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Conference Report

Contemporary Challenges of the Muslim World: The Vision and Role of the OIC

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The Institute of Strategic Studies, Islamabad (ISSI) recently arranged a Public Talk titled *Contemporary Challenges of the Muslim World: the Vision and Role of the OIC*. The chief guest of this session was the OIC Secretary General His Excellency Iyad Ameen Abdullah Madani. The focus of the talk was the current crises affecting the Muslim *ummah* at large, and the role OIC intends to play in dealing with them.

While felicitating a large section of dignitaries and scholars in his opening remarks, ISSI Director General Dr Rais emphasised the importance of OIC as an international body, and the significant role played by it for the betterment of Muslims ever since its creation. He also highlighted Pakistan's vital role in furthering the agenda of the OIC, and the contribution it has made for bringing together the Muslim World.

Madani started by talking about the numerous issues being faced by the Muslim *ummah* at present. He mentioned the current security issues in Syria, Iraq and Central Africa. The focal point of his talk was the current Israeli aggression on Gaza and the atrocities being committed against the people of Palestine, and the role of OIC in dealing with this crisis. He also talked about other major challenges being faced by the Muslim countries like extremism and terrorism, and the misguided perception of Islam in the West. Furthermore, he added that rising sectarianism in the Muslim countries was of grave concern to the OIC, and in such troubling times for the Muslim world, unification of the *ummah* is of utmost importance. He also spoke about referring the case of Israel genocide in Gaza to the International Criminal Court, and said the matter would be discussed further in the ministerial level meeting of the OIC, which is to be held later this month.

Madani further spoke about the power bias in favour of Israel which stems from the US, which he believed was hindering the efforts of OIC in bringing about a speedy resolution to the current Middle Eastern conflict. Furthermore, he said that major crises being faced by the *ummah* including the issue of Kashmir were of equal importance, and each must be dealt with in its own domain. He also assured the audience that OIC was looking to play an active role regarding the Kashmir issue, in dealing with the new government in New Delhi on Pakistan's terms. Madani said that solving these problems and implementation of the vision of OIC regarding the *ummah* is a long process, in which all the Muslim countries have to play an active role. Concluding his address, Madani said the OIC is seeking actionable and doable approaches to deal with the various challenges, and Pakistan has an important part to play in this regard.

The concluding remarks of the session were delivered by ISSI Chairman Ambassador (R) Khalid Mahmood, who said that OIC has an important role to play in the current scenario, which can be achieved by bringing the Muslim countries together on a common platform. He noted that OIC was facing severe constraints in bringing about its vision, and there was the problem of implementation of different decisions taken by the OIC; in order to overcome these constraints, a collective will is required on part of the whole *ummah*. He also said that the organisation lacks effective public relations mechanisms, and is therefore unable to get its ideology across. In the end, the chairman thanked His Excellency, and hoped that he would be able to help OIC turn a new corner.