

## Ban praises UN partnership with Islamic States to overcome global challenges



Secretary-General meets head of OIC

24 September 2010 – Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon today lauded the role of the Organization of the Islamic Conference (**OIC**) as a partner of the United Nations in seeking solutions to a wide range of global problems, including conflict in the Middle East, instability in Iraq and civil strife in Afghanistan.

“The OIC is a strategic and crucial partner of the United Nations, and plays a significant role in helping to resolve a wide range of issues facing the world community,” Mr. Ban said in a **message** to the annual coordination meeting of OIC foreign ministers, which was delivered on his behalf by Shaaban M. Shaaban, UN Under-Secretary-General for General Assembly and Conference Management.

Mr. Ban said this year’s OIC ministerial coordination meeting was being held at a crucial time for peace process in the Middle East, with direct talks between the Israel and the Palestinian Authority having resumed.

“The continued support of Arab and Muslim countries will remain crucial,” the Secretary-General told the OIC ministers, who met at UN Headquarters in New York on the sidelines of the General Assembly’s high-level debate.

On Iraq, the Secretary-General said that is important that all political leaders work in a spirit of national unity and inclusiveness to form a new government. Better regional cooperation and the normalization of Iraq’s relations with its neighbours are essential elements for stability and prosperity, he said, adding that the OIC was well placed to support those efforts.

Mr. Ban noted that the Kabul Conference on Afghanistan in July resulted in a detailed roadmap for a transition to greater Afghan responsibility in security and sectors. “I have been pleased to note the solidarity of Islamic countries with Afghanistan, the generous assistance provided, and the clear stand against terrorism,” he said.

As one of Sudan’s key partners, the Secretary-General urged the OIC to support a credible referenda process in southern Sudan and the Abyei area of the country. “We also count on your assistance in developing the capacity of southern Sudan institutions regardless of the outcome of the referenda. I would also welcome OIC in urging Sudan to deter attacks against United Nations peacekeepers and humanitarian workers in Darfur,” he said.

Voters in southern Sudan will cast their ballots on 9 January next year to decide whether to secede from Sudan or remain united with the rest of the country. On the same day, residents of Abyei, located in the

centre of the country, will vote separately on whether to retain Abyei's special administrative status in the north or become part of Bahr el-Ghazal state in the south.

On Pakistan, Mr. Ban said the UN continued to respond to the flood emergency there and urged the OIC to continue to help Pakistan to strengthen its relief and recovery work, as well as its longer-term reconstruction efforts.

Turning to the Millennium Development Goal (MDGs), the internationally agreed targets to eradicate extreme poverty and improve standards of living, the Secretary-General noted that progress has been uneven in OIC Member States, but stressed that the goals are still achievable.

"Some countries in the Middle East continue to face enormous challenges in reducing poverty, improving health and empowering women. In Western Asia, the food and economic crises have increased the prevalence of hunger.

"Achieving gender equality remains a challenge. The aim of the [MDGs] summit and, our imperative moving ahead, is to transform the pace of change from what we have seen over the past decade into dramatically faster progress," Mr. Ban said.

"I look forward to continuing to work in partnership to promote development, to respond to emerging threats, and to uphold the values on which our organizations are based," he added.

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