

Politics and New Paradigms in the 21st Century Forum

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Speech by

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- H.E. Prof. Dr. Numan Kurtulmuş, Deputy Chairman of the Justice and Development Party (AK Party) of the Republic of Türkiye
- Distinguished Participants, Ladies and Gentlemen
Good Morning and Very Good day to all of you

It is a great pleasure for me to take the stage as a speaker at this Forum on “Politics and New Paradigms in the 21st Century”, which is sponsored by the Justice and Development Party (Ak Parti) of the Republic of Türkiye.

Let me, at the outset; express my deep thanks and appreciation to the organizing community for their kind invitation and for the excellent arrangements and outstanding hospitality.

Distinguished Participants,

The humanity has achieved huge development and advancement in the 21st century in numerous areas, particularly in S&T. However, despite these achievements, humanity is witnessing the worst level of suffering since the end of the World War II and facing daunting economic, social, political, and environmental challenges.

My talk, in this context, will focus on the Islamic world as represented by the 57 countries that comprise the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation, “the OIC”. The OIC block constitutes a substantial part of the world and it is well-endowed with a high potential in terms of both human and natural resources.

With a population of 1.9 billion, the OIC block accounts for a quarter of the world total population. The young population, which is a major engine of socio-economic development, constitutes more than half [51.3%] of the total OIC population. It is one of the most important strengths of the OIC countries.

In addition, the OIC block possess around 65% and 58% of the world total proven oil and natural gas reserves, respectively. Having these huge natural resources of energy gives this block a strong position and provides it with many economic and strategic advantages.

The OIC block is also endowed with a strategic geopolitical and trading location, which control the main international land and sea corridors.

For example, as we know, around 80% of the global merchandise is shipping via sea. Certain points along the global sea trade routes are known as Maritime Choke Points, which are strategic narrow passages with high volume of trading traffic connecting two larger areas to one another.

These Maritime Choke Points are regarded as the primary veins for the world's major supplies and, thus, give strategic advantages to the countries that control them. 6 out of the world 8 primary maritime choke points are controlled by OIC countries.

However, although the OIC block has this huge potential, unfortunately this potential has not translated into the desired levels of development and effective role at the international arena.

This has been reflected in the weak economic performance of many individual OIC countries and of the OIC block as a whole when compared with the world average and the averages of other groups of countries.

For example, despite having a quarter of the world's total population, the 57 OIC countries usually account for less than 10% of the global GDP, global merchandise exports, and global foreign direct investment inflows. And, almost 80% of this economic performance is still concentrated in only 10 countries in the group.

The OIC block also has weaknesses in various socio-economic areas including low enrolment rates in education, high child mortality rates, underutilisation of labour force, lack of sufficient funding for R&D, and inadequate physical and digital infrastructure.

Distinguished Participants,

At SESRIC, our analysis indicates multiple causes that have prevented the OIC block from achieving its potential. However, I would like here to highlight and talk about one chief cause among these causes, which is the state of conflicts in the OIC block.

The conflict and security landscape stands as the main obstacles preventing the OIC block from achieving its potential.

Indeed, the OIC, since its inception in 1969, has been working tirelessly to promote global peace, stability, harmony and security. This is stipulated in the OIC Charter where the Member States of the OIC expressed their determination to:

- ❖ Preserve and promote the lofty Islamic values of peace, compassion, tolerance, equality, justice and human dignity.

However, despite all the efforts of the OIC over the last five decades, the goal of achieving peace and security in the OIC block is still out of reach.

❖ This is evident from the fact that:

The number of conflicts in the OIC block is showing an upward trend and currently the majority of conflicts in the world are taking place in OIC countries. Between 2000 and 2020, the number of armed conflicts, involving OIC countries as a side, increased from 40% to 57% of the world total armed conflicts.

The consequences of conflicts and violence in OIC Countries have been destructive. It is a human tragedy that has taken its toll on the lives of hundreds of thousands of people. Almost three quarters of global conflict fatalities have taken place in OIC Countries. Millions of people have been forced to leave their homes.

In 2021, 13.1 million or almost half [48%] of the worldwide refugees originated from OIC countries. Moreover, the OIC countries are currently home to 32.8 million or 62% of the world's total internally displaced persons and to 19.6 million or 72% of the world's total refugees.

This means that there are tens of millions of vulnerable people in the OIC block are in a critical need of humanitarian assistance.

Distinguished Participants,

To meet the challenge of achieving peace and security, the OIC needs to focus on conflict preventive diplomacy by identifying and eliminating the root causes, thus transform a system that encourages conflicts to a system that promotes peace, security, human rights and inclusive development.

This is, of course, not an easy task. It is a complex one. It needs conducting rigours and holistic research covering the multi-dimensional aspects of conflict, peace and security, including socio-economic factors, inequality, governance, human development, and social and political exclusion.

Over the last few years, we, at SESRIC, have exerted some efforts in this regard. We conducted two research studies: one titled “Towards Understanding Radicalism & Violent Extremism in OIC Countries” and the other titled “Achieving Peace and Security in a World of Turmoil: An Arduous Challenge for the OIC”.

These two reports, which were highly appreciated by the OIC diplomatic community, focused on the changes in the OIC security environment and the resulting new challenges, mostly related to preventing, managing and resolving conflicts.

On the other hand, the OIC also needs to strengthen its mediation capacity as an organization in order to be more effective in resolving conflicts and in establishing enduring peace. Here again, SESRIC has been in the forefront of these efforts.

SESRIC, in close collaboration with the OIC General Secretariat and in response to a Resolution by the OIC Council of Foreign Ministers (CFM) entitled “Strengthening the Mediation Capacity of the OIC”, worked on developing a Mediators Guideline Focusing on Culturally Sensitive Mediation Approaches. This Mediators Guideline, which is now ready for adoption, is expected to have a significant contribution to the literature and the field of mediation at the OIC Level.

In the same vein of our efforts towards enhancing the capacity of the OIC, SESRIC also launched its Diplomacy Capacity Building Programme in 2017. Over the years, SESRIC has provided training to hundreds of junior diplomats from the OIC countries in areas of interest to the OIC diplomatic community such as: mediation, conflict resolution and humanitarian diplomacy.

Still, much work is needed at the OIC level, especially the need for developing new ideas, models, tools and proposals for conflict resolution and prevention. This is due to the fact that the models and tools we have now at hand belong to a setting that is no longer much relevant to OIC Countries.

The models and tools we have at hand are designed for **interstate wars**. However, the majority of conflicts in OIC Countries are **internal conflicts**. Therefore, there is a need to develop innovative approaches that deal with internal conflicts in many fields, but mainly, in the case of OIC Member Countries, in the two areas of **power sharing** and **wealth sharing**.

In fact, the joint efforts of conflict resolution and peace building in the context of OIC Countries should pay a special attention to these two areas (the **power sharing** and **wealth sharing**), as these two issues are now among the contentious issues in the OIC countries, which are experiencing internal conflicts.

Distinguished Participants, Ladies and Gentlemen

Before concluding, I would like to express my deep admiration for Türkiye under the visionary leadership of His Excellency, President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan for establishing a new approach in politics and diplomacy. An approach that is rooted in morality, justice and human values.

With this new approach, Türkiye has been spearheading the challenge to the unjust international order. This is why President Erdoğan's mantra, "the world is greater than five," has resonated with masses around the globe and has become a rallying cry for people who want to reform the United Nations and its Security Council to become more democratic, just and inclusive.

Not only that, but Türkiye has become a leader in promoting harmony and enhancing greater understanding among diverse world civilizations and has been proactive in trying to diffuse mutual suspicion, fear and tension. As a major peacemaker, Türkiye is mediating in hot spots all around the world bringing peace to where there is conflict.

Türkiye has also emerged as a major international humanitarian aid donor. According to the Global Humanitarian Assistance Report, Türkiye is among the largest donors by volume and by percentage of gross national income (GNI) when taking its response to the Syrian refugee crisis into account.

This new Türkiye under the leadership of President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan gives the people of this region and the entire world a glimmer of hope and a promise of salvation.

I would like to stop here and wish this forum all the success in contributing to our understanding of contemporary politics and global issues and increase our ability to foresee the future and the challenges that face humanity.

Thank you