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Azerbaijani Ambassador assumes first Chairmanship of OIC Group in Washington

On March 15, 2007 the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC) Group launched an informal forum for Ambassador's of Member and Observer nations in Washington, DC. Keynote speakers for the opening ceremony included; H.E. Dr. Rajmah Hussain, Ambassador of Malaysia as Chair of the OIC Summit and initiator of the project, and H.E. Ambassador Karen Hughes, Under Secretary for Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs of the State Department. A message of the OIC Secretary General H.E. Prof Ekmeleddin Ihsanoglu was read out by H.E. Ambassador Abdul Wahab, OIC Permanent Observer in New York.

In her welcoming remarks, Ambassador of Malaysia Dr. Rajmah Hussain stated: "The formation of the OIC Group in Washington DC is to provide a platform for the OIC Ambassadors to get together informally to consult on issues affecting the Muslim Ummah and to correct misperceptions of our noble religion, Islam, which is a religion of peace and not of violence, to interact with members of the of the US Administration..."

During her speech, Ambassador Karen Hughes spoke of the importance of strengthening US relations with the OIC. "We at the State Department have worked hard over the last year to strengthen our relations and interact with the OIC...And, I believe, you and I share a common mission creating a more constructive dialogue between your countries and mine a friendly, frank and honest dialogue that is vital if we hope to achieve a better and peaceful world..."

Based on Azerbaijan's chairmanship of OIC Foreign Ministerial Meeting, H.E. Yashar T. Aliyev, Ambassador of Azerbaijan to the United States assumed the first chairmanship of the OIC Group in Washington, DC.

In his message to the participants of the event, Secretary-General Ekmeleddin Ihsanoglu congratulated the first Chairman H.E. Yashar T. Aliyev and talked about the seriousness of the OIC on constructive dialogue: "The formation of the OIC Group in Washington DC reaffirms the OIC's commitment at the highest level towards constructive dialogue with relevant members of the US administration, particularly the White House, the Congress and the State Department, on issues of common concern..."

In the end, Ambassador of Azerbaijan H.E. Yashar T. Aliyev, in Azerbaijan's capacity as Chair of the OIC Group in Washington, DC, thanked the event participants and spoke of the significance of creation of this OIC Group and its perspectives.