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**Statement by H.E. Prof. Dr. Ekmeleddin Ihsanoglu, Secretary General,
Organization of Islamic Cooperation
at the High Level Segment of the 22nd Session of the UN Human Rights
Council
(Geneva - February 28, 2013)**

Mr. President,

Madam High Commissioner,

Excellencies Heads of Delegations,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I have the honor and pleasure to address this important High Level Segment of the Human Rights Council. Allow me, at the outset, to join all those who took the floor before me to congratulate you Mr. President, on your presidency. I am confident that the proceedings under your wise stewardship will further the cause of Human Rights in concrete terms. I take this opportunity to pay a special tribute to the High Commissioner Navi Pillay for successfully completing first term in office. Her commitment and tireless efforts in carrying out the onerous responsibility of addressing all human rights situations around the world are indeed commendable. Let me reiterate OIC's full support to the High Commissioner and her team during the well-deserved second term.

With the 22nd session being held, this Council has indeed matured as the world's premier human rights institution. The six year period since establishment in 2006 has been punctuated by success stories including the review and the first UPR cycle. It, however, is a continuous process which does not afford complacency. It is particularly so, with a view to avoiding the politicization that led to the demise of the erstwhile Human Rights Commission. I reiterate subscription to the view that this Council's main role should be constructive and remedial, and not judgmental or selective.

My continued presence during the High Level segment each year bears testimony to the increasing importance accorded to the Human Rights at the OIC. It is in fact a major pillar of the reform and restructuring exercise. Establishment of OIC Independent Permanent Human Rights Commission - in half the stipulated time - symbolizes the transformation accomplished at the Organization. The Independent Permanent Human Rights Commission (IPHRC) reflects the resolve - expressed at the highest level in OIC - towards mainstreaming human rights perspective

across programs and activities of the organization. The Commission – operationalized last year – developed its Rules of Procedures (RoP) in a record time. It has clearly identified rights of women and children as well as human rights education and Right to Developments (RtD) as the first list of priorities. It simply represents a paradigm shift. It is a major exercise in institution building at OIC. It deserves encouragement as the World's first cross regional human rights mechanism. I am confident that the Member States intend to and will utilize its potential optimally.

**Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen**

This session of the Council is being held at a time when the international scene is littered with hotspots of armed conflict. Situations in Syria, Mali and Myanmar are of particular concern to OIC. With the new trends and techniques of warfare emerging in conflict ridden areas there is a need to ensure that the international law is not violated in any case. We appreciate the active role of the High Commissioner in each case, as reflected in her statements. This Council is the human rights conscience of international community. It has the responsibility to ensure full implementation of international human rights law.

Protection of civilians in armed conflict is of utmost importance. The recent open debate at the UN Security Council took cognizance of the significance of Human Rights Council in this regard. Syria today is a major theatre of armed conflicts. The 12th OIC Summit in Cairo – held earlier this month – clearly pronounced and underlined the Syrian government's primary responsibility of the continued violence and destruction of property. It called for immediate cessation of violence and respect for human rights. On the situation in Mali, the OIC has condemned the acts of terrorist groups reaffirming solidarity with the people of Mali and its National Union Government. The situation of Rohingya Muslims in Myanmar constitutes a major concern of OIC with particular reference to their right to citizenship. I am of the view that the deteriorating human rights situation of Rohingyas in Myanmar merits a focussed attention of this Council. We are confident that the substantive work of this session and the Council will duly address it in terms of a results oriented approach. We believe this Council's role would continue to figure prominently in forging and implementing international consensus. OIC believes in consensus being of the essence towards legitimizing international Community's action.

**Mr. President,
Ladies and Gentlemen**

Let me reiterate the urgent necessity for this Council to address the long standing and permanent sufferings of Palestinian people. The Israeli occupation and policies pose a continuing threat to the entire body of human rights in the occupied Palestinian territories. Key issues including the Palestinian refugees; Civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights in Occupied East Jerusalem; settlements in the occupied Arab territories; apartheid wall; blockade of Gaza Strip; and the Palestinian prisoners have all been riddled with violations of the whole range of Human Rights.

The report of the the International Fact-Finding Mission on Israeli Settlements in the Occupied Palestinian Territory clearly indicates a systematic pattern of expansion in illegal settlements. It carries grave implications with regard to both the human rights of the Palestinian people and the final settlement of the Palestinian issue. I would also urge this session to focus on the exacerbating situation of Palestinian prisoners riddled with human rights violations including protracted arbitrary detentions and extra judicial killings. The Human Rights Council must shoulder its responsibility towards putting an end continuing violations of the Geneva Conventions and other relevant international laws, in this situation.

Promotion and protection of human rights of the Kashmiri people continues to form part of the OIC's agenda. We are particularly concerned at the Human Rights situation in the Indian Occupied Kashmir. The recent arrests of Kashmiri leadership also constitute a matter of concern. We continue to call for a peaceful settlement of the Kashmir dispute. It must be in accordance with the relevant UN resolutions and aspirations of the people of Jammu and Kashmir. We believe engagement between Pakistan and India is a positive development that must be continued and intensified with a view to resolving all outstanding issues.

We condemn the aggression of Armenia against the Republic of Azerbaijan, and urge for strict implementation of UN Security Council resolutions Nos. 822, 853, 874 and 884 and for immediate, full and unconditional withdrawal of the armed forces of Armenia from occupied territories of the Republic of Azerbaijan, including its Nagorno Karabakh region. We call for the resolution of the conflict within the sovereignty, territorial integrity and inviolability of the internationally recognized borders of the Republic of Azerbaijan.

**Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen**

Islamophobia – being a contemporary manifestation of racism – continues to form a vital concern at the OIC. The Fifth Report of the OIC Islamophobia Observatory indicates a higher frequency and profile of Islamophobic incidents. In confirming our worst fears, increasing frequency of such events and their aftermath vindicated OIC's warnings of serious repercussions. The long term implications go beyond these repercussions. The increasing trend of Islamophobia is indeed ominous in an increasingly interconnected and interdependent world. Let me clearly state that OIC has a principled position against denigration of all religions as well as sacred symbols and veneered personalities in each case. Accordingly, I reiterate the call for an observatory at the Office of the High Commissioner to act as an early warning system monitoring instances of Islamophobia, Christianophobia, Judeophobia and all other religions.

The consensual passage of HRC resolution 16/18 has been widely acknowledged as a positive development. The Resolution forms a triumph of multilateralism. It demonstrated OIC's ability to forge consensus on a most sensitive of issues in contemporary international relations. The resolution codified the eight points identified in my address to the 15th Session of the Human Rights Council. These points constitute areas of action, at both the national and the international levels.

We did not stop at mere passage of a resolution. The Istanbul Process initiated with the former Secretary of State Hillary Clinton to build further on the consensus must be carried forward. I appreciate that it has come to be recognized as the way forward by all stakeholders. Its merit lies in acceptance as the least common denominator. This approach carries a lot of potential in terms of evolving a common understanding to deal with the matter while addressing genuine concerns of all parties. The real test, however, lies in implementation. The consensus would, otherwise, be fragile. The approach signified by the resolution 16/18 is not an end in itself. It is a means to an end. We need to build on it.

Within the framework of the Istanbul Process, we must continue to address interrelated issues. Grey areas need to be squarely addressed in search of durable and consensual solutions. The two Istanbul Process events in Washington and London have addressed important areas with regard to the eight points. We look forward to sustaining a candid and frank exchange of views on each of the eight areas of action. The Process must be carried forward. I take this opportunity to inform that OIC will be hosting the next event in the Istanbul Process. This engagement would help us build on the consensus signified by the Resolution 16/18. The text has already evolved as reflected by the latest UNGA resolution 67/178. It must continue to evolve on a consensual basis.

Mr. President,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

This year we celebrate the 20th anniversary of the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action. It was indeed a landmark Document. The international community agreed during the World Conference on Human Rights that national and regional particularities and various historical, cultural and religious backgrounds must be borne in mind while considering the issue of human rights. It is most relevant today as we seek solutions to the challenges of a multicultural and globalized world. We must recognize the significance and utility of an intercultural approach in that endeavour.

I thank you all.