedom to exchange ideas. They must be able to learn from each other. As the Holy Quran says --

“O mankind! We created you from a single pair of a male and female, and made you into nations and tribes, that you may know each other.”

All the great religions and traditions overlap when it comes to the fundamental principles of human conduct: charity, justice, compassion, mutual respect, the equality of human beings in the sight of God.

That is what has made it possible for States in all parts of the world, representing many different religious and cultural traditions, to espouse the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and other agreements which flow from it. Your organization can help to ensure that religious and cultural dialogue serve as a foundation for political reconciliation, even in the most dangerous conflicts, even among the bitterest of enemies.

I am confident that in the great tradition of your faith you will continue to strive for justice and peace, among your own peoples and around the world. I wish you all success in your deliberations.

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