



**Statement
at 616th meeting of the OSCE Permanent Council
June 29, 2006**

ENGLISH only

Mr. Chairman,

In my country's capacity as a Chairman of the Organization of Islamic Conference (OIC) Ministerial and Chairman of the OIC Group in Vienna, I would like to bring to the attention of the Permanent Council the following:

From 19 to 21 June, 2006 the Republic of Azerbaijan hosted the 33rd Session of the Islamic Conference of Foreign Ministers in Baku. Along with the high level representatives of the member states, representatives of countries and international organizations, such as the UN, Council of Europe, OSCE and the League of Arab States participated in the Session in the capacity of observers and invitees. Taking this opportunity we would like to extend our gratitude to H.E. Marc Perrin de Brichambaut, Secretary General of the OSCE for representing the OSCE at this event and his written contribution.

Mr. Chairman,

The major document adopted during the Conference was the Baku Declaration of the ICFM, the text of which has been distributed to all delegations. In the Baku Declaration, the Member States of the OIC reiterated their devotion to the noble ideas of peace, humanism and tolerance to aptly respond to the challenges facing humanity in the 21st century. They called for further unification around their values and display solidarity against recent defiances confronting Islam.

They expressed support to the continuation of reforms in the economic, social and cultural areas, as well as in the spheres of democratization, transparency and strengthening the role of civil society in the OIC Member States and underlined the importance of protecting cultural, religious and racial diversity, which must be a source of mutual enrichment and dialogue among religions and civilizations.

The Member States voiced their deep concern over the growing tendency towards Islamophobia and called for concrete efforts to enhance dialogue and broaden understanding among civilizations, cultures and religions by promoting

tolerance, respect for and freedom of religion and belief. In this regard, they welcomed the work of the OIC General Secretariat to establish the OIC Observatory aimed at monitoring manifestations of Islamophobia, as well as the establishment of contacts between the relevant institutions of the OIC and the European Union in developing secondary school programmes on Islam, which has special relevance in this context.

They deemed it important to raise public awareness throughout the world on the tenets and values of Islam, including among the youth, and underlined the crucial role of mass media in this regard. Particularly, they welcomed the proposal of the Government of Azerbaijan to host an OIC Conference on the role of the media in the development of tolerance and mutual understanding in 2007 in Baku. With this in mind, we are looking forward for an active contribution of the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media to the planned event.

The Member States strongly condemned terrorism in all its forms and manifestations, expressed deep sympathy with and support for the countries that fell victims to terrorist attacks, and denounced any attempts to link terrorism with any religion, culture and people. They reaffirmed their commitment to strengthen cooperation in fighting and eliminating terrorism through, inter alia, exchange of information and strengthening capacity building, by benefiting from the experience of OIC Member States in fighting terrorism through, among other means, the promotion of national reconciliation policy in order to achieve peace. With the aim of strengthening international cooperation to jointly fight in a comprehensive and concerted manner against international terrorism, transnational crime, illicit weapons and drug trafficking and trafficking in human beings, they supported the establishment of the Conference of the Heads of Law-Enforcement Agencies of the OIC Member States and welcomed the offer of Azerbaijan to host a meeting at the level of experts in Baku.

Along with the issues of the Middle East, Iraq, Afghanistan, Iran, Cyprus, Sudan, Somali, the OIC Foreign Ministers touched upon the issue of conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan. They strongly condemned the aggression of Armenia against Azerbaijan, urged immediate, complete and unconditional withdrawal of Armenian occupying forces from all occupied territories of Azerbaijan. They also considered the illegal transfer of Armenian population into the occupied Azerbaijani territories, illegal economic activities and exploitation of natural resources in the occupied territories detrimental to the peace process, condemned the continued destruction of Azerbaijani cultural and historical monuments, expressed deep concern over recent massive fires in the occupied territories and demanded the occupying forces to take urgent measures to prevent ecological disaster. They appealed to the international community to undertake all necessary measures for the peaceful resolution of the conflict and

urged the OIC Member States to support Azerbaijan on the issue of full restoration of its territorial integrity and sovereignty.

The Baku Declaration emphasized the importance of regional and inter-regional cooperation and encouraged cooperation aimed at improvement of inter-regional connectivity, as well as exploitation and transportation of energy resources of the OIC Member States as an essential factor for their social and economic development.

It also noted that the problems and need of the landlocked OIC Member States and stressed the importance of rendering necessary financial and technical assistance by the relevant financial institutions to these countries to improve their transit transport systems.

I thank you, Mr. Chairman.