REMARKS BY

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AT THE SECOND OIC MEMBER STATES CONFERENCE ON MEDIATION

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Excellencies,

Ambassador Aldobeay,

Distinguished Participants from OIC, and Member States, Secretariat and affiliated institutions,

Esteemed Academics and Students,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It's an honor to be here today, with such an esteemed audience and address the Second OIC Member States Conference on Mediation.

We are delighted to welcome all of you here in Istanbul, a city embracing two continents and the cradle of civilisations.

One foot in Europe and the other in Asia, Istanbul has been a refuge to various races, religions, cultures and languages throughout history.

At the same time, this city has been routinely host to many important international events, including the first ever World Humanitarian Summit, and countless others.

Istanbul is also the city in which our conference series have begun. And, we are delighted to organize the second OIC Mediation Conference here in Istanbul again.

As you know, **the OIC is the largest international organization after the UN** in terms of geographical outreach and population. As such, it has a huge potential and a real comparative advantage in the global search for peace and stability.

Yet, we cannot overlook the conflicts and grave human tragedies that prevent the OIC Member States and their people from living in peace.

Given the crisis-ridden and weakened state of politics in the world today, we can rightfully say that the international rules-based order is no longer able to address the world's needs and the crises.

Our world has seen enough bloodshed and tears. The war in Syria has entered its 8th year. Hundreds of thousands of civilians have been killed, millions displaced. A child under the age of five dies every 10 minutes in Yemen as we speak. The conflict in Afghanistan continues to claim lives, also causing further instability for the region.

Today, we are spending more time and effort to solve the crises to save the day rather than addressing the root causes.

The sheer fact that the world is experiencing the highest number of forcefully displaced people since the Second World War shows us that we must work harder together.

Dear friends,

Unfortunately, the Islamic World is not immune to any adverse effect of these global challenges. On the contrary, we are all witnessing the current global threats like increased violence and instability, terrorism irregular migration and many others.

As you know, Hatem-al Anbiya *(the last of the prophets)* Prophet Muhammad said in a hadith, “Make your rows straight, stand shoulder to shoulder and close the gaps, do not leave room for the devils”. This is true for when we pray together in mosques but also true for our daily lives.

If we leave gaps between us, others will cut in. As OIC members and as Muslim nations, we have to make our rows right and stand close to each other.

Expecting the conflicts in the Islamic states to be solved by others is not realistic. The conflict map of the world is getting more complicated and prevention and peaceful resolution of conflicts is as important as ever.

It is heart-breaking to see that the Islamic community, despite boasting a wonderful heritage, today looks like a wreck in a spiral of poverty, misery, hunger, terrorism and conflicts.

But we all know that the LIGHT RISES FROM THE EAST.

It is our civilization that raised prominent figures like Ibn Sina (Avicenna) in medicine, Ibn Rushd (Averroes) in philosophy, Ibn Khaldun in sociology, Piri Reis in geography.

It is our civilization that built such a huge civilization from Samarkand to Cordoba and that made İstanbul, Damascus, Baghdad centres of science and culture.

Islam was born as a religion of peace and civilizations it created have always been built on affection, justice and knowledge.

We should question why our civilization, despite being the centre and pioneer of science, knowledge and development throughout the history, is now lagging behind the West and becomes the playground of Western propaganda.

We should think about why Islamic countries can’t speak with one voice and why we can not unite our forces and hearts on many issues.

We should never forget that the more united we are and the more we work for a shared objective, the more easily we can overcome our hardships and mobilize our potential.

Your very presence here is an act of defying the challenges faced by the Muslim community in the world.

Dear friends,

Situated in a turbulent region, Turkey has been taking a leading role in mediation efforts in and beyond its region.

The Astana, Sochi and Geneva processes are the recent examples of Turkey's efforts for a peaceful resolution in Syria. Only recently, this city hosted the quadrilateral summit on Syria. Yesterday, our President Erdoğan called both Putin and Poroshenko and Trump to mediate recent conflict on Kerch Strait.

Turkey has been also encouraging the international community to take part in preventive diplomacy through various means.

We launched the "Mediation for Peace Initiative" together with Finland within the UN in September 2010. Our aim is to raise awareness within the international community on the importance of mediation as a means of conflict prevention and resolution.

The UN Group of Friends of Mediation was established in the same year and currently it has 57 members from diverse geographies.

Turkey also co-chairs the OSCE Group of Friends of Mediation, together with Finland and Switzerland.

As the current Chair of the OIC Summit, we want to reflect the dynamics of our enterprising and humanitarian foreign policy, to the OIC mechanism in an effort to realize the high potential of the Organization. We believe that OIC has all the necessary ways and means to function in a more effective and efficient way. What we need to do is to help the Organization to adapt itself to the conditions of today's world by developing its capacity to act in a timely and effective manner.

In this context, we, as Turkey proposed Resolutions that were approved at the 45th Council of Foreign Ministers in Dhaka. We led to the first Brainstorming Meeting for the comprehensive reform of the OIC in Jeddah in October 2018. The second meeting is expected to convene in February 2019.

As you would all recall, as a solid instance of prompt and well-timed action, the illegal decision of the US Administration to move its Embassy from Tel-Aviv to Al-Quds and the violence carried out by the Israeli security forces upon Palestinian civilians were confronted by our determined stance.

Following the call of H.E. President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, the 6th and 7th OIC Extraordinary Islamic Summits were held in Istanbul. Furthermore, we carried our Summit Decisions to the UN General Assembly Emergency-Special Sessions and once again, the just cause of Palestinians was endorsed.

Actually, the Organization has long been a **player in the field of mediation**. However, we believe that an increased capacity of the OIC in this field is needed in view of the persistence of several conflicts in and around the OIC geography.

Turkey's Summit Chairmanship of the OIC is guided by one core principle: "**Common problems can only be overcome through common actions."**

There are too many conflicts in our geography and we must find our own solutions. In fact, the future of our geography and our peoples will depend on how we rise (or fail to rise) to this challenge.

Building mediation capacity of the OIC is one way among others to respond to the challenge of peacemaking.

In this regard, we started the **OIC Member States Conferences on Mediation a year ago as part and parcel of a broader, more general drive to develop the role and capacity of the OIC in the area of making peace**.

The First Conference last year served as a platform for innovative thinking and dialogue among officials and unofficial participants.

As a follow up to the conference, we, as Turkey, submitted a resolution which was adopted at 45th Council of Foreign Ministers in Dhaka.

This Resolution has been a milestone in giving a structured approach towards how we think about strengthening the mediation capacity of the OIC.

A number of the steps the Resolution foresees have already been taken: I don't want to detail them, as our team here can explain the details in the next session.

All those developments and approaches form an excellent basis for our future work.

However, we need an accurate assessment of the challenges ahead so we can act on them and make full use of the opportunities.

In this regard, the Conference will start with a presentation of the SESRIC Report entitled "Achieving Peace and Security in a World of Turmoil: An Arduous Challenge for the OIC." ,

In the introductory session, the **Director General of SESRIC, Ambassador Musa Kulaklıkaya,** will share the main findings of the SESRIC Report. Ambassador Akçapar will moderate a session that will open the floor for a free-flowing open exchange of ideas and comments. We hope this Report and the brainstorming session will serve as a solid foundation to further develop our common thinking and understanding of trends and issues.

The following panel will ask how we can move concretely from analysis and ideas to practical steps at the OIC with contributions from Senior Officials and experts from the OIC Member States, OIC Institutions and civil society.

At the end of the day, we hope to have a common understanding on the challenges and opportunities ahead in implementing the landmark Resolution that has opened a new chapter in OIC's role and profile.

Dear friends,

I welcome you all again and wish the Second OIC Member States Conference on Mediation great success and thank you all for being here and contributing to the discussion.

Thank you.