



OIC - Statement of H. E. Prof. Ekmeleddin Ihsanoglu Secretary General of the Organization of the Islamic Conference to the Global Launch of and Conference on “1001 Inventions: Discover the Muslim Heritage in Our World”

H. E. Prof. Ekmeleddin Ihsanoglu, Secretary General of the OIC despite his sincere desire to be present here personally, was unable to attend this august meeting due to some prior commitments. He has designated me to represent him. I now have the honour to read out his statement to this conference on his behalf.

I Quote:

“Professor Salim T S Al-Hassani,
Chairman of the Board of the Foundation for Science, Technology and Civilization,
Distinguished participants,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It gives me indeed great pleasure and honor to address this august gathering of scholars, academicians and researchers. I am equally happy and delighted to see that there is an apparent interest to learn more about Islam, its history and its contributions to the human civilization at large. The significant progress and advancements achieved in various fields of human endeavors did not in fact, come only as a result of the last two centuries of hard work and scientific research. It is also the outcome of building upon the rich legacy of one thousand years of extraordinary scientific works and scholarly researches undertaken by Muslim scholars.

World civilization is one civilization with many tributaries. Over many centuries the flow of civilization was running uniquely from the East to the West.

To expose further this grand Muslim civilizational heritage, the Foundation for Science, Technology and Civilization has undertaken a commendable mission by initiating the global launch of **1001 Inventions** and holding of this important conference on the subject in collaboration with Muhammad Abdul Latif Jameel Foundation. Let me express my profound appreciation to the two prestigious institutions for their laudable initiating and organizing this marvelous cultural manifestation that would serve as an eye opener allowing new generation to catch a glimpse of tiny portion of a great glorious legacy.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Its indeed heartening to note that the initiative seeks to refresh us all of the hard work of a galaxy of academicians, researchers and historians. Its huge success brings great satisfaction and encourages further dedicated and quality work on this important area.

I am student of science and have spent a good part of my life in research of the achievements of Muslim Scientists in the past. I found that so much of the rich heritage have either been lost or ignored.

For so long the need was seriously felt to reflect the truth of the medieval Muslim world as a golden age for the human civilization. The matter deserves to be adequately and fairly reflected in the school textbooks and curricula in the West as well as through media outlets here.

This would partly contribute in dispelling the stereotypes of Muslims and misperceptions of Islam and consequently result in the reduction of the discrimination against Muslims to a great extent.

To look back into the history, for centuries, the Muslim scholars developed new disciplines and enriched and enlightened Europe, Asia and Africa in various fields and traits of human endeavor including trade, agriculture, academic research, philosophy, law, history, theology, mathematics, algebra, chemistry, medicine, hospitals, optics, music, architecture, anthropology, etiquette, diplomacy, fashion etc.

Within this context, 800 years of Islamic civilization in Spain between the 8th and 15th centuries was a turning point in the history of Europe paving the way for the renaissance. During the period of Muslim civilization in Spain great scholars, scientists, and men of learning and wisdom flourished.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Since many centuries the legacy of Islam was made obscure in the western subconscious and the psych of many in the West. There is a need to celebrate and learn about Muslims and their meritorious contributions to the scientific and technological achievements. In dealing with history of civilizations one will hardly come across any mention of Islam or Islamic contributions. Even until recent times, when some had a mention of Muslims merit, they would only say that Muslims had merely contributed to the transfer of the Greek knowledge to Europe. They brush aside in the process Muslims' pioneering role in preserving the universal human heritage, be it from the Mesopotamia, the Nile valley and the Great Syria or from Greece, India, Persia and beyond. Its high time to recognize the contributions of Muslims which enriched the old knowledge, added to it, corrected many erring concepts and injecting it with many innovative contributions using genuine scientific approach, and introduced to the world new sciences and technologies.

Distinguished participants,

Its unfortunate to note that despite all the advancements and achievements in various fields of human endeavors and within the scope of the current globalized world where cultures, races and religions interact and intermingle, misunderstandings regarding Muslims and stereotyping them in the West is growing. Ignorance of Islam and underestimating tremendous contributions made during thousand years of the Islamic civilization, play a significant role in the steady growth of Islamophobia in the West.

Stemming from the same ignorance and lack of understanding, and due to some anti-Islam publications and propaganda, Islam is stigmatized for the backwardness of some societies and their problems. Today, regrettably Islam is portrayed as a threat to West by some quarters and Muslims are being subjected to discrimination, profiling, indignity and injustice. Islamic sacred symbols and beliefs are insulted and defamed. Muslim cultural traits are tainted as medieval and against moderation. A large section of the western media remains focused to link Islam with terrorism and extremism. This has further contributed to widen the divide between Islam and the West and keep prejudices and misgivings alive.

We earnestly believe that its time for the Islamic world and the West to set aside the growing differences and develop a culture of mutual understanding, respect and dialogue built on the commonalities and shared values. The glorious heritage of the medieval Muslim civilization along with today's scientific and civilizational achievements in the west, should be combined together to form a bigger picture of a common world with inter-religious, intercultural and intercivilizational appreciation and harmony.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC) as an inter-governmental Organization comprising 57 states with many non Muslim observer countries, is committed to the engagement and dialogue based on mutual respect and understanding in line with its principle of moderation and modernization. The OIC continues its efforts with its western partners and stakeholders to pursue a constructive dialogue for the integration of civilizations and cultures.

Before conclusion I have to underscore how strongly Islam gives emphasis to reading and seeking knowledge and Quran's first injunction was to read. Muslims were instructed to learn, teach and help others learn. On this basis, Islam was, in reality, a call to human beings to observe, reflect and ponder on the wonder of the universe, to obtain knowledge to guide his life in tandem with the laws of nature. This was the spiritual incentive that prompted Muslim scientists to explore all venues of knowledge and all branches of science. Its worth noting that the intellectual regression started in the Muslim world when Muslims stopped to pursue scientific studies and researches.

We are confident that this exhibition will help in deepening cultural awareness conducive to filling parts of the gap which separates Islam from the West as well as reviving 1000 years of missing history.

Finally, I would like to express my appreciation to the organizers of this important event with special mention to my very dear and old friend Dr. Salim Al Hassani.

I wish you all the best and the exhibition huge success. I thank you all.”