



PRIME MINISTRY
PRESIDENCY FOR
TURKS ABROAD
AND RELATED COMMUNITIES

CONCEPT NOTE

WORKSHOP ON

"MUSLIM DIASPORA: PROSPECTS AND CHALLENGES FOR GLOBAL PEACE AND PROSPERITY "

12-13 MAY 2018, ISTANBUL, TURKEY

1. Background and Rationale

Global mobilization has reached to an unprecedented high in contemporary societies. The United Nations Population Division estimated that in 2015 the number of international immigrants on a worldwide scale has reached approximately to 244 million (about 3.3% of the World Population). In the face of increasing immigration across the world and a set of new social problems this global mobilization brings with it— from questions of political rights to economic integration— the concept of diaspora has become ever more relevant both for host countries and immigrant communities.

Regional distribution of Muslims

Population by region as of 2010



Percentage of world Muslim population in each region as of 2010



Note: Population estimates are rounded to the ten thousands. Percentages are calculated from unrounded numbers. Figures may not add to 100% due to rounding.

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Within the current global mobilization, Muslim mobilization strikes the eye in particular. Although a great deal of Muslims continues to live in Asia-Pacific and the Middle East-North Africa, a considerable number live in “non-Muslim” countries and this number is growing rapidly.

In 2010, the number of Muslims in Europe reached up to 43,470,000 making Islamic religion the biggest religious minority in the region. The same year in America, the number of Muslims reached 4,320,000.

It is estimated that Muslims will constitute 8% of the European population in 2030 and 2.1% of the American population in 2050. Overall, until 2030 the number of countries that host more than 1 million Muslims will be seventy-nine. “Non-Muslim” countries like Belgium, Canada, and the Netherlands will be in the top seven of this category. These numbers indicate that the size of diasporic Muslim communities is growing rapidly and therefore it is critical to pay attention not only to their problems and challenges but also to improve the conditions and



opportunities for them to make greater and impactful contributions to social, cultural, economic and political development in their countries.

Over decades, several factors have triggered Muslim immigration, including but not limited to: the impact of the colonial past, the need for labour in the Western countries, and the unemployment problem in the Eastern countries, followed by family reunification and asylum claims. In the 21st century, growing unrest and terror in Muslim regions have become additional push factors for Muslim global mobilization. Especially in the Middle East after 2010, many Muslims have been forced to abandon their countries due to civil wars and terrorism. Most of these groups have emigrated for economic reasons, with the hope of returning to their homeland; nevertheless the vast majorities have not returned and have begun to live in a guest country with their families.

The Muslim Diaspora has a diverse profile, such as country of origin, ethnicity, religious belief (sects), and socio-economic status and education level. One historical pattern that defines Muslim immigration has been clustering of certain Muslim country citizens in certain non-Muslim countries. For instance, in France the Muslim population is predominantly from the Maghreb countries, namely, Tunisia, Algeria and Morocco, while Turks are the main Muslim immigrant category in Germany, the Indian and the Pakistanis constitute the main Muslim immigrant segment in the United Kingdom. It should be noted that some Muslim groups, due to the gain of citizenship rights laws in the host country have lost their country of origin citizenship as well as the status of immigrant or foreigner.

Immigration to a new country poses many challenges as well as new opportunities. Cases where the host and country of origin have great religious and cultural differences are more vulnerable and exposed to severe adaptation and integration problems. Across the Muslim Diaspora, the main difficulties in terms of integration with the host country seemingly are language problems (having difficulties with the host country's language), unemployment or having to work in jobs that are substantially below one's skill, education, and knowledge level, and lower access to educational and socio-economic upward mobility. The broader international political context also impacts life quality and chances of Muslim immigrants; events such as the 11th September, the publication of caricatures of Prophet Muhammad and subsequent attacks on Charlie Hebdo, and bombed attacks in major European cities, have negatively affected the image and lives of Muslims in host countries.

On the other hand, with global remittances tripling over the past decade and now outstripping official aid, increasing attention is being given in both public and private forums to the issue of how the growing Diasporas from the developing world could promote development in their homelands. Indeed, diaspora involvement in development opportunities in the homeland has increased significantly during the past decade.



When we observe the rate of external migration (emigration) in 23 Member States of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), for which data are available in 2015, the number of immigrants was over 1 million. Such high numbers in the majority of Muslim countries points out to the pressing need to further and more thoroughly study and work with the Muslim Diaspora.¹

With the recognition of such need and alarmed by the problems they face, resulting from discrimination, repression or persecution, the 44th Session of the Council of Foreign Ministers held in Abidjan, Republic of Côte d'Ivoire on 10-11 July 2017, adopted the Resolution No. 1/44-MM "On Safeguarding the Rights of Muslim Communities and Minorities in Non-OIC Member States". The Resolution emphasizes the need to respect the rights of Muslim communities and minorities in non-OIC Member States, and stresses the importance of continued coordination between the OIC Member States in order to find ways to assist them to solve their problems, protect their religious, cultural, civil, political and economic rights, and preserve their Islamic identity.

In this perspective, SESRIC, jointly with the Presidency for Turks Abroad and Related Communities (YTB), will organize a "Workshop on Muslim Diaspora" with the purpose of exploring collaboration opportunities among diaspora authorities of the OIC Member States that are in charge of the citizens living abroad.

2. Objectives of the Workshop

The main aim of this workshop is to gather information on policies and works done by OIC Member States, with considerable amount of their citizens living abroad, on Diasporic communities to improve those communities' overall economic, social, and political well-being and enhance their success including their contributions both the host countries and countries of origin. For that goal, the workshop will inquire the problems and opportunities facing Diaspora communities and the nature and aspects of their relations with the host country. The workshop will contribute to:

- Identifying the current situation of Muslim Diaspora regarding existing obstacles and challenges;
- Deepening and spreading knowledge about policies, strategies and activities of Diaspora authorities of Member States;
- Exchanging experiences and good practices amongst Member States on the ways and means for overcoming problems;

¹ United Nations International Migration Report 2015



- Exploring and developing effective cooperation models to carry out successful projects which will contribute to solving socio-economic, religious and cultural problems Diasporic communities experience on daily basis.

3. Methodology of the Workshop

The workshop will be held over two days. The first day will be composed of thematic sessions that will focus on one key aspect of the Muslim Diaspora issue. Each thematic session will be followed by a 10 minute Q&A. Thematic sessions will serve a broader framework, setting the tone of the workshop. The second day will be composed of presentations by national institutions relating to Diaspora and civil society organizations active in the field of Muslim Diaspora. Countries and civil organs will introduce their institutions/organizations and their activities. This will enable to host the closing session in the form of brainstorming session where all participant can formulate and suggest the ways in which intra-OIC collaboration can be improved and actions that can be taken to improve the status of Muslim Diasporic communities. Finally, brainstorming discussion will also bear upon discussing possible approaches to how to improve relations between communities and the host country.

4. Expected Outcomes and Follow-up

In order to contribute to global welfare and peace, the workshop will focus on issues faced by the Muslim Diaspora and develop collaborative actions to solve them. The workshop will shed light on the current situation of Muslim Diaspora. This will firstly allow the start of the necessary preliminary works with a view to developing a road map for strengthening cooperation amongst Muslim Diaspora, as well as helping to work out national collaborative projects.

5. Date and Venue

The venue and date will be held in Istanbul on 12-13 May 2018.

6. Working Language

The working language of the meeting will be English with simultaneous interpretation into Arabic and French.

7. Target Group

The participants of this workshop will include government officials from key Diaspora Authorities from OIC Member States, which have the highest population living abroad and which can share best-practices proven to be effective. The representatives from NGOs,



universities and international organizations in charge of Muslim Diaspora issues will be also invited to the workshop.

8. Workshop Partners

The workshop will be jointly organized by SESRIC and the Presidency for Turks Abroad and Related Communities (YTB).