



**Statement on behalf of the OIC General Secretariat
57th Session of the Commission on the Status of Women
Monday 11 March 2013**

Check against delivery

Thank you **Madame Chairperson** for your expert guidance of the fifty-seventh session of the Commission on the Status of Women. The OIC General Secretariat has been diligently keeping the issue of eliminating violence against women and girls at the forefront of the OIC Agenda.

As soon as he took office in 2005, OIC Secretary General Prof. Ekmeleddin Ihsanoglu has prioritized the promotion of women's role and participation in every aspect of society. He has spearheaded the adoption of the Ten Year Program of Action, which provided a roadmap to facilitate and increase women's contribution to social, economic and political development of their countries.

Toward this end, OIC Secretary General convened the first ever Ministerial Conference on Women in Istanbul in 2006, and since that time, the OIC has hosted conferences on women every other year. In 2008, the OIC adopted the OIC Action Plan for the Advancement of Women (OPAAW), which comprises of a plan to improve the situation of Women in all socio-economic, political and cultural areas. The OPAAW also provides strategic vision and aims to be inclusive of the gender perspective across all activities of the OIC.

Madame Chair,

We are pleased to report that the OIC has established the Women's Development Organization in Cairo, Egypt as a specialized institution of the OIC, and we are in the process of having its statute ratified by the member states. Most recently at the Islamic Summit held in Cairo this past February, a considerable group of OIC Member States signed the statute of the Women's Development Organization. The OIC calls upon those OIC Member States who have not yet signed and ratified the statute to do so as soon as possible in order to operationalize WDO. Once the Women's Development Organization is operational, it will be able to focus on such activities and campaigns as to bring awareness to all issues particular to women, especially, how to combat violence against women and girls. This organization is a major achievement of the OIC, and has the potential to be a strong advocate for all women in the OIC region.

Another major step forward in the OIC's work to improve the status of women was the establishment of OIC's Independent Permanent Commission of Human Rights in 2011. The eighteen-member Commission, headed by a distinguished woman scholar from Indonesia, will be a formidable organ to safeguard women's rights in the OIC member states. As part of an orientation programme, all 18 Commissioners have been visiting the human rights institutions in New York and Geneva in order to exchange views and seek collaboration. As the Commissioners stressed during their visits, the women's rights will be at the forefront of their agenda.

Madame Chair,

The Organization of Islamic Cooperation believes that eliminating all violence against women and girls begins with eliminating all discrimination against women and girls. Women and girls must be allowed to participate fully in economic, social and political decision-making. Women and girls must also be able to access educational and professional opportunities without fear. It is the duty and responsibility of the governments to ensure that.

Yet, at this time and age, the women in some countries are faced with such an archaic cultural practice as the female genital mutilation. The FGM is still practiced in some societies under the cloak of religious, cultural and tribal practices. As the OIC Secretary General reiterated just last month here at the United Nations, "We can no longer allow ignorance surrounding women's rights, and FGM to be perpetuated by traditions and rituals disguised as religious teachings. This inhumane practice has survived for over centuries, and must be stopped."

We are glad to report that there is a rising awareness across the Muslim world against this terribly hazardous practice that endangers the physical and psychological health of women and girls. It was concluded at the Second Islamic Conference of Ministers in charge of Childhood held in Khartoum in 2009 that FGM is a violation of human rights of girls and women. In this regard, the OIC welcomes the UN General Assembly resolution 67/146, entitled, Intensifying global efforts for the elimination of female genital mutilations and General Assembly resolution 67/144, entitled, Intensification of efforts to eliminate all forms of violence against women, both of which were adopted without a vote.

Madame Chair,

The FGM is unfortunately only one of many cultural practices that are disguised as part of religious tradition. Child marriage, violence against women as well as other negative acts perpetuated are often misidentified as being part of Islamic tradition, whereas they are part of the local tradition and we should raise awareness at the local level to de-link these practices from religion. On this occasion, the OIC General Secretariat condemns in the strongest terms the killing of the women polio workers. Similarly, the OIC General Secretariat also condemned the assassination attempt on the young, Pakistani girl, Malala Yousafzai, who, even as a child, understands the importance of women's education and just wanted to improve educational access for women and girls.

One activity that we can all take part in is to organize public awareness campaigns about the FGM, and other issue-specific campaigns to ensure that all people receive information regarding the negative impacts of violence against women. This can happen through community gatherings, radio, television, social media, mass text messaging, social media and other forms of media.

We must continue to support and empower women and girls. We must do our utmost to eliminate any impediments between them and their goals. Whether they are interested in participating in science, engineering, math and technology; creating, building and maintaining peace; participating in economic or governmental decisions or becoming entrepreneurs; attending school and university or providing for their families; women and girls should have equal access to all opportunities without any fear.

Thank you Madame Chair.