



MUSLIM VISION TO ACTION STATEMENT Revised June 2003

Preamble

The global Muslim community is made up of people who believe in the principle of *tawhid*, i.e., that God alone is worthy of worship and servitude and that Muhammad is God's messenger. Muslims believe that before Muhammad, the Final Prophet, God sent many prophets and messengers for the guidance of humanity. In spite of differences in religious laws and customs, their fundamental teachings were essentially the same.

All Muslims agree that *tawhid*, which implies the unity of humankind under God, is the foundation of Islamic life. Muslims differ widely in details, but always treat the Qur'an and *Sunnah* (the words and works of the Prophet) as the basic source of guidance. For the global Muslim community, understanding and interpreting its basic sources of guidance—against the backdrop of ever-changing human society and world situations, and with a view to progress in science and technology—is a continuous, open process.

Muslims respect differences in belief and practice among religious and spiritual communities and appreciate all efforts at developing better mutual understanding among people of different religions. There is no justification for hatred on the basis of faith. Rather, religion should function in contemporary society as a moral force leading to a peaceful, just, and sustainable world. Religious people must cooperate to make this world a better place and should not allow differences in religious belief and practice to stand in their way.

What follows is a discussion of the principle areas where cooperation among religious communities as well as between religious communities and other institutions may help us to move together toward a better world. From the Muslim perspective, the *tawhidic* principle demands economic and social justice, solidarity with our fellow human beings, and responsible living in an interdependent world.

Evidence that the World is “in agony”:

Glaring disparities in power, wealth, and knowledge exist within nation-states and across the globe. Violence, bloodshed, terror, and war threaten the very fabric of human society in all parts of the world. Political and economic injustice, corruption, increasing poverty, and the accumulation of wealth in the hands of the few all contribute to the further

alienation of the people of the world. Exploitation and degradation of the Earth's resources, increasing pollution, and species extinction offer dramatic proof that humankind is not following a sustainable path. In developed and developing nations human rights are violated and the dignity of the individual is sacrificed to greed, lust for power, and false notions of progress. And in virtually every society, the dignity, rights, and hopes of women are denied.

Muslims believe that each of these critical areas exemplifies the human disregard of the principle of accountability before God, which is the essence of *tawhid*.

Perceived systemic problem:

The leading institutions at national and global levels are largely unable to respond positively to contemporary challenges. Moreover, they often do not appear to be listening to the plea for justice. In the same way, our most powerful institutions seem to disregard the steady poisoning of our Earth and the selfish abuse of resources that should be shared widely and justly by all. Too often the world's religious communities have a role in exacerbating the problem.

The roots of current political, economic, and social imbalance and inequity are behavioral. Institutional reforms alone cannot improve the situation. The pursuit by each individual of his or her self-interest must be moderated by a concern for others resulting in caring and sharing. This ingredient is best supplied by religions, but reason too affirms this in view of humanity's shared habitat and the interdependencies in the human situation in general.

The world's religious and spiritual leaders must rise to the challenge and consider ways to re-energize and re-generate their faith communities. The global Muslim community must respond to contemporary challenges—and to the larger challenge of a world and a human community in need—in a spirit of serious self-criticism (*ih̄tisab*) and reflection (*tafakkur*). This cannot happen without a re-awakening to the *tawhidic* mission that demands *ij̄tiḥad* (fresh and creative thinking) and transformation of our own community as the first step towards building a better world.

What is the vision of what the world can be?

We envision a world in which justice, compassion, and love guide human conduct. The world can be a place in which the spirit of *tawhid* prevails.

We envision a world in which the guarantee of an adequate standard of living *with dignity* to every human being, anywhere, at all times, is regarded as a collective commitment.

We envision a world in which political leaders—as trustees under the sovereignty of God—are chosen by and accountable to the people, and in which governance is based on the principles of transparency and consultation (*shura*) with the people.

We envision a world in which all share responsibility for the Earth and all life.

We envision a world in which—although the overall framework of free trade and globalization may be here to stay—international arrangements protect the weak and the small so that neither their dignity nor their survival is at stake.

What brings out our best nature?

One important way to bring out humankind’s best is through civilizational dialogue. The focus of civilizational dialogue is not a final verdict on truth or falsehood, superiority or inferiority. The focus is on living together, learning from one another and making the human family, and the global village in which it lives together, richer and stronger. The arrogance of power or the claim of spiritual superiority both negate the humility required of a true person of religion and a truly civilized person.

This requires, in the first instance, preventing confrontation. Cooperation to realize the common goals of all civilizations must be based on a vision that is truly universal and cosmopolitan, rather than parochial, regional, or ethnic.

The dialogue of civilizations can overcome the destructive modern notion of the “clash of civilizations.” Those who have taken the latter approach—in the wake of September 11—have their own agendas. Men and women of religion should rise to the occasion, expose such calls to destructive confrontation, and rally humanity to the causes common to all civilizations: survival, freedom, justice, human dignity, peace, sustainability, and moral excellence and progress. They must oppose all hegemonic agendas that would impose the will of some over others.

Why is there reason for hope?

Muslims draw hope from their understanding that they are a people with a profound sense of love and loyalty to God and a deep sense of community and belonging. Islam is an open community of believers that are self-reflective and seriously concerned with the critical issues that humankind faces today. The great majority of Muslims share the confident expectation that addressing these critical problems requires the cooperative efforts of conscientious people of the world, from all faith communities.

What should be done to reach the vision?

Muslim leaders, scholars, teachers as well as major Islamic organizations should take the initiative to build a broad Muslim consensus on steps that must be taken to move toward a more just, peaceful, and sustainable global society. This effort should be made with all enthusiasm and commitment, in the spirit of *tawhid*. The core of the *tawhidic* approach to action is the recognition that the human being is servant only to God. That approach finds expression in these fundamental affirmations:

- Humankind is one family, one community; this demands of each of us a fundamental commitment to the social and economic welfare of the other.
- The Earth's resources are entrusted to us by God for stewardship, for just and appropriate use by all people, and as a sign of God's creative magnificence. Humankind must cherish the Earth and all life.
- Our loyalty to Truth gives us freedom of thought, expression, and action. It also accords freedom from enslavement to rigid dogmatic or formulaic structures, and freedom for creative engagement with the world and its critical issues.

Specific actions?

- Muslim leaders, scholars, and teachers must make clear to the world, to Muslims and all others, that the killing of any innocent person calls forth the wrath of God. This is why such an act is forbidden even in war. The global Muslim community should demonstrate that terrorists have no place within it.
- Muslims should work together and with other communities and institutions to urge the elimination of nuclear weapons and all weapons of mass destruction. In addition, the global Muslim community should take up an active role in the international campaign against landmines.
- Muslims should join energetically with other communities, NGOs, and institutions dedicated to awakening humanity to the existence of deep-rooted injustice in the socio-economic structures of present society. Muslims should join efforts to find globally sharable paths to sustainable economic growth and social justice.
- A new Islamic initiative should be created to develop widespread consciousness among Muslims that those who have power over the Earth and its resources have a sacred trust from God and are obliged to safeguard the planetary ecosystem and to provide just and sustainable access to Earth's resources. This initiative should include—but not be limited to—research and publication, networking, and active

cooperation with appropriate organizations. As a first step, all Muslims are urged to support efforts such as the Earth Charter. (Note: the document can be viewed and downloaded at <http://www.earthcharter.org>.)

- Muslim educators and organizations should develop a coordinated initiative to restore democracy in Muslim countries. A key dimension of this effort is the creation of new literature explaining the social, economic, and democratic implications of tawhid. In addition, the effort should create a unified Muslim voice to urge western powers to end their long-standing support of anti-democratic trends in Muslim countries.
- The Islamic community must immediately take steps to empower Muslim women. New energy must be given to national and international programs for the education of girls and women. Muslim organizations should act to strengthen the movement for social reform and empowerment of women in the Muslim community and in human society at large. In addition, the global Muslim community should work to share with the larger world its most enlightened teachings with respect to the role of women in society.
- The global Muslim community should work with other religious communities, with the organizations of civil society, and with other institutions to face the growing problem of corruption in our world.
- It is imperative that Muslims work to ensure that the curricula and syllabi of religious education throughout the Islamic world emphasize values such as peace, universal human solidarity, justice, compassion, honesty, and integrity.
- Muslim groups and communities should work to engage the media, the school, the family, the mosque and other institutions to develop empathy and understanding among Muslims for all human beings and indeed for all living beings.
- Finally, the global Muslim community must develop a univocal commitment to civilizational dialogue, a sincere effort to build understanding and harmony between Islamic and all existing civilizations. Such a dialogue must immediately begin to engage the great issues of our time, including freedom, justice, equality, human rights and dignity, ecological balance and sustainability, the use of reason and freedom of thought, the spirit of inquiry, respect for and proper use of science and technology, morality, and benevolence

In affirming this strategy statement, the Muslim community commits itself to uphold, implement, and work for its success, so help us God.