

## **UN Secretary-General's address to the 11th Summit of the Organization of the Islamic Conference**

**Dakar, Senegal, 13 March 2008**

Monsieur le Président, Monsieur le Secrétaire général, Messieurs les Chefs d'Etat et de Gouvernement, Mesdames et Messieurs,

C'est un honneur pour moi que d'être parmi vous aujourd'hui à l'occasion du onzième Sommet de l'Organisation de la Conférence islamique. Permettez-moi de remercier d'abord notre pays hôte pour sa chaleureuse et généreuse hospitalité.

Excellences,

Nous sommes réunis à Dakar en des temps difficiles pour le monde islamique. Depuis quelques années, la communauté internationale suit avec beaucoup d'attention les événements qui se déroulent dans les pays membres de l'OCI, de la situation en Iraq à la crise au Darfour en passant par les souffrances qui perdurent dans les territoires palestiniens occupés.

En tant qu'organisation la plus importante et la plus ouverte du monde islamique, l'OCI a une légitimité particulière. Vous exprimez les aspirations et les préoccupations de plus d'un cinquième de l'humanité. Vous êtes leur lien avec la communauté internationale. Enfin, vous êtes un partenaire primordial de l'ONU dans son action en faveur de la paix et de la coopération internationales.

Je suis heureux que les liens entre nos deux organisations n'aient jamais été aussi solides. L'OCI et l'ONU ont fait cause commune dans de nombreux domaines, en défendant la justice économique et sociale, en œuvrant en faveur des droits de l'homme, en favorisant une meilleure compréhension entre les cultures et les religions et, bien sûr, en renforçant la paix et la sécurité.

En novembre dernier encore, nous avons organisé conjointement à Tunis la Conférence internationale « Terrorisme : dimensions, menaces et contre-mesures », sous le patronage du Président de la République tunisienne.

The UN and the OIC stand side by side in rejecting forcefully and wholeheartedly any linkages between terrorism and Islam. You have spoken up against those who seek to justify violence in the name of religion. Your efforts reinforce the UN's own steps to promote tolerance and understanding through the Alliance of Civilizations initiative, and I look forward to increasing UN-OIC collaboration in this area.

Excellencies, our partnership is desirable – indeed necessary – on many other matters as well. As we meet, the situation in the Middle East remains precarious, nowhere more so than in the Gaza Strip. Let me use this opportunity to once again urge Israel and the Palestinian Authority, together with their regional partners and the Quartet, to take urgent measures to ease the suffering in Gaza and give hope to its people.

As I told the Security Council when I briefed them earlier this month, Israel's disproportionate and excessive use of force has killed and injured many civilians, including children. I condemn these actions and call on Israel to cease such attacks. Israel must fully comply with international humanitarian law and exercise utmost restraint.

At the same time, I also condemn the rocket attacks directed against Israel and call for the immediate cessation of such acts. They serve no purpose, endanger Israeli civilians and bring misery to the Palestinian people.

Elsewhere in the Middle East, Lebanon remains in the grip of an intense political crisis centered on the election to the country's Presidency, which has lain vacant for more than three months. I regret that regional interests and domestic Lebanese dynamics have forestalled any breakthrough.

In nearby Iraq, the UN is working hard to promote political dialogue, while assisting with pressing humanitarian and reconstruction needs. The UN is working closely with the Iraqi leadership to achieve progress. I urge you all to support the UN's efforts, and to help bring lasting peace to the Iraqi people.

With regard to Iran's nuclear programme, I welcome the continued dialogue between the Islamic Republic of Iran and the IAEA. It is essential that Iran complies with the relevant Security Council resolutions and with all of its commitments under the work plan. I am convinced that the nuclear issues with Iran can and should be resolved peacefully through diplomatic and political means.

Beyond the Middle East, the distressing situation in Sudan, especially in West Darfur, demands urgent international attention. I have prioritized the deployment of UNAMID as an important step towards stabilizing the situation within Darfur, and towards reducing the likelihood of this conflict unsettling the broader sub-region.

However, UNAMID's deployment is no substitute for a political process. That remains the key to lasting peace in the region.

Excellencies,

The OIC is well placed to support this process; you can utilize your considerable influence on behalf of a lasting peace within, and between, Chad and Sudan. As you do so, the UN will continue to do everything it can to help end the suffering in the region.

Within the broader region, Somalia is another country where progress appears possible and must be made. The security and humanitarian situation in the country is dire. Yet the recent willingness shown by both the Government and opposition groups to enter into dialogue without conditions represents the most promising opportunity for international intervention in 17 years. We have to seize it. Later this month, I will report to the Security Council on a comprehensive approach for UN engagement in Somalia.

Excellencies,

Active and sustained engagement between our two Organizations remains vital to address pressing issues of peace and security.

Already, our joint economic, cultural and social projects are yielding significant dividends for OIC member states. I am determined to continue down this path.

Our Organizations have a strong shared interest in addressing extreme poverty, and in improving the lives of the poorest of the world's poor. Many of these "bottom billion" live in OIC member countries, and I have called for 2008 to be a year when we dedicate ourselves to their needs and welfare.

Progress on this front depends in part on reenergizing efforts to achieve the Millennium Development Goals, which range from the effort to end poverty to ensuring dramatic improvements in maternal health. Midway to the MDG target date of 2015, we have reached a tipping point. Urgent and concerted action now can help make up for wasted time and effort.

Monday this week, the MDG Africa Steering Group included in its recommendations that African countries, with the international community, step up efforts to achieve critical targets such as gender parity in education, improved family planning services, and reduced child and maternal mortality rates.

In September, together with the President of the General Assembly, I will convene a high-level event on the MDGs in New York. I trust will help reinforce the partnership between developed and developing countries, and to focus attention, at the very highest level, on the needs of the poorest of the poor.

Excellencies,

This brief overview underlines the fact that we face daunting challenges on many fronts. The OIC and the United Nations are natural allies in confronting these issues, and in furthering the cause of security, human rights and development across the world.

That is why I feel privileged to join you today. I will keep working to strengthen the operational relationship between the United Nations and the OIC. By pooling our resources and reinforcing our efforts, we can advance in ways that would not be possible on our own. Together, we can take on great challenges, and achieve great things for the peoples of the United Nations.

Thank you very much.