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Prevention of armed conflict

Letter dated 24 January 2019 from the Permanent Representative of Turkey to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to convey herewith a copy of the summary report of the second Organization of Islamic Cooperation Member States Conference on Mediation, entitled “The implementation of resolution No. 53/45-POL: challenges and opportunities”, held in Istanbul on 29 November 2018 (see annex).*

I would be grateful if the present letter and its annex could be circulated as a document of the General Assembly, under agenda item 34.

(Signed) Feridun H. **Sinirlioğlu**
Permanent Representative

* The annex is being circulated in the languages of submission only.



Annex to the letter dated 24 January 2019 from the Permanent Representative of Turkey to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

Second Organization of Islamic Cooperation Member States Conference on Mediation, on the theme “The implementation of resolution No. 53/45-POL: challenges and opportunities”

Istanbul, 29 November 2018

Summary report

Executive summary

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Turkey, in cooperation with the OIC General Secretariat, convened the Second OIC Member States Conference on Mediation in Istanbul on 29 November 2018 under the theme “The Implementation of Resolution No. 53/45-POL: Challenges and Opportunities”. The Second OIC Member States Conference on Mediation was joined by more than 150 participants, including representatives from 41 Member States of the OIC, the OIC General Secretariat, as well as experts and academics.

In the course of the year since the First OIC Member States Conference on Mediation, an important development has been the adoption of the Resolution No. 53/45-POL, entitled “Strengthening the Mediation Capacity of the OIC”, by the 45th Session of the Council of Foreign Ministers in Dhaka on 5–6 May 2018. While several OIC members had already been active in practicing mediation in the past, this Resolution provided a strong political mandate for a more structured and effective OIC approach towards mediation. The Resolution also stipulated several concrete steps to contribute to enhancing the mediation capacity of the OIC and willing Member States, such as the establishment of the Contact Group of Friends of Mediation, a Network of OIC Mediators, Special Envoys and Experts and the continuation of the OIC Member States Conferences on an annual basis. These steps were also among the concrete recommendations of the First OIC Member States Conference on Mediation held in Istanbul on 21 November 2017.

Building on the findings of the First Istanbul Conference and the subsequent OIC Resolution No. 53/45-POL, the Second OIC Member States Conference on Mediation aimed to discuss where the OIC and the Member States stood in the implementation of the said Resolution from the vantage point of the challenges and opportunities.

The Conference was inaugurated with the speeches by H.E. Yavuz Selim Kiran, Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Turkey and H.E. Ambassador Youssef Aldobeay, Assistant Secretary General (Designate) for Political Affairs of the OIC.

In his opening speech, Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Turkey, H.E. Yavuz Selim Kiran noted that the world today is prone to crises and the international system in its current state is falling short of providing solutions. He mentioned that the OIC geography cannot evade the negative implications posed by global challenges and similarly, we cannot afford to ignore conflict and its human costs that impede the quest of the countries and their citizens to live in peace. As the second largest international organization after the UN, the OIC presents great potential in the search for peace and prosperity. H.E. Kiran drew attention to the

efforts by Turkey to increase awareness on the role of mediation in the prevention and peaceful resolution of disputes in the UN, as well as the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) and most recently the OIC.

In his opening speech, Assistant Secretary General (Designate) for Political Affairs, H.E. Ambassador Aldobeay read the statement of the OIC Secretary General, H.E. Dr. Yousef Ahmed Al Othaimen. He noted that since the first OIC Member States Conference on Mediation in 2017, there has been substantial developments regarding the mediation-related efforts of the OIC. This includes the adoption of the Resolution No. 53/45-POL, the first ever OIC resolution on mediation. Ambassador Aldobeay also added that the Resolution offered a powerful mandate for the adoption of an OIC approach that features a greater degree of organizational capability and efficiency in the field of mediation.

After the opening speeches, the Conference continued with the presentation of the new Report, “Achieving Peace and Security in a World of Turmoil: An Arduous Challenge for the OIC” by the Statistical, Economic and Social Research and Training Centre for Islamic Countries (SESRIC) prepared in close collaboration with the Peace, Security and Conflict Resolution Unit (PCSU) of the OIC General Secretariat. The Q&A and discussion session provided an opportunity to reflect on the findings and the recommendations of the Report. The ensuing session addressed the means to enhance the mediation capacity of the OIC in the light of Resolution No. 53/45-POL.

Following the Conference, young diplomats from 17 OIC Member States and students from Turkey joined a 3-hour simulation session to develop their skills in mediation in line with the Resolution’s mandate to provide training opportunities.

Summary of the panel discussions is provided below.

The Summary and findings of the Conference Sessions

First Session: “The State of Conflict in the OIC Geography”

The first session started with the presentation of the Report “Achieving Peace and Security in a World of Turmoil: An Arduous Challenge for the OIC” by Ambassador Musa Kulaklıkaya, Director General of SESRIC. The Report addressed threats to peace and security in the OIC geography, as well as drivers and impacts of conflicts, with a view to preventing and managing them. It also reviewed the efforts of the OIC in mediation and conflict resolution and concluded with a policy discussion.

In his presentation, Ambassador Kulaklıkaya stressed that although the Islamic world has lived in peace throughout history, in the recent past there has been a rise in conflict across the Islamic world despite the global downward trend in conflict numbers. He noted that 60% of the conflicts across the globe take place in the OIC geography, which has grave human costs in terms of mass refugee flows and internally displaced peoples. He drew attention to the fact that 39% of refugees in the world come from countries such as Syria, Somalia and Afghanistan. Ambassador Kulaklıkaya pointed out that the total cost of global conflicts amount to 14.3 trillion USD and mentioned that the prevention of conflicts through mediation remains the most cost-effective option. He argued that the root cause of conflicts is inequality and that economic development is of vital importance. He added further that state fragility is both a cause and consequence of conflict and therefore it reinforces a vicious cycle. With reference to the existing mediation efforts within the OIC, Ambassador Kulaklıkaya highlighted that the OIC has great potential in this field, noting the field missions in Chad, Afghanistan, Southern Thailand, Southern Philippines, Somalia, Sudan, Guinea and Mauritania. In its current state, the OIC Peace and Security

Architecture is composed of special initiatives, PCSU at the General Secretariat, Special Envoys and the Wise Persons Council.

In the ensuing panel discussions, participants were invited to reflect upon the current state of violent extremism, armed conflict and organized violence across the OIC geography and the extent to which mediation is a useful method to counter radicalism and violent extremism. Participants were also invited to share their views on what could be potential resilience-building mechanisms, as well as how the OIC Peace and Security Architecture could be adapted or supported to meet current conflict-related challenges. Participants stressed that the report by SESRIC is instrumental as it reminds the OIC Member States of the pressing need to explore the root causes of conflict across the OIC geography, several participants arguing that conflicts largely stem from weak governance and insufficient levels of economic growth and development. Yet, the latter is also difficult to achieve in the absence of peace, security and stability, meaning that peaceful resolution of conflicts and post-conflict reconstruction are of vital importance. It was also pointed out that one cannot afford to think of economic growth alone, but rather should focus on inclusive, sustainable development to avoid future conflict.

Admitting the importance of conflict analysis for any mediation effort, it was recommended for the OIC to form an academic working group, which could map out conflicts across the OIC geography to find common threads across them. Yet, it was also argued that the efforts of the OIC should not be confined to an academic framework alone. To allow academic insights to translate into actionable steps, there is need for political will. Many participants stressed the need for the OIC Member States to unite and develop a common vision to find the political will for strengthening the mediation capacity of the OIC.

Reflecting upon the discussions, SESRIC Director General pointed out that unless there is political will to find “its own solutions to its own issues”, the OIC geography can become more prone to external intervention. It is therefore prudent for Member States to proactively seek avenues for cooperation with other Member States within the existing OIC Peace and Security Architecture.

It was pointed out that most of the conflicts across the OIC geography are not interstate conflicts but internationalized internal conflicts and that the existing mechanisms are geared rather towards addressing interstate conflicts. To match the capacity of the OIC with the reality on the ground, there is need for partnerships with regional organizations that have the relevant experience, such as the OSCE.

Furthermore, it was recommended for the OIC to develop early warning mechanisms. In response, it was added that OIC field units have important functions regarding early warning capabilities and that these need to be supported. In addition, some participants have highlighted the changing nature of conflicts and noted that as conflicts become more complex, the need for “smart” solutions is also becoming ever more pronounced. It was also pointed out that in addition to interstate conflicts, the mediation portfolio of the OIC should be expanded to include innovative methods to address the root causes of terrorism, as well.

Second Session: “Implementing Resolution No. 53/45-POL – Ways Forward”

The second session was joined by Talha Köse, Associate Professor of Political Science and Vice Dean of School of Humanities and Social Sciences at Ibn Haldun University as a moderator, Ambassador Syed Hassan Raza, Special Secretary of the Middle East, OIC, Legal Affairs at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Pakistan, Ambassador Majed Alqatarneh, Director of Arab and Middle East Affairs Department and Spokesperson for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Expatriates of the

Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan and Ambassador Askar Mussinov, Head of Peace, Security and Conflict Resolution Unit of the OIC General Secretariat as panellists.

The discussions in the second session took stock of what has been achieved in the field of mediation since the adoption of Resolution No. 53/45-POL and focused on practicable steps forward.

There is already increasing awareness regarding mediation in the OIC, with Member States committed to investing and facilitating to this end. Participants argued that although the OIC was an active player in the field of mediation, it has lagged behind the UN in generating capacity for mediation. In this vein, they commended Resolution No. 53/45-POL which provides a solid basis to this end and stressed that mediation should have long been a top priority for the OIC given the pervasiveness of conflict across the OIC geography. They noted that the said Resolution signifies the OIC's very recent endeavour to join the debate on mediation. The 45th Council of Foreign Ministers in Dhaka was as a defining meeting where Member States decided to use mediation as a method of the peaceful resolution of "differences and disputes". Reflecting on the presentation by SESRIC, participants once again drew attention to the fact that 60% of conflicts in the world take place across the OIC geography. It was noted, however, that this should not be taken as an excuse for pessimism and inaction. This very fact alone shows the pressing need for mediation for OIC Member States as a peaceful method of conflict prevention and resolution and that this realization in itself provides opportunities to do more.

It was argued that there is a wide gap between the intention to be active in mediation and the capacity made available to that end. This reflects to the rupture between decision-making and implementation. Participants drew attention to the modes in which the Resolution assigns roles to the OIC institutions, General Secretariat and the Secretary General, such as reinforcing the OIC Peace, Security and Conflict Resolution Unit as foreseen in Para. 4. They noted that the support of these organizational structures is paramount in enhancing the mediation capacity of the OIC in the first place. Some, on the other hand, noted that equal responsibility falls upon the OIC Member States given the need for political will and impetus to enable institutional development.

An observation was that at the very core of the Resolution is interaction between the OIC and OIC Member States and among OIC Member States. Therefore, the Resolution presents a momentum for Member States to be more proactive, propose suggestions as to how to enhance the mediation capacity of the OIC. The Resolution assigned a special role to the Contact Group of Friends of Mediation, which embodied the objective of increasing interaction. Many drew attention to the fact that the Contact Group, co-chaired by Turkey, Saudi Arabia, Gambia and the OIC General Secretariat, is the second largest in the OIC with its currently 24 members. It was noted that this signals the strong political will that is crucial for increasing the mediation capacity of the Organization. Participants argued that while the imminent task of the Contact Group is to facilitate deliberation, as its work progresses it can also be expected to provide guidance towards enhancing the capacity of the OIC in mediation.

Participants frequently referred to Paragraph 5 of the Resolution, which affirms the importance of strengthening the partnerships between the OIC, the UN and other international and regional organizations. They highlighted that there are many actionable steps within this realm. The exchange of experience of other international organizations that have robust capacity in the field of mediation is crucial for every organization to build further capacity. They also stressed that this is instrumental in making the best use of the existing international mechanisms, instead of searching to create new ones. It was also argued that although creating vibrant partnerships

requires a long-term process, the OIC would greatly benefit from the expertise of others. More specifically, participants drew attention to the fact that many OIC Member States are also members of the African Union and the Arab League. Such overlaps present a significant opportunity for access whereby the Member States in question can take the lead in bringing the vision of the Resolution to other regional organizations and strive towards synergy. Other specific recommendations included devising a formula to fully partner with the Mediation Support Unit (MSU) of the UN and the Standby Team of Mediation Experts and greater participation in the Peace-making and Conflict Prevention (PMCP) Programme of the United Nations Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR) by the OIC Member States. It was highlighted that the latter is key for creating networks that could facilitate inter-organizational synergy for mediation.

Participants also welcomed the initial steps towards realizing Para. 7 of the Resolution, which requests the Secretary General to form a “Network of OIC Mediators, Special Envoys and Experts”. It was highlighted that these individuals will be the leading figures to guide the Organization and the Member States and play a definitive role in expounding ideas on mediation.

With reference to the Para. 8, which requests the OIC to provide conflict resolution and mediation training opportunities, participants commended the ‘Mediation for Peace’ Certificate Programme initiated by Turkey in cooperation with OIC General Secretariat, the UN and the OSCE. It was argued that the OIC should not only focus on generating the institutional capacity for mediation but also generate capacity by training diplomats from the OIC Member States. Member States were called upon to initiate similar training opportunities to multiply the present efforts. Some participants also noted that there could be possible gains in creating/expanding targeted training opportunities for mid-level to senior diplomats.

Finally, the participants stressed that the continuation of OIC Member States Conference on Mediation on an annual basis, as called for in the Resolution No. 53/45-POL, is important given that the Conferences provide a significant platform for brainstorming not only among OIC Member States, but also among academics and experts. It is also highly instrumental in keeping the momentum alive towards strengthening the mediation capacity of the OIC.

Concluding remarks

In his concluding remarks, H.E. Ambassador Burak Akçapar, Director-General for Conflict Prevention and Crisis Management at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Turkey, pointed out that the First OIC Member States Conference on Mediation in 2017 was organized with the recognition that the Muslim World was facing major challenges and that research, debates, recommendations, expertise, institutionalization, funding, almost all capacity and capacity-building efforts existed outside the OIC membership. He stressed that preventing conflict and sustaining peace requires a lot of attention, care, effort, and will. Ambassador Akçapar further highlighted that although conflicts are at an all-time low worldwide, there is an upward spike 2010 onwards and that at any rate conflicts are not at an all-time low within the OIC geography. To the contrary, this upward spike is mostly because of the conflicts within the OIC geography. From 2015 onwards, the gap between OIC countries and non-OIC countries in terms of conflict trends has widened dramatically.

Ambassador Akçapar continued, however, that efforts are under way to address this negative trend making the OIC Resolution No. 53/45-POL that presents many opportunities and helps generate capacity for mediation as a conflict prevention and resolution method. The resolution intends 1) to increase interaction among OIC member states and 2) build capacity, both nationally and at the OIC General

Secretariat on conflict prevention and resolution including through mediation. He mentioned that several participants referred to the gap between pledges and actual implementation. This Resolution is already producing concrete results, such as the establishment of the Contact Group of Friends of Mediation, which has potential to facilitate focused and targeted interaction on key issues of peace and the role of mediation. There was also a newly inaugurated training opportunity to diplomats from the OIC, there was also this very Conference. The latter will continue annually to provide a platform to strengthen both the interaction and the mediation capacity of the OIC and its Member States. Therefore even before the first anniversary of the Resolution, a large part of it has already been implemented. Ambassador Akçapar noted however, that Resolution No. 53/45-POL has further life to it and two steps in particular, to the formation of a Network of Mediators, Special Envoys and Experts, as well as the preparation of a Code of Conduct for Mediators, including culturally sensitive mediation approaches, remain to be implemented. In terms of recommendations, Ambassador Akçapar re-emphasized the need to prioritize 1) increasing interaction and 2) building capacity. Regarding the first, not only does the OIC and its Member States need to utilize the Contact Group but also need to connect better with the work at the UN, OSCE and other regional organizations such as the African Union. He thanked the OIC Secretary General and the Secretariat for their support and noted the Conference as a turning point in the further implementation of the Resolution No. 53/45-POL. He further added that the results of the Conference will be shared with Groups of Friends of Mediation at the UN and the OSCE, which Turkey co-chairs. Ambassador Akçapar closed the Conference by emphasizing that there is momentum, strong interest among OIC Member States, right instruments, willing co-chairs and a world of conflicts to help resolve.
