



**REPUBLIC OF ALBANIA
MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS**

ADDRESS

BY

**THE DEPUTY MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS
OF THE REPUBLIC OF ALBANIA,
*MRS. EDITH HARXHI***

TO

**THE MEETING OF THE MINISTERS OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE
ORGANIZATION OF ISLAMIC CONFERENCE**

ISLAMABAD, 15-17 MAY 2007

Honourable Chairman,
Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen,

Please do allow me to express my delight in attending the Meeting of the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of the Islamic Conference Organization here in Islamabad. In particular, I would like to thank our Pakistani colleagues for the hospitality and excellent reception provided to us.

On this occasion, please do allow me to convey to all the participants in this meeting and in particular to our Host, H.E. Mr. Khurshid M. Kasuri, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Pakistan, the warmest wishes and greetings from the Albanian Government.

Mr. Chairman,

As a member country, Albania appreciates the growing role of this organisation in the international arena. The overall situation which the entire international community faces today is utterly dynamic and complex. Significant global issues, such as the strengthening of security and peace, sustainable socio and economic development, protection and respect for human rights, harmonization and dialogue among various cultures and civilizations, fight against terrorism and organized crime as well as eradication of poverty are increasingly reflected in the agenda of world's multilateral diplomacy. We believe that the Islamic Conference Organisation is in the front run of this global agenda.

I thank you all for the support you have given during these years to Albania and stand here today to ask you for more commitment and attention towards the Balkans and its new challenges.

The progress of the ongoing process taking place in compliance with the decisions reached on the organisation's reform and the restructure of its Secretariat is visible and in the right direction. We are convinced that the Organization's reforms will encourage cooperation and harmony with the achievements of human civilization, and it will be fully coherent with the aspirations of our peoples for justice and equality and recognition.

Likewise, the review of the Organization's Charter, through the contribution of the High Level Consultative Panel would be an added value to the Organization itself and to the cooperation among its members.

Distinguished participants,

The inter-cultural dialogue and the religious dimension as its integral part, together with the complexity of the issues it addresses and the positive aspects it derives in the current societies is a clear example of

the growing interest on the part of international community for their harmonization as a whole and, in particular, the special consideration from the Islamic Conference for these elements.

Coming from a 50 years totalitarian regime that abused with culture, just as it abused with the human rights, a regime that misused its culture to isolate its own people, a regime that denied the right of its citizens to express freely its own religion and infringe the most basic value of a human being the belief in God, we understand better than many others what human rights and culture means. After all we are the living proof that God remains inside the heart and spirit of each of us even in the most difficult days of imposed denial. Every Albanian in the last 17 years has experienced the strength of renaissance and recapturing of its own belief. While overcoming the barriers of isolation and while driving towards the new philosophy of civilization that for many of you has been part of your life and being, we are already open and we render our own cultural contribution in the framework of extending the overall culture in the Islamic Conference area and beyond.

Having perhaps a special record of religious co-habitation and harmony, since the times when religious wars in Europe inflicted numerous human lives, Albania is discovering with each passing day the values of religious tolerance and respect for religion at home. This is an asset that should be unfolded in terms of extending peace and stepping up the fight against the terrorism. Islam is exactly a living example of how civilised culture and strong moral pillars help the world interact and offer these values to the world in support of all other religions, beliefs, races and cultures.

Albania's integration to NATO and the European Union remains a strategic priority not only for us, but also for the other countries of our basin involved in the same process, as well as for this organization. Since ancient times the land where Albanians live today and Albanians themselves have served humanity for the diversification of cultures between east and west. Thus we are ready to continue in the same path as our forefathers and together with Turkey could serve as the gateway to the western world, European and Euro-Atlantic structures. We are there to fortify the strong bridges that already exist between east and west and we will do our best to deserve the membership status in the Islamic Conference. Let's work together towards building safe bridges to different cultures and to our people and their interests.

Albania remains a vital member of this organisation as in day one when it applied for membership and was welcomed by all of you. With as much possibility that a difficult transition offers to a country reshaping between east and west, we have numerous times supported the

comprehensive and peaceful settlement of the Middle East conflict, in full compliance with the UN Resolutions and in particular with the resolutions of the United Nations Security Council. We fully support the Road Map and believe that the international community and the concerned parties should monitor the whole process and take an active part in its implementation, by avoiding human casualties and protecting the human rights.

Albania believes that the Government of Iraq will keep on working to consolidate the country's unity and its territorial integrity, in order to ensure stability in the country and the neighbourhood. We give our full support to the Iraqi government and their efforts to restore peace and security in the country. While supporting Iraqi's territorial sovereignty and integrity, we believe that the political process there would assist, in a convincing way, in speeding up the establishment of the country's constitutional institutions and reconstruction through backing up the work of Iraq's Government. We condemn violence and share our sadness about many lives being lost and the difficult conditions that the people of Iraq are facing, but this is a time of challenges and they should succeed.

Albania also supports all endeavours made in the UN context, in finding a fair, comprehensive and lasting solution concerning the Cyprus issue.

*Mr. Chairman,
Honourable Ladies and Gentlemen,*

I would like to draw your attention to a very important issue in the politics and of the world today and that is called Kosovo.

In these decisive moments for the future of the Balkans and Kosovo and the security and stability in our region, Albania would highly appreciate the understanding and commitment in support of President Ahtisaari's Report and Proposal, as well as the resolution that was already introduced to the United Nations Security Council.

In these decisive moments for the future of the Balkans and Kosovo and the security and stability in our region, Albania supports President Ahtisaari's Report and Proposal, as well as the relevant resolution expected to be adopted by the Security Council.

The Republic of Albania supports the endeavours of the International Community, The Security Council, The Contact Group and the Mission of the Special Envoy of the UN Secretary General, and the help from most of the member countries in the Islamic Conference towards finding a stable and permanent solution on the Kosovo issue, a solution that respects the basic principles of: *non-return to the situation existing before 1999*,

non-separation and non-unification of Kosovo or part of it to any other country.

The Republic of Albania maintains the position that Kosovo should be a free, independent, democratic, totally functional and multiethnic country, a new state with its own symbols and institutions, entitled to membership to international organizations, including UN, wherein the liberties and rights of the minorities are respected and guaranteed by law and institutions. An independent and democratic Kosovo, orientated towards Euro-Atlantic integration, is the solution that generates peace and prosperity for all citizens, irrespective of their ethnic backgrounds and long term stability for the whole region.

Albania shares the position that the solution of Kosovo status should be politically and legally evident, and should guarantee not only the territorial integrity of Kosovo, but even the functional integrity of its institutions in all levels.

Kosovo is a unique case. I understand that certain countries here might have their reservations however I appeal to all of you to look carefully at the real facts and the main one being "the genocide". For more than a century it is exactly this genocide and mass expulsion of people by force from their homeland that makes Kosovo unique and any decision of the United Nations unprecedented and fully justifiable.

We should all support this and show the commitment of this organization in support of peace and freedom for individuals who have suffered the pain of being "unwanted and rejected" just because they belong to a different ethnicity, religious belief and background. This organization has proved many times to favour exactly what the people of Kosovo have been denied. I thus call upon all the countries of the Islamic Conference to support a Resolution of this Organization in support of Kosovo and the Marti Ahtisaari plan. Lives can be saved today if we all adopt this stand, and humanism remains the fundamental pillar of Islam and our countries.

Honourable Participants,

We support the Organization of Islamic Conference's adopted universal principles concerning the major significance of mutual tolerance and respect and OIC is actively working to promote them. The Albanian Government condemns every action or statement, expressing disrespect towards individuals, on the account of their religion or background. Albania has always supported the efforts of this organization and also UN in fighting religious intolerance; in addition, we consider these efforts essential in preventing distrust and conflicts.

In this regard, we condemn every manifestation of “islamophobia”, wherever it occurs and, at the same time, we join the voices urging the strengthening of dialogue and expansion of understanding among civilizations, cultures and religions, by promoting tolerance and freedom for our nations.

I thank you for the attention!