



**Statement by Ambassador Ufuk Gokcen
Permanent Observer of the Organization of the Islamic Conference to the UN
55th Session of the Commission on the Status of Women**

Mr. Chairperson,

The issues concerning women have been among the top priorities in the OIC General Secretariat's agenda in recent years.

The OIC Ten Year Programme of Action, adopted by the Third Extraordinary Islamic Summit held in 2005, highlighted the importance of the role of Muslim women in society and stressed on the need to strengthen laws aimed at enhancing the advancement of women in Muslim societies in economic, cultural, social and political fields in accordance with Islamic values of justice and equality and for protection of women against all forms of violence and discrimination. Since the adoption of the Ten Year Plan of Action in December 2005, three Ministerial level OIC Meetings were held on women, the first in Istanbul in 2006, the second in Cairo in 2008, and the third most recently, in Tehran in December 2010.

The OIC, as part of its new vision set by the Ten Year Plan of Action as well as its amended charter, has been focusing on some key areas of the development and empowerment of women, and has been relentless in its efforts to deliver its commitments at the national, regional and international levels with its partners in order to promote the status of women and protect their rights. We believe that effective implementation of the OIC Plan of Action for the Advancement of Women (OPAAW) will contribute substantively to advance the status of women in the Muslim world and to bring them into the mainstream of society including areas of science and technological advancement. Following the adoption of OIC Plan of Action for the Advancement of Women, we worked diligently to establish a specialized institution under the OIC framework for the development of women in the OIC Member States with its headquarters in Cairo. The Statute of the OIC Women's Development Organization was adopted by the 37th OIC Council of Foreign Ministers held in Dushanbe in May 2010.

The OIC Plan of Action constitutes a comprehensive strategy towards improving the situation of women in political, economic, cultural and social spheres in the 57 Member States of the OIC. It accords the all-important recognition to the rights of women in the Muslim World dispelling misperceptions about the status of Women in Islam. It lends a strategic vision and action oriented impetus to OIC's programs and activities towards incorporating the gender perspective.

Another very significant development is the prospective establishment of an OIC Independent Permanent Commission on Human Rights (IPCHR) - as an OIC organ under the new Charter - which also constitutes a welcome augury for mainstream human rights, including rights of women, in the programs and activities of the Organization.

The OIC General Secretariat as well as the OIC Observer Mission also intend to give priority to forge partnerships and encourage initiatives to highlight the role of women in development, reconciliation and peace-building, including women's role in faith based and interfaith

initiatives.

Mr. Chairperson,

In order to provide a mechanism for the empowerment of women in the areas of science and technology, the Islamic Network of Women Scientists was created during the Fourth Islamic Conference of Ministers of Higher Education and Scientific Research held in Baku in 2008. The network is administered by senior women scientists from OIC Member States. In 2010, the Fifth Islamic Conference of Ministers of Higher Education and Scientific Research held in Kuala Lumpur called for developing mechanisms for joint action among the Member States concerning the empowerment of women in the various scientific and technological fields, in order to foster their presence in higher education and scientific research; highlight their important role in the development of society, and the fight against poverty and other social ills, achieve an effective partnership among all society segments in the various productive and decision making fields, and provide measures to allow women to succeed in their lives.

In this regard, we call on the OIC Member States, their official and civil society institutions as well as other potential partners to increase their engagement with the OIC General Secretariat.

A very important aspect of the OIC's efforts is promoting maternal health. The OIC with the assistance of the US Center for Disease Control and Prevention has established a pilot program entitled, "Reaching Every Mother and Child in the OIC Emergency Care." This project aims at reducing the mortality rate of mothers during delivery and infants for the first 4 weeks. The implementation of this project is lead by women's groups, civil society, community and religious leaders and other international partners.

I thank you for your attention.