

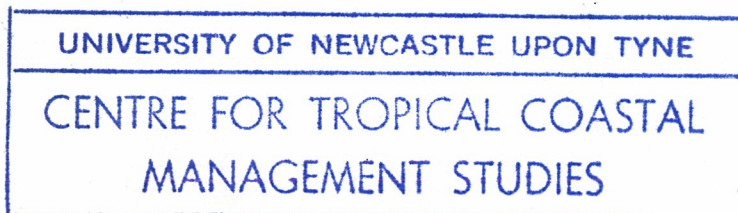


**SMALL STATES  
CONFERENCE ON  
SEA LEVEL RISE**  
MALE, 14 - 18 NOVEMBER 1989

Message of

**His Excellency Dr. Hamid Algabid**

**Secretary-General of the Organisation of the Islamic Conference**



at the

**Small States Conference on Sea Level Rise**

Male', Republic of Maldives

14 - 18 November 1989

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Excellency,  
Excellencies,  
Distinguished delegates,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is my privilege and indeed my great pleasure to address your august gathering on behalf of H.E. Dr. Hamid Algabid, Secretary General of the Organization of the Islamic Conference, and to convey to Your Excellencies his greetings and good wishes for the success of your important meeting.

I am greatly honoured to read out to you the message of His Excellency Dr. Hamid Algabid, Secretary General of the OIC.

Excellency,  
Excellencies the Ministers of the participating States,  
Distinguished delegates,

The Organization of the Islamic Conference was highly honoured by the gracious invitation extended to it by the Republic of Maldives, a Member State of the Organization, and felt it a privilege to join the multinational effort being launched today and aiming at

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tackling one of the crucial issues of environmental protection and conservation: the threat posed by the predicted sea level rise to the small low lying island nations of the world.

Whatever the nature and the location of such permanent damages to the physical integrity of our common and unique planet earth, it should raise a universal concern, and prompt all nations to take appropriate action in order to preserve the life supporting ecosystems. This is especially needed in the case of damages occurring in the atmosphere or in the oceans, as their movements totally ignore any national boundaries. The various oil-spills and nuclear accidents are a sinister reminder of this fact.

I, therefore, praise the wisdom and vision of the leadership of the States participating in this Conference with the purpose of finding a practical basis for an effective and long-term solution to the threat of sea level rise such an ecological catastrophe would impair the economies of the small island states, endanger their population, and in the long run also disrupt the coastal and mangrove ecosystems of larger states.

Excellency,  
Excellencies,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

According to the teachings of Islam,  
Allah-Almighty has bestowed upon Mankind the Vice-

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Regency on Earth, meaning not only the usufruct of its resources, but also the responsible management of its trust. Muslim nations are therefore dutybound to stand on the frontline of life and nature conservation.

It is most unfortunate that Man, the natural caretaker, tends to turn into the ultimate predator because of greed and ignorance. Whereby ecological disasters may be caused by a limited numbers of individuals, groups or nations, their consequences are met by humankind at large, physically, financially, or else. It is therefore our collective responsibility to stop suicidal trends dictated by opportunistic and equipostic short-term considerations, and to cooperate in the planning of a better common future. This will only be possible through universal awareness, spiritual elevation and harnessing the scientific and legal instruments necessary for the optimal management of our ecosystems, and the monitoring and prevention of ecological disasters, especially those affecting marine and atmospheric ecological systems.

We have been witnessing, during the past decades, the shifting of more and more environment-damaging industries and other infrastructures from developed to developing countries under the cover of technology transfer and industrial development, because the standards of environment protection were getting

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tougher in the developed nations (thus raising production costs), and popular concern was growing. Unfortunately, there were little room left for options in the developing countries fighting for a better future, if not for mere survival, as they usually lack appropriate expertise, technology and funds altogether, and, thereof, the necessary strength to weigh on the final technological choices. The recent issue of hazardous wastes being dumped in some Third World countries is also a matter of concern. This situation calls for balanced corrective measures before the level of damage gets critical, i.e. irreversible. Obviously, the small states depending on sensitive ecosystems, such as the island and the low-lying coastal nations, are more vulnerable than others, as their economies and development may be severely hampered by relatively small variations in sea-level, fish stocks, forestry resources, etc... In these countries, the vital sectors of tourism and exports of natural resources must be protected and developed in a sound natural environment if they are to further contribute to their national economies.

It is in this regard that the convening of this Conference could go a long way in helping vulnerable Coastal and Island States like Maldives in preserving their natural resources and indeed their physical existence.

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Excellencies,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Human activities worldwide is having a growing impact on the basic balances governing life on this planet. The progressive destruction of the ozone layer, and the heating up of the atmosphere due to increased levels of pollutants and "greenhouse gases", especially carbone and nitrogene oxides and chlorofluorocarbons (CFCs) are but some of the numerous unwanted side-effects of our development activities. The threat is serious when these side-effects go out of control.

The sea-level rise constitutes one aspect of the extensive damages caused in the atmosphere by the combination of several factors, among others the release of huge amounts of chemicals and non-recyclable wastes, of "greenhouse gases" and other air-pollutants, as well as the release of larger amounts of heat, while the over-exploitation of the rain-forests and the consequences of acid rains are depriving the atmosphere of its normal "cleansing and renewing capacity. With this gloomy background, and the perspective of a worsening situation in mind, the international community had become increasingly aware of its responsibility to properly manage and monitor the preservation of our common heritage and life-sustaining

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environment. Ofcourse, situations of conflicting interests abound, be it at political, economic, strategic level or else; the environmental cost of human activities is neither properly assessed, nor properly distributed; the choice between short-term emergencies and long-term interest is rarely a simple one. Still, it is a matter of hope that some results have been achieved so far, which need enforcement, implementation and further improvement, such as :

- the International Convention for the Protection of Marine Ecosystems;
- the Protocol agreement on the Fight against Hydrocarbons Spilling (Carthagena, Colombia - 1983); and
- the General Convention adopted by the 3rd U.N. Conference on the Rights of the Sea.

In addition to the legal frameworks, a huge scientific endeavour was started throughout the world, but this effort lacks coordination and funding. Some highly educative and promising results were achieved in coastal zones protection and ecosystem conservation: the Great Coral Barrier in Australia, the Carribean Islands, the Chesapeake Bay in the USA, among others. Dramatic applications of space sciences (remote

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control, teledetection, meteorology), material sciences and biotechnology have opened new and bright avenues to our scientists and engineers.

The Organization of the Islamic Conference is in good position to join the efforts of the World Scientific community and contribute to the solutions of environmental hazards through its scientific institutions, in particular through the inter-Islamic S and T Networks on Space Sciences, and on Oceanography, both operating under the auspices of the OIC Standing Committee for Scientific and Technological Cooperation (COMSTECH).

Excellencies,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

In conclusion, I wish to express my sincere hope that this meeting will set the pace and scheme out the guidelines for an effective approach in tackling the most serious threat ever posed to mankind, the destruction of its life-sustaining environment, in a spirit of human solidarity and with a sense of collective accountability, in agreement with the highest standards of international policies. The OIC and its relevant institutions will spare no effort in discharging their responsibilities regarding the issue confronted here. I wish your meeting all the success.

Wassalamu Alaykum wa-Rahmatullahi wa-Barakatuh.

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