Address by President of Kazakhstan Nursultan Nazarbayev at the 38th OIC Council of Foreign Ministers

Bismillahir Rahmanir Rahim!
Dear Guests,
Ladies and Gentlemen!

I am pleased to warmly welcome you on behalf of the benevolent people of Kazakhstan!
For Kazakhstan that is celebrating the 20th anniversary of its independence this year, the Chairmanship in the Organisation of the Islamic Conference is of great historical significance.
Today, the importance of the Organisation of the Islamic Conference for peace, cooperation, and development has increased.
This organisation is a unique structure that performs a role of “the UN of the Islamic world,” uniting 57 states on four continents.
The Ummah today is facing serious challenges in a dramatically changing world.
The Islamic community desperately needs peace, modernisation, scientific and technological development, and education.
Combined economic potential of the Ummah is inexhaustible, and we need to unite efforts to develop effective mechanisms for cooperation, mutual aid, and promotion of development.
It is precisely in the implementation of effective trade and investment, technological, social and educational programmes that the Islamic solidarity should manifest itself as the main principle of our Organisation.
Average GDP per capita at purchasing power parity in the OIC countries equals nine and a half thousand dollars, while the similar figure for European countries equals more than twenty four thousand dollars.
There is a serious imbalance in development among the OIC countries.
For example, GDP per capita between the most developed and least developed states differs by more than 100 times.
OIC countries control 70 percent of global energy resources. However, they account for only 7.5 percent of global GDP and 11 percent of total volume of global trade.
And this situation is totally unacceptable.
We need to increase the competitiveness of every member state of our organisation separately and the Ummah as a whole.
That is why we propose to develop an integrated strategy for economic development of the OIC member states.
At the Seventh World Islamic Economic Forum that took place here three weeks ago, I put forward a series of concrete proposals which were on balance accepted.
In particular, I have offered to create a dialogue platform of the top ten Muslim economies.
Just 10 out of 57 countries of the Organisation produce 80 percent of the total product of the community of Muslim states.
It is advisable to develop a system of mutual food assistance within the OIC in the form of a Regional Fund similar to FAO, which will include the possibility of creating a pool of food in the interested states. We are ready to locate the headquarters of the Fund in Kazakhstan, as a country that exports food products.
Large-scale investments in energy are vital today.
According to the International Energy Agency, till 2030, 17 trillion dollars will be required to ensure the necessary production and transportation of energy resources.
Our country has put forward its candidacy to host the International exhibition “EXPO-2017” on the topic of “Energy of Future.”
I hope for support for our initiative from the OIC Member States and active participation in the discussion of the proposed topic.
I am confident that the solution for problems of Muslim countries should come from within.
The Islamic world needs to break free from the vector of development based on raw materials to industrial and innovative development.
I propose to develop and adopt a joint Action Plan within the OIC for investment and technological cooperation in energy sector, as well as to establish an International centre for innovation.
The creation of support system for small and medium enterprises within the OIC is a promising direction.
We propose to establish a Special Fund for small and medium businesses under the Islamic Development Bank.
The global economic crisis has shown that the Islamic financial and economical model is stable and viable.
One of the useful and effective products that the Ummah can offer the world is the system of Islamic financing.
Kazakhstan opened the Islamic bank.
We are actively promoting the Islamic financing and creation of benchmarking in the area of Islamic finance instruments in the region.
I propose that an international conference on Islamic banking takes place in Almaty, as well as to develop Almaty as a regional financial centre that is actively engaged in Islamic finance.
The Islamic world should enjoy its major advantage, which is the potential for demographic growth, and make it an inalienable part of stable economic development.
International experts have estimated that by the year 2030 the population of the Muslim Ummah will account for more than 2.2 billion people, which will be more than a quarter of the world’s population.
The immense human resources require adequate level of education and science.

The creation of intellectual elite capable of generating new ideas that would serve the renaissance of the Islamic civilization must be our common goal.
Islam in the Middle Ages gave the world its greatest achievements in mathematics, chemistry, astronomy, medicine, architecture, philosophy and poetry.
Cities such as Baghdad, Córdoba, Toledo, and Alexandria were the world’s intellectual hubs. They were the fulcrums of the largest communities of scientists, interpreters, scribes and book publishers.
Muslims brought forth an incredibly powerful intellectual civilization exciting the admiration of the neghbouring countries.
In the early days of the Renaissance, the peoples of Christian Europe wore oriental dresses and read philosophic works of the Muslim authors.
The introduction of Arabic figures and counting system led to a breakthrough in mathematics, algebra, and geometry, which created the ground for the subsequent development of teaching system, architecture, trade - and further prosperity for all of Europe.
Relying on this powerful historical foundation, we are obliged to unite our efforts to revive the intellectual role of the Islamic civilization.
It is crucial to understand the reason for the loss of intellectual mightiness and constructive dynamism by the Muslim Ummah.
Why are Islamic countries - with their immense natural and human resources, and financial capacities – at a modest level in the hierarchy of the global development?
Why are Islamic universities not in the top leading higher educational institutions of the world?
Why have there been no world scale discoveries in natural sciences and technology in Muslim countries over the last twenty years?
It is impossible not to notice these realities.
Apparently, neither money, nor rich natural resources will play a defining role in achieving innovations and the development of Islamic civilization. But the intellectual environment and socio-political climate will.
Today a number of Muslim countries are already making steps in this direction.
World-class universities open in these countries.
One of them is the International University in Astana, providing background in engineering, technical/natural and humanitarian sciences according to world standards.
The Prophet (may God bless him and grant him peace) said “He who seeks knowledge, follows the path of Allah”.

Dear friends!

I believe the OIC should take an active role in elaboration of new ideas and decision making at a global level.
I suggest addressing the possibility of sending the OIC representatives to participate in the work of the G20 summits.
This will increase the representative nature of G20 and will enable OIC member states to make a stand for consolidated positions on key issues on the global agenda.
We should consider strengthening inter-regional cooperation - a good example of which is an OIC Plan of Action for cooperation with Central Asia that is being developed now - as a qualitative step of the development of common Muslim economic integration and interaction.
Instability in Afghanistan is a matter of concern. Over the past ten years the production of Afghan heroin and drug trafficking has increased ten times.
We should recognize that the organization itself does not fully use its capabilities to help the long-suffering Afghan people.
Along with the stepping up of activity of the OIC special envoy for Afghanistan, I propose the establishment of a special working group within the OIC, which would address the issues of assistance to that country.
It is necessary to increase activity and institutional role of our Organization in consolidating efforts of all Ummah states against global challenges.
A new Charter of OIC, adopted in Dakar in 2008, orients us on this.
It directly encourages modernizing Organization in the context of overall modernization and reforming, increasing of effectiveness of its bodies.
In particular, OIC needs an effective body – an Institute or a Centre – that will conduct deep forecasting and analytical work providing heads of state with possible scenarios and ways of events’ development inside the Organization as well as in the world.
The Conference on Interaction and Confidence Building Measures in Asia, established on the initiative of Kazakhstan, has become a unique multilateral instrument of security and cooperation in Asia. Out of its 24 participating states 15 are current members of the OIC.
Through our joint efforts, the foundation for dialogue between the OIC and the CICA, the OSCE, and the SCO was laid.
And we intend to fully support its further development.
Kazakhstan voluntarily renounced the world’s fourth largest nuclear and missile arsenal, shut down the Semipalatinsk nuclear test site, and has become an active participant in establishing a nuclear weapons free zone in Central Asia.
As the President of Kazakhstan, on behalf of our people, I call for the establishment of a nuclear weapon free zone in the Middle East and, in the long term, for a world without nuclear weapons.

International terrorism presents a serious threat, particularly to the Muslim world. We need to jointly develop a common approach of Islamic states to adequately combat this evil.
Non-implementation of the lawful rights of the Palestinians to establish their own state, the undefined status of Eastern Jerusalem, and the plight of refugees remain sources of tension not only in the Middle East but far beyond.
We support initiatives for a peaceful settlement in the region in accordance with UN resolutions.
Kazakhstan starts its chairmanship in the OIC at a rather difficult period.
At the beginning of the twenty-first century the Islamic world is living through a difficult stage of development, facing serious political upheavals, social, economic and demographic problems.
The events in the Middle East and North Africa show that the main cause of upheavals were unsolved social and economic problems of these states.
Since gaining its independence, Kazakhstan has prioritized the economic development for increasing living cost of our people, and we were right.
During the 20 years of our independence, the GDP per capita grew by more than 12 times and has exceeded 10,000 dollars.
In the next 5 years, we will reach the amount of 15,000 dollars. And it is real.
During years of independence the income of Kazakhstan people grew by 17 times.
Due to this every year millions of Kazakhstan citizens are going abroad on their holiday, more than 30,000 of young people are studying in world famous universities.
During the hard period of the global crisis unemployment in Kazakhstan did not increase but declined.
In just ten years, a new capital city of Astana was built here on the steppes.
The primacy of economic development has led us to effective security, political stability and spiritual harmony.
The modernization of society, while preserving and rethinking Islamic principles -- that is the way forward.
Kazakhstan is a secular state with a Muslim majority population.
We stand for unity of all Muslims on the basis of enlightenment, moderation and tolerance both towards each other and towards representatives of other religions.
Preserving cultural and religious traditions and peculiarities of different ethnic groups, we put social and economic modernization - improving peoples’ standard of living - at the top of our priorities.
The more successful Muslim countries are, the more attractive the image of Islam will be throughout the world.
One of the major issues in world politics remains challenges of the Muslim world relations with the outside world, primarily with the West.
The Muslim world in the eyes of Western society is associated primarily with its radical part and causes unwarranted fear, despite the fact that Islam preaches universal values of kindness, tolerance and justice.
The true meaning of Islam has nothing to do with the activities of extremist and terrorist groups, disguised under religious phraseology.
As is known, those who suffer the most from terrorism are the citizens of the Islamic countries.
In the Hadith, the Prophet Muhammad said: “Faith is the renunciation of violence. Let no Muslim support violence”.
We face two major challenges.
First we need to learn to confront religious fundamentalism as a political ideology.
We must unequivocally declare that Islam has nothing to do with political violence, extremism and terrorism.
At the 7th World Islamic Economic Forum I proposed creating a single media Islamic project.
Today there is a strong onslaught of “new media” in the Internet.
In this respect, I suggest creating the e-ISLAM Internet resource, which would cover the activity of our Organisation, stimulating the interest of the youth in religion and culture of Islam and spreading the Muslim spiritual values.
The second challenge is to establish an open and honest dialogue between the Muslim world and the West.
Kazakhstan’s chairmanship in the OIC aims to achieve these noble goals.
In 2008, Astana for the first time held a conference of foreign ministers of the Muslim world and the West.
We managed to bring together more than 60 representatives of governments and international organizations for a dialogue to deepen mutual understanding between the West and the countries of the Ummah.
I believe this dialogue among officials should be continued.
The Holy Quran addresses the foundations of dialogue and debate with non-Muslims: “Invite to the way of the Lord with wisdom and fair exhortation, and contend the dispute with them in the best way.”
This is especially important at a time when extremists of various stripes seek to sow seeds of alienation in the world, to draw the world into the so-called “clash of civilizations”.
This is an absolutely wrong and destructive message.
The clash of Christian and Muslim civilizations, to which we are being pushed, can destroy the whole world. Is this not enough to stop everybody?
This thought should make everyone consider the significance of preserving peace and harmony.
Historically, Islam, Christianity and Judaism are close to each other, our religions are interdependent and mutually complete each other. We acknowledge one God, our religions have the same Abrahamic roots.
Instead of the ‘clash of civilizations’, we propose to talk about an ‘alliance of civilizations’.
Instead of conflict, we should loudly and publicly call for an open and honest dialogue between the Muslim and the Christian worlds. Such a step from the Ummah would strengthen the trust and respect for Islam.

More than 130 ethnic groups peacefully co-exist in Kazakhstan while Muslim mosques, Christian temples and Judaic

synagogues stand peacefully next to each other.
This is a practical contribution of our country into the advancement of peace and tolerance.
As is known, last year Kazakhstan chaired the largest Euro-Atlantic Organisation, the OSCE.
Here in Astana, in this very hall, we held the OSCE Summit, the first in the past eleven years.
We used the capabilities of the OSCE chairmanship to expand contacts with the OIC, deepen understanding between the Muslim world and the West, and attract attention of Europe and the US to the needs and problems of Central Asia.
Having rich experience as the OSCE Chairman, Kazakhstan leading the OIC Ministerial Conference is ready to exert every effort to promote comprehensive dialogue on any issues of our Organisation.
We have good opportunity to use the existing potential of the Congress of Leaders of World and Traditional Religions.
The next fourth Congress will take place in Astana in 2012.
I invite religious leaders to take part in the event to continue our dialogue.

Dear participants!

The Astana dialogue platform may help both in resolving and preventing numerous local and interfaith conflicts in the West, and the East.

Dear friends!

In conclusion I would like to express my confidence that the Forum will present a worthy contribution to the safety and welbeing of the Muslim world.
I am convinced that the renaming of our Organisation as the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation on the Kazakh land will become a symbol of our renewal, unity, and the competitiveness of the Ummah.
I hope our Organisation will participate more actively in the formation of the international agenda.
It is not for no reason that Kazakhstan’s Chairmanship in the Organisation is held under the motto “Peace, Cooperation and Development.”
Our country that has achieved considerable results in all of these three dimensions will do its best to enhance the prestige of the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation.
I wish you successful and fruitful work during the session!

Thank you for your attention!