

CHEALLENGES BEFORE THE MUSLIM WORLD AND THE OIC

PRESS RELEASE

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Makkah (September 10, 2005): In order to play the role for which it was created, the OIC must address the issue of the widening gap between the rulers and the masses in the Muslim world on issues of policy, governance and relations with the US, along with measures to protect and promote Muslim identity and achievement of self-reliance.

Senator Prof. Khurshid Ahmad expressed these views while initiating discussion at the "Preparatory Forum of Scholars and Intellectuals for the Extraordinary Session of the Islamic Summit Conference" held in Makkah.

Prof. Khurshid said the OIC should seriously reflect upon the widening gap between the rulers and the masses in the Muslim world because "our real strength lies in the people, along with Allah's blessing." He said any tension, conflict and confrontation between the Governments and the people is bound to weaken both the Governments as well as the Ummah. Saying that every one would have to realize the gravity of the situation, he emphasized "even if we all cannot agree on all issues, at least we should develop a mechanism to evolve consensus or near-consensus and move towards active cooperation on points of agreement and tolerance in matters where there is disagreement".

A fundamental challenge that confronts the Ummah is about its Muslim identity. Upholding the OIC Charter that "common beliefs constitute a strong factor for rapprochement and solidarity among Islamic people" and that the preservation of "Islamic spiritual, ethical, social and economic values" is the only path to progress for mankind, he noted that today it is this very Islamic identity of the Ummah and of the Muslim States that is at stake. It is only by reaffirming and strengthening this identity that the Ummah can face the challenges of the 21st Century, Prof. Khurshid maintained.

Coming to the economic challenge, the learned Senator said achieving self-reliance is a challenge for the Muslim Ummah. He noted that it does not mean seeking to become self-sufficient, nor does it entail isolation or autarky because Muslim countries are part of the global community and ready to play their role on the world scene. "Self-reliance means that degree of political sovereignty and economic autonomy that policy making and setting of priorities could be made without external constraints or pressures," he observed. This means freedom from dependence on outside world that could impinge upon our sovereignty, independence and integrity of decision-making and relates to matters of security, economy, political decision-making and socio-cultural existence.

In his lecture, Prof. Khurshid Ahmad also called for reviewing the achievements as well as weaknesses of the OIC and its key organs. Saying that the formation and continuous existence of the OIC is an achievement and Allah's blessing, he urged that we should sincerely face the question as to why we have not been able to implement most of the decisions and policies agreed upon at the OIC platform over the last 36 years. Let us face

these bitter facts and resolve to find an honourable solution so that whatever we decide is also implemented. We should ponder whether our decisions are really to implement or are they meant for mere window-dressing, he said.

Analyzing the *raison d'être* and performance of OIC on the core issue of Palestine "which constituted the basis for the formulation of the OIC". Prof. Khurshid said that different Muslim countries are taking different initiatives. "This is creating confusion and the Arab League rightly rejected a member country's proposal about recognition and direct dealing with the Israel because it is an occupying power," he maintained.

Prof. Khurshid appealed for a unified stand on the issue of Al-Quds by the OIC and said that "all dealings in respect of Palestinian issue should take place keeping in sharp focus the fundamental question of illegal occupation of Palestine by Israel on the basis of brute force and the blind support of the US." Any action by individual states under whatever pretext is bound to weaken the Palestinian cause. It is the people of Palestine and the Muslim people all over the world whose aspirations and feelings must guide the policies of the OIC, he concluded.

PROF KHURSHID AHMED