



Under the high patronage of His Excellency Mr Béji Caïd Essebsi, President of the Republic of Tunisia

First ISESCO Conference of Education Ministers

**“Towards boosting and activating joint Islamic
educational action”**

Tunis, Republic of Tunisia
26 Muharram 1438A.H. / 27 October 2016

Final Report

بِسْمِ اللّٰهِ الرَّحْمٰنِ الرَّحِیْمِ

Final Report

- 1.** With the help of Allah, ISESCO Conference of Education Ministers held its first session in Tunis, under the high patronage of H.E. Mr Béji Caïd Essebsi, President of the Republic of Tunisia, on 26 Muharram 1438 A.H. / 27 October 2016, on the theme “***Towards boosting and activating joint Islamic educational action***”, and in the presence of a host of representatives of international, Arab and Islamic organizations.
- 2.** The Conference’s opening session was held under the effective chairmanship of H.E. President Béji Caïd Essebsi of Tunisia, in the presence H.E. Mr lyad Madani, Secretary General of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC); H.E. Dr Abulfaz Garayev, President of ISESCO 12th General Conference, and Minister of Culture and Tourism of the Republic of Azerbaijan; and H.E. Dr Abdulaziz Othman Altwajiri, Director of ISESCO. Also in attendance were their Excellencies the members of the government, leaders of national parties, representatives of the Tunisian national institutions and Islamic, Arab and international organizations, Member States’ ambassadors to the Republic of Tunisia, and a host of prominent personalities and figures from the realms of education, thought and culture.
- 3.** The Conference started with a recitation of verses from the Holy Quran. Then, H.E. Dr Néji Jalloul, Minister of Education of the Republic of Tunisia, President of the Tunisian National Commission for Education, Science and Culture, made a welcome address wherein he greeted the participating delegations and the Conference guests, expressing gratitude to President Béji Caïd Essebsi for having chaired the opening session of the Conference. He also expressed thanks and appreciation to ISESCO and to its Director General, H.E. Dr Abdulaziz Othman Altwajiri, for having chosen Tunisia as venue for the conference and for the considerable efforts made to strengthen communication and cooperation between ISESCO and the Member States.

His Excellency expressed hope that the first ISESCO Conference of Education Ministers will mark a new milestone in joint Islamic educational action, and confirm, through its deliberations and outcomes, the desired shift towards a modern model of schools that instills in students our Islamic faith's values, which advocate middle-stance and work dedication, offers them opportunities of success and excellence, and enhances our presence in the international arena.

4. Thereafter, the Conference's patron, H.E. President Béji Caïd Essebsi of Tunisia, made an address in which he welcomed the delegations participating in the Conference and expressed pride in Tunisia's hosting of the first ISESCO Conference of Education Ministers and his deep gratitude and appreciation to ISESCO Director General, H.E. Dr Abdulaziz Othman Altwajiri, and to his assistants for the commendable services provided by ISESCO to the youth and peoples of the Islamic world; as well as for choosing Tunisia as venue for this event.

His Excellency also explained that, amidst its current critical context marked by enormous dangers and appalling terrorist events, our Islamic world needs to develop a well-thought strategy to push further the reform of our educational, cultural scientific and communication policies and to integrate the knowledge society. This, he added, places on ISESCO and the conference the responsibility to lay the groundwork for a renewal movement in the Member States that pushes education forward towards more advanced levels and facilitates coping with the rapid changes.

In addition, His Excellency paid tribute to ISESCO's three-year Action Plan for 2016-2018, explaining that, with its content elements and guidelines, the Plan testifies to the development witnessed by the Organization, as epitomized by the said action plan's innovative, diverse, rich and insightful approach to the issues of education, science culture and communication.

H.E. President Essebsi highlighted the well-established character of the Tunisian experience of educational, intellectual and *Ijtihad*-related reform, which has demonstrated that a reform that capitalizes on knowledge and expertise and on the principles of fairness and good governance, while being sensitive to the latest developments and successful international experiences, is the right recipe for ensuring success in the present and laying down the bases for a developed society; and called for taking advantage of the Tunisian experience in this area.

By way of conclusion, the President expressed his confidence that the first ISESCO Conference of Education Ministers would contribute to enhancing joint Islamic educational action, opening up new avenues for the advancement of Muslim societies and to achieving all desired results.

5. In recognition of the Republic of Tunisia's sustained support to ISESCO, the Director General of ISESCO, H.E. Dr Abdulaziz Othman Altwaijri, offered the Gold Medal of the First ISESCO Conference of Education Ministers to H.E Mr Béji Caïd Essebsi, President of the Republic of Tunisia.
6. For his part, H.E. Mr Iyad Madani, the OIC Secretary General, took the floor to extend his deep appreciation and gratitude to the President, government and people of the Republic of Tunisia for the warm welcome and hospitality, expressing thanks to ISESCO for its initiative to convene this conference which comes to consolidate its rich record of achievement. He also pointed to the important role of education in fostering the socio-economic development of OIC Member States and preparing Muslim peoples to rise to challenges, calling for more investment in the development of the human capital to prepare a highly educated generation self-immunized against extremist trends. He also underscored the need to place effective educational action on top of Muslim countries' priorities in order to achieve the desired excellence in knowledge, research and innovation, pointing out to the Tashkent Declaration issued by the OIC Foreign Ministers Council held under the theme: **«Education and Enlightenment - Path to Peace and Creativity»**.

At the close of his address, the OIC Secretary General expressed OIC's full support to the efforts aimed at the development of educational systems in the countries of the Islamic world, along with his Organization's hope that this conference will serve as platform towards a new roadmap for the promotion of education in the Islamic world.

7. Then, H.E. Dr Abulfaz Garayev, President of ISESCO 12th General Conference, and Minister of Culture and Tourism of the Republic of Azerbaijan, took the floor to extend his thanks and appreciation to the Republic of Tunisia and ISESCO for the good sense of organization they have shown in this Conference and for their warm welcome and generous hospitality. He also paid tribute to the close cooperation ties between the Republic of Azerbaijani and ISESCO. He then reminded the participants of the Republic of Azerbaijan's ongoing preparations to host two major events in 2017, namely the 4th World Forum on Intercultural Dialogue, in

association with UNESCO, ISESCO and other international organizations; and the 4th Islamic Solidarity Games. In the same vein, he invited the competent parties in the Member States to participate in these two events in order to promote the rising generations through education, culture and sports activities.

- 8.** Afterwards, ISESCO Director General, H.E. Dr Abdulaziz Othman Altwaijri, made an address in which he first placed on record his thanks, appreciation and gratitude for the patronage extended by H.E. President Béji Caïd Essebsi of Tunisia to this Conference, commending the important guidelines and insightful approach to education issues as expressed in the President's address, wishing him every success in his noble mission and steady progress and prosperity to the Republic of Tunisia. He also stated that the First ISESCO Conference of Education Ministers convened in line with the Organization's goals as enshrined in its Charter and in continuation of the efforts to develop the educational system in the Muslim world, pointing out that ISESCO's accumulated experience in joint Islamic educational action shows that rapt attention needs to be paid to pre-university education, particularly to its primary and secondary stages, in tandem with the attention to given to higher education and scientific research.

Besides, Dr Altwaijri explained that by organizing its First Conference of Education Ministers, ISESCO is seeking to spearhead and sustain meticulous attention to research on the development of education curricula and systems, in line with the goals, tools and mechanisms laid out in the Strategy for the Promotion of Education in the Islamic World that the Organization was keen to develop as a roadmap for boosting joint Islamic educational action. In this way, he further explained, education would be an instrument for fostering peace and growth and a driving force of comprehensive development, the ultimate aim being to meet the needs and aspirations of Muslim peoples.

In addition, ISESCO Director General said that the First ISESCO Conference of Education Ministers convened at a critical context that requires Muslim countries, which are at the heart of the world's most tumultuous region, to strengthen solidarity, cooperation, integration and coordination in all areas, including joint educational Islamic action, while expressing his confidence that the Member States will work towards achieving the Conference's sought objectives based on a sense of Islamic solidarity and brotherhood.

- 9.** H.E. the President of the Republic of Tunisia posed for a group photo with the heads of delegation taking part in the Conference.

10. At the close of the opening session, a reception was given by the Minister of Education of the Republic of Tunisia in honor of the participants.

11. Afterwards, a *Ministerial Roundtable on “Strategic approaches to developing education and invigorating its role in fostering development and coexistence”* was held, with H.E. Dr Hatem Ben Salem, Director General of the Tunisian Institute for Strategic Studies, as moderator and keynote speaker, in the presence of H.E. Dr Abdulaziz Othman Altwaijri, ISESCO Director General; and their Excellencies the heads of delegation participating in the Conference. Participants called for building on the outcomes of the Ministerial Roundtable when developing national educational policies in terms of planning, programmes, curricula, staff training, governance, quality, equality of opportunity, monitoring and evaluation, and regional and international cooperation. They also expressed gratitude to ISESCO Director General for his initiative to convene this Ministerial Roundtable as part of the First ISESCO Conference of Education Ministers. In addition, they invited him to convene similar roundtables in the Conference’s forthcoming sessions in order to discuss relevant major issues and emerging educational challenges, propose solutions to them and promote cooperation and joint Islamic action in this connection.

12. Afterwards, a procedural session was held in which the Draft Agenda and Draft Programme were adopted, and the Bureau of the First ISESCO Conference of Education Ministers was formed as follows:

- **Chair:** Republic of Tunisia

- **Vice-chairs:**

- Islamic Republic of Pakistan
- Kingdom of Saudi Arabia
- Republic of Benin

- **Rapporteur:** Republic of the Sudan

On this occasion, H.E. Dr Néji Jalloul, Minister of Education of the Republic of Tunisia, delivered an address wherein he expressed profound gratitude and appreciation to ISESCO and its Director General for choosing Tunisia to host the First ISESCO Conference of Education Ministers.

He explained that the Republic of Tunisia's cooperation with ISESCO is based on solid relations and that the convening of this important ministerial conference in the Tunisian capital would strengthen these relations and lay the ground for a new era of cooperation, coordination and integration among the countries of the Islamic world in the various fields associated with education.

13. Thereafter, ISESCO Director General presented the reports and documents placed on the agenda of the First ISESCO Conference of Education Ministers, namely his report on *ISESCO's Educational Action for Member States and Muslim Communities outside the Islamic World over the period 2013-2015, the Draft Strategy for the Promotion of Education in the Islamic World (amended version), the Draft Tunis Communiqué on Invigorating Youth's Educational Roles in Entrenching the Values of Tolerance and Coexistence, Adoption of the Draft ICEM Rules of Procedure, Establishment of the Consultative Council for the Promotion of Education in the Islamic World and Election of the Council members, and the date and venue for the 2nd Session of the Conference. A presentation was also made on the efforts and outcomes of education reform in the Republic of Tunisia*. In addition, the heads of the delegations of Member States and organizations taking part in the Conference gave statements on the efforts made towards developing education the Member States and organizations they represent.

14. After discussion of the relevant introductory notes and presentations, the Conference adopted the following resolutions:

- *The Conference adopted the Report of the Director General on ISESCO's Educational Action for Member States and Muslim Communities outside the Islamic World over the period 2013-2015*" as contained in Document (ICEM-1/2016/3.1), taking into consideration the Conference's observations. The Conference commended the strategic vision underlying the educational action of ISESCO over the period 2013-2015, which was centered on sustainability priorities relating to improving Member States' formal and non-formal education systems, including particularly upgrading pre-school education, developing technical and vocational education to curb youth unemployment, revamping adult literacy programmes through incorporation of training for rural girls and women on the management of small income-generating projects, fostering the teaching of Arabic as a non-native language as part of the programmes of ISESCO's specialized educational centers, providing pedagogical training for these centers' teachers of Arabic language

and Islamic Education, modernizing the curricula of both subjects; invigorating the role education plays in comprehensive development and in the enculturation of the shared universal values. The Conference also welcomed ISESCO's initiatives aimed at creating more regional specialized educational centers, establishing and activating university chairs, allocating annual prizes for literacy and educators, and providing scholarships to bright students from Member States and from Muslim communities outside the Islamic world; commended the education-related achievements ISESCO has made for Member States and Muslim communities outside the Islamic world over the period 2013-2015 and throughout its history; and invited the Director General to continue such efforts within ISESCO's focus areas and under its future action plans and educational programmes, in such a way as to enhance joint Islamic educational action and meet Member States' needs and commitments regarding the goals of the 2030 international agenda, the OIC Ten-Year Programme of Action 2015-2025 and the African Agenda 2063. In the same vein, the Conference invited Member States, specialized institutions, partners and donors to increase their support for ISESCO's efforts in educational areas of common interest and to provide the procedures and the relevant material, technical and human resources necessary for bringing such efforts to full fruition. It also thanked national, regional and international institutions, governmental and non-governmental, which contributed to the funding and implementation of the reported programmes and activities as well as to the realization of such outstanding achievements for the Member States and for Muslim communities outside the Islamic world; expressed gratitude to the Director General and his assistants for having prepared the Report, and invited him to have the item related to the Director General's report on ISESCO's educational action included, on a regular basis, in the agenda of ISESCO Conference of Education Ministers.

- ***The Conference adopted the document on the efforts and outcomes of education reform in the Republic of Tunisia*** as contained in Document (ICEM-1/2016/3.2). It commended its content elements and outputs, and invited Member States to use this leading experience for guidance within the framework of bilateral and multilateral cooperation. The Conference also commended the efforts of the Government of the Republic of Tunisia, represented by the Ministry of Education, consisting in the major structural reforms it has conducted to develop its educational system at all levels, and in the particular attention it pays to preparing young people to effectively

contribute to the promotion of development and coexistence; and thanked the educational community, national organizations, political parties and civil-society institutions in the Republic of Tunisia, and all international and regional organizations having contributed with their expertise and inputs to preparing the document on education reform in Tunisia.

- ***The Conference adopted the Strategy for the Promotion of Education in the Islamic World (amended version)*** as contained in Document (ICEM-1/2016/4.1), taking into consideration the Conference's observations. It encouraged seeking guidance in the guidelines and goals of this Strategy in the process of developing national educational policies; and building on the Strategy's forward-looking vision regarding the priorities of future educational action in the Muslim world, in such a way as to ensure optimal benefit from its content elements and insights, taking into account each Member State's specific context and needs, the ultimate aim being to keep abreast of the present and future demands and achieve the expected comprehensive development. The Conference also called for taking appropriate measures, enacting relevant legislation, providing adequate material and technical resources, expanding the scope of consultation with ministries and with other production sectors and civil society institutions concerned with educational issues in the Member States, and instructing the competent national authorities concerned with educational planning and evaluation and other such technical authorities to implement the Strategy, without losing sight of the specific local needs and contexts. It also called for seeking inspiration in the Strategy's philosophy to ensure the expected transition in all educational stages from a teaching-based into a learning-based model of education and from an instruction-based into a smart digital school; invigorating the role of education in entrenching shared Islamic and universal values; and accounting for such efforts in the national reports submitted to the meetings of ISESCO Conference of Education Ministers to make the best of them and ensure a successful sharing of experiences in this connection. In addition, the Conference called for boosting educational cooperation, strengthening international and regional partnership in the education sector, and ensuring diversified forms of access to the financial support opportunities offered by regional and international financial institutions, the private sector and the Arab and Islamic charitable and waqf organizations, in order to boost the sectors related to comprehensive sustainable development. It also expressed support for the national mechanisms in charge of addressing educational issues, such

as national education and training councils and think tanks aimed at the development of the educational system, and all other such mechanisms dedicated to the monitoring and evaluation of educational action, and entrusted them with monitoring the implementation of the Strategy for the Promotion of Education in the Islamic World. The Conference lauded ISESCO's efforts devoted to the promotion and invigoration of joint Islamic and international educational action in order to develop the educational systems of Member States; thanked ISESCO along with its Director General and his assistants for having prepared the "Strategy for the Promotion of Education in the Islamic World", adopting it as a reference document for joint Islamic educational action, and invited the Organization to ensure follow-up to its implementation and to set up appropriate mechanisms to this end. In the same vein, the Conference invited the Director General to submit to its forthcoming session a report on the implementation of the "Strategy for the Promotion of Education in the Islamic World".

- ***The Conference adopted the Tunis Communiqué on Invigorating Youth's Educational Roles in Entrenching the Values of Tolerance and Coexistence*** as contained in Document (ICEM-1/2016/4.2). In this connection, the Conference encouraged seeking guidance in the guidelines of the Communiqué in developing youth-oriented educational plans and programmes in such a way as to invigorate their educational roles in entrenching tolerance, civic values, human rights and coexistence, and shielding them against vulnerability to violence, extremism and terrorism. It also commended ISESCO's efforts and initiatives to invigorate youth's educational roles in fostering coexistence and addressing contemporary international issues, and invited the Organization to increase these efforts and to consolidate cooperation and partnership relations with Member States and international and regional specialized organizations to raise youth's awareness about the values shared by the world's youth and strengthen understanding among them.
- ***The Conference, after having adopted the Rules of Procedure of ISESCO Conference of Education Ministers, established the Consultative Council for the Promotion of Education in the Islamic World***, and invited the Director General to prepare the Council's draft Rules of Procedure and to submit them for approval to the Council's first session and then to the Conference's second session for adoption.

The Conference then elected the members of the Consultative Council for the Promotion of Education in the Islamic World for a three-year term, renewable once, as follows:

◆ **Member States:**

- **Arab Region:**

- State of Qatar
- Arab Republic of Egypt
- Kingdom of Morocco

- **African Region:**

- Republic of Chad
- Republic of Côte d'Ivoire
- Federal Republic of Nigeria

- **Asian Region:**

- Republic of Azerbaijan
- People's Republic of Bangladesh
- Malaysia

◆ **Ex-officio Members:**

- State chairing the Conference session
- The Islamic Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (ISESCO) in its capacity as Secretariat of the Conference and Secretariat of the Consultative Council.

The Conference invited the Member States to designate their representatives to the Council within three (3) months as from the date of the resolution, and mandated the Director General to designate another State as member of the Council, in coordination with the Conference Chair, in the event ISESCO General Directorate has received no nomination from one of the States concerned within the prescribed time limit. It also noted that the Member States should cover the travel expenses of their representatives to the Council, while ISESCO should bear their accommodation expenses over the duration of the Council.

- ***The Conference took note of the statements of heads of Member States' delegations and participating organizations on their efforts for developing joint international and Islamic educational action.*** The Conference commended the efforts being devoted by the Member States and parallel international and regional organizations to the promotion of educational issues as part of their international and regional commitments, inviting them to continue their efforts to implement the resolutions of the specialized ministerial conferences, in such a way as to meet Member States' needs, address their priorities and boost their public policies aimed at developing joint Islamic educational action.
 - ***The Conference decided to hold the second session of ISESCO Conference of Education Ministers in October 2019,*** and mandated ISESCO Director General to contact Member States to determine its venue, noting that it should be held at ISESCO headquarters in Rabat in the same date, in the event no Member State offers to host it.
- 15.** The Conference also issued a Communiqué on Support to Jordanian Educational Institutions Hosting Syrian Refugee Children and Students, wherein it stressed the necessity for increasing attention to the education-related situation of the Syrian refugee children and students, called for providing support to the Jordanian educational institutions to help them accommodate the large number of Syrian refugee children and students, and thanked the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan for its praiseworthy efforts in this connection.
- 16.** The Conference then issued a Communiqué on Support to the National Educational, Cultural and Religious Institutions in Palestine and Al-Quds Al-Sharif, wherein it commended the decisions and resolutions issued by UNESCO Executive Board in support of the inalienable right of Palestinians and Muslims over Al-Aqsa Mosque, and stressed the need for concrete and immediate actions and initiatives to support the national educational, scientific, cultural and religious institutions in Palestine and Al-Quds Al-Sharif.
- 17.** At the close of its deliberations, the Conference adopted the ***Tunis Declaration on Boosting Joint Islamic Educational Action***, wherein it reiterated its resolve to step up efforts and promote cooperation, Pan-Islamic and international solidarity for the advancement of education in the Member States, while endeavoring through education to mainstream a culture of quality and innovation, peace and coexistence. Afterwards, the Director General of ISESCO,

H.E. Dr Abdulaziz Othman Altwajiri and the Tunisian Minister of Education, H.E. Dr Néji Jalloul, respectively took the floor to express their gratitude and appreciation to the President of the Republic of Tunisia, H.E. Mr Béji Caïd Essebsi, for having bestowed his high patronage upon the conference and for having attended its opening session. They also expressed gratitude to the attending delegations of Member States and all parties and committees having contributed to the conference's success by their concerted efforts; and commended the outcomes and important resolutions of the conference. Finally, the Conference addressed a message of thanks and gratitude to H.E. President Béji Caïd Essebsi of the Republic of Tunisia.