



CENTRO STUDI SUL FEDERALISMO

PERSPECTIVES ON FEDERALISM



ISSN: 2036-5438

# The New Organization of the Islamic Conference Charter

by Giacomo Cavalli

Perspectives on Federalism, Vol. 1, single issue, 2009



## **Abstract**

This note analyses the new Charter of the Organization of the Islamic Conference, adopted in 2008.

## **Key-words:**

Organization of the Islamic Conference, reforms, decision making process



The Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC)<sup>I</sup> is the second largest inter-governmental organization after the United Nations and has membership of 57<sup>II</sup> states from the Middle East, Africa, Central Asia, Caucasus, Balkans, Southeast Asia, South Asia and South America, furthermore two states are attempting to become members (India and Philippines).

The Organization was established by the decision of the historical Summit, which took place in Rabat, Kingdom of Morocco on 25th September 1969 as a result of an arson of Al-Aqsa Mosque in Jerusalem. In 1970 the first meeting of the Islamic Conference of Foreign Minister (ICFM) was held in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia, that decided to establish there a Permanent Secretariat headed by the Organization's Secretary General.

During the 11th OIC Summit held in Dakar, Senegal, a new Charter was adopted unanimously; the new Charter is set to replace the previous version and should speed up OIC decision making processes. It would also create new institutions for the 57 nation body to promote cooperation on different levels among member countries<sup>III</sup>.

According to the new Charter, the Organization is composed by the following bodies.

- The supreme authority of the Organization is the Islamic Summit Conference<sup>IV</sup>, composed of Kings, Heads of State and Governments of Member States. It convenes once every three years to deliberate, to take policy decisions, to provide guidance on all issues pertaining to the realization of objectives and to consider all other issues of the member states' and the *Ummah*<sup>V</sup>'s concern.
- The Islamic Conference of Foreign Ministers<sup>VI</sup>, which meets once a year to examine a progress report on the implementation of its decisions taken within the framework of the policy defined by the Islamic Summit.
- The Permanent Secretariat<sup>VII</sup>, located in Jeddah, is the executive organ of the Organization, entrusted with the implementation of the decisions of the two preceding bodies (Prof Ekmeleddin Ihsanoglu is the 9th Secretary General who assumed the office in January 2005 after being elected by the 31st ICFM).
- The Al Quds Committee<sup>VIII</sup>, one of the Standings Committees has, among its duties, to follow-up the implementation of resolutions adopted by the Islamic Conference and by other international organizations that support or are in line with the OIC's position; to liaise with other bodies, and to offer to member states proposals it deems appropriate



on implementation of resolutions, achieving their objectives, and on taking steps on developments that may arise within these terms of reference; to implement all Islamic Conference resolutions on the Arab-Israeli conflict in view of the fundamental connection between the Al-Quds question and the conflict.

- The other Standing Committees<sup>IX</sup> are the following: The Standing Committee on Information and Cultural Affairs (COMIAC); the Standing Committee on Economic and Trade Cooperation (COMCEC); the Standing Committee on Scientific and Technological Cooperation (COMSTECH);
- The Executive Committee<sup>X</sup>, comprised of the Chairmen of the current, preceding and succeeding Islamic Summits and Councils of Foreign Ministers, the host country of the Headquarters of the General Secretariat as well as the Secretary-General as an *ex-officio* member (OIC Troika).
- The Committee of Permanent Representatives<sup>XI</sup>, which the prerogatives and modes of operation shall be defined by the Council of Foreign Ministers.
- The International Islamic Court of Justice<sup>XII</sup>, established in Kuwait in 1987 shall, upon the entry into force of its Statute, be the principal judicial organ of the Organisation.
- The Independent Permanent Commission on Human Rights<sup>XIII</sup>, established by the new Charter, shall promote the civil, political, social and economic rights enshrined in the organisation's covenants and declarations and in universally agreed human rights instruments, in conformity with Islamic values.

The Organization has the exclusive aim to galvanize the Ummah into a unified body and has actively represented the Muslims by espousing all causes close to the hearts of over 1.5 billion Muslims in the world. The Organization has consultative and cooperative relations with the UN and other inter-governmental organizations to protect the vital interests of the Muslims and to work for the settlement of conflicts and disputes involving member states. In safeguarding the true values of Islam and the Muslims, the organization has taken various steps to remove misperceptions and has strongly advocated elimination of discrimination against the Muslims in all forms and manifestations<sup>XIV</sup>.

So far eleven Islamic Summit Conferences and thirty-six Councils of Foreign Ministers (CFM) have been held. The Eleventh Islamic Summit Conference, held in Dakar on 13-14 March 2008, elected Senegal as the current Chairman of the Organization. The Secretary General of the Organization of the Islamic Conference, Professor Ekmeleddin



Ihsanoglu, was re-elected for a new term of office at the closing meeting of the 11th Session of the Islamic Summit Conference.

The new OIC Charter was adopted at the Dakar Summit and it replaces the Charter which was registered in 1974 in conformity with article 102<sup>XV</sup> of the United Nations Charter. The objectives and the principles of the Organization as well as their fundamental purposes to strengthen the solidarity and cooperation among the member states of the Organization are clearly reproduced in the present Charter<sup>XVI</sup>.

Alluding to the new Charter, OIC Secretary General Prof Ekmeleddin Ihsanoglu said “This amended Charter represents a new vision of the Muslim World”<sup>XVII</sup>.

According to its new Charter, the OIC aims to preserve Islamic social and economic values; to promote solidarity amongst member states; to increase cooperation in social, economic, cultural, scientific, and political areas; to uphold international peace and security; and to advance education, particularly in the fields of science and technology. One of the main objectives of the Organization is to promote the real values and peace ideals contained in the Islam, preserving their religion from the unfounded stereotype that sometimes, most of all in the western countries with the arising of the new terrorism, is commonly spread at the population level. The aim of this positive campaign is surely based on the project of combating the defamation of Islam and encouraging dialogue among civilizations and religions, defending all the Islamic believers that are living in other countries and, nevertheless, to show that member states follow principles based on democracy, rule of law and respect of human rights, as it’s in the soul of their true religion principles<sup>XVIII</sup>. Overall, one of the topics contained, is the fight against terrorism in all his forms and manifestation<sup>XIX</sup>.

The will of the member states to preserve the integrity of Palestine<sup>XX</sup> is another well documented issue in the new Charter in order to put a target to protect its population in his right of self determination and establishing their sovereign state. In this view, OIC promotes, for the Palestinian people, the right to live in a free country and it candidates itself as an important interlocutor and player that other international organizations or states can’t neglect in the Middle East peace process<sup>XXI</sup>.

The new collaboration showed by the Organization of the Islamic Conference is definitely based on important principles and respect of as well International Law as democracy, which allows OIC, as a single voice for their member states, to promote new



initiatives for crises managing and collaboration with other international organizations in order to lay the foundations for a new concept of dialogue between states federations.

With the new Charter, the Organization of the Islamic Conference proposes itself as a strategic player for the international relations. The reforms allocated in the Charter, like e.g. the enhanced International Islamic Court of Justice or the new Independent Permanent Commission on Human Rights, follow the models of the other international organizations and give to OIC the credibility of a democratic ideals institution. The role that this Organization can play in crises solving is even more endorsed by the kind of states which are its members; nevertheless, OIC includes countries with ongoing wars, e.g. Iraq and Afghanistan, and countries facing relational difficulties with western states, like Iran or Palestine. OIC could represent the united voice of all Muslims to affront better situations of present danger, a voice maybe stronger than the single member states ones and more considered by the opposite part and by the other Organisations like United Nations, NATO and European Union.

---

<sup>I</sup> <http://www.oic-oci.org/oicnew/home.asp>

<sup>II</sup> Afghanistan, Algeria, Chad, Egypt, Guinea, Indonesia, Iran, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Libya, Malaysia, Mali, Mauritania, Morocco, Niger, Pakistan, Palestine, represented by the Palestine Liberation Organization, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, Sudan, Somalia, Tunisia, Turkey, Yemen Arab Republic, Bahrain, Oman, Qatar, Syria, United Arab Emirates, Sierra Leone, Bangladesh, Gabon, Gambia, Guinea-Bissau, Uganda, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Comoros, Iraq, Maldives, Djibouti, Benin, Brunei, Nigeria, Azerbaijan, Albania, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Mozambique, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Suriname, Togo, Ivory Coast.

<sup>III</sup> [http://www.islamonline.net/servlet/Satellite?c=Article\\_C&pagename=Zone-EnglishNews/NWELayout&cid=1203758046406](http://www.islamonline.net/servlet/Satellite?c=Article_C&pagename=Zone-EnglishNews/NWELayout&cid=1203758046406)

<sup>IV</sup> Ruled by the Chapter IV of the OIC Charter.

<sup>V</sup> **Ummah** (Arabic: **أمة**) is an Arabic word meaning Community or Nation. It is commonly used to mean either the collective of states, or (in the context of pan-Arabism) the whole Arab world. In the context of Islam, the word ummah is used to mean the diaspora or "Community of the Believers" (ummat al-mu'minin), and thus the whole Muslim world.

<sup>VI</sup> Ruled by the Chapter V of the OIC Charter.

<sup>VII</sup> Ruled by the Chapter XI of the OIC Charter.

<sup>VIII</sup> The Committee convenes its meetings upon invitation of its chairman (the King of Morocco) or the majority of its members. The meeting is considered a regular meeting when attended by the majority. The Committee presents reports to the Islamic Conference of Foreign Ministers, while the General Secretariat provides all facilities necessary to carry out its work. [http://www.oic-oci.org/page\\_detail.asp?p\\_id=172](http://www.oic-oci.org/page_detail.asp?p_id=172)

<sup>IX</sup> Ruled by the Chapter VI of the OIC Charter.

<sup>X</sup> Ruled by the Chapter VII of the OIC Charter.

<sup>XI</sup> Ruled by the Chapter VIII of the OIC Charter.

<sup>XII</sup> Ruled by the Chapter IX of the OIC Charter.

<sup>XIII</sup> Ruled by the Chapter X of the OIC Charter.

<sup>XIV</sup> <http://africanpress.wordpress.com/2008/03/19/oic-moves-to-reduce-inequality-amongst-islamic-states/>

<sup>XV</sup> It's ruled by the article 39 comma 3 of the OIC new Charter; article 102 UN Charter : " 1 Every treaty and every international agreement entered into by any Member of the United Nations after the present Charter



---

comes into force shall as soon as possible be registered with the Secretariat and published by it; 2 No party to any such treaty or international agreement which has not been registered in accordance with the provisions of paragraph 1 of this Article may invoke that treaty or agreement before any organ of the United Nations.”

<sup>XVI</sup> [www.oicun.org/articles/37/3/New-Vision-of-the-OIC/3.html](http://www.oicun.org/articles/37/3/New-Vision-of-the-OIC/3.html)

<sup>XVII</sup> <http://www.oic-oci.org/oicnew/data/journals/issue7/flip/>

<sup>XVIII</sup> All these aspects regarding the Islamic religion defends are included in the Charter at the preamble and at the article 1, comma 12: “To protect and defend the true image of Islam, to combat defamation of Islam and encourage dialogue among civilisations and religions.”

<sup>XIX</sup> Ruled by article 1, comma 18: “To cooperate in combating terrorism in all its forms and manifestations, organised crime, illicit drug trafficking, corruption, money laundering and human trafficking.”

<sup>XX</sup> Palestinian Permanent Representative to the OIC signed the new Charter on the 18<sup>th</sup> November 2008. [http://www.oic-oci.org/oicnew/topic\\_detail.asp?t\\_id=1624&x\\_key=](http://www.oic-oci.org/oicnew/topic_detail.asp?t_id=1624&x_key=)

<sup>XXI</sup> In the new Charter there are many reminds to the Palestinian people, most of all in the preamble and at article 1, comma 8: “To support and empower the Palestinian people to exercise their right to self-determination and establish their sovereign State with Al-Quds Al-Sharif as its capital, while safeguarding its historic and Islamic character as well as the Holy places therein.”