

The Revival of Islamic Civilisation

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sector-specific strategies which were approved by the Islamic Conference Summit and adopted by specialised ministerial conferences. Dr Altwaijri also oversaw the establishment of the Supreme Council for Education, Science and Culture with the aim of enhancing joint Islamic action in these fields outside the Islamic world.

Throughout the history of Islamic thought, we find great thinkers and eminent scholars, and most of them were inspired not only by the Quran and Sunna, but also by other religious symbols that had a significant impact on their reflection and perception. Above all these is of course the divine message of Hajj and the role of the holy shrines in guiding the Muslim in their daily physical and spiritual life. Makkah as a city, the Kaaba as a Qibla and the other holy sites have occupied a central place in the reflection and meditation of our scholars, thinkers and writers.

For this reason, Makkah was chosen by the Islamic Educational, Scientific and Culture Organisation – ISESCO, in 2005 as the first and unique capital of Islamic Culture. This programme, which is run by ISESCO, was the occasion, that year, to highlight the position of Makkah in the hearts and minds of all Muslims and to document the crucial role that Makkah played in building Islamic Culture throughout history. ISESCO has also published a number of reference books on different aspects of Islamic Culture that show the extent to which Makkah has been at the very centre of all scientific and cultural dynamics in the Islamic World. Since then, ISESCO has held regularly a number of activities that deepen research and investigation into these concerning Makkah.

The Islamic perspective of reality springs from a conscious assimilation of the objectives of the Sharia, religious principles and cultural and civilisational values, and from deep awareness of life's necessities, and of the challenges and dangers facing Muslims. With a profound and rational understanding of reality in its fluctuations and changes and

developments, we can survey the prospects of the future. Guided by the teachings of our religion, we move towards the future, combining *ijtihad* (effort, physical or mental) and renewal as means of modernisation. Such modernisation and renewal are meant to ensure that we remain at pace with the passage of time and its developments without undermining our religious constants and cultural and civilisational specificities, or relinquishing the supreme interests of our Ummah, which represent the sum of national interests of each country in the Muslim world.

We thus call for the revival of modern Islamic thought with a sound vision of the mission of renewal. We also call for strengthening Islamic solidarity and boosting joint Islamic action, so that the *ijtihad* of our Ummah becomes an ever-renewing collective *ijtihad*, the fruit of the combined efforts of its scientists, scholars and experts to renew its life within a framework of cooperation, complementarity and coordination, and modernise it in full respect of religion's constants and of the fundamentals of the munificent Islamic civilisation.

Our anticipation of the future and our preparation for it would therefore rest on solid foundations. In turn, our endeavours for the reform of the overall state of affairs would become a coordinated and cohesive effort, with guaranteed results for the benefit of the Ummah at present and in the future.

Ijtihad in planning the future of the Muslim world, through a renewed Islamic thought that contributes to accomplishing this mission, shaping the ways to develop Islamic life, and modernising the means and ways of fulfilling the lofty ideals we all pursue, are all channels that will possibly unlock wide horizons before us for serious and constructive work. They would help us at the same time to avoid pitfalls, keep us out of harm's way and safe from the pressures to which enfeebled nations are subjected.

From this vision of the mission, meaning and limitations of renewal, and of the role, tools and conditions of *ijtihad*, we should work within a harmonious civilisational endeavour to renew our life and advance it in all areas of civilisational edification and ensure that our Ummah is one of a renewal that is observant of its specificities, attached to the constants of its religion, open to modern times to draw benefit from their advantages, creativity and achievements, provided these do not clash with the essences of the religion, the indissoluble link and the tightest of all bonds.

Only thus, can we fulfil the much-needed modernisation, make this renewal beneficial to us, and ensure the continuity of the various loops in the chain of progress, growth and civilisational ascent, true to the divine words: Thus, have We made of you an Ummat justly balanced, that ye might be witnesses over the nations, and the Messenger a witness over yourselves. Being a witness over other nations is only possible through a civilisational distinction that is born out of *ijtihad* and renewal. ■