

The 3rd Think Tanks Forum of the Organization of the Islamic Cooperation (OIC) was held in Baku

The Forum brought together the Think Tanks of the member countries of the OIC to discuss “Change and Transition”.

“3rd OIC Think Tanks Forum” which was held on 2-3 March 2012 in Baku, Azerbaijan included Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs’ Center for Strategic Studies (SAM), 21st Century Turkey Institute, Black Sea Research Center (KAM), Wise Men Center for Strategic Studies (BILGESAM), Middle East Research Center (ORSAM), TURKSAM, KAFKASSAM and TASAM from Turkey.

“3rd OIC Think Tanks Forum” was organized by Center for Strategic Studies under the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan (SAM) and TASAM Islamic States Institute in Baku Gulistan Palace and Hilton Hotel. Think Tanks from 40 member countries, Delegations from observer states like Russia, Thailand and The Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus, diplomats from OIC countries, experts and media representatives attended to the forum.

1st OIC Think Tanks Forum was held under the title “Peace, Civilization and Cooperation” on January 2010 and 2nd OIC Think Tanks Forum was held under the title “Public Diplomacy” on March 2011 in Istanbul. Both meetings were organized with the participation of member countries, observer states, diplomats, experts and academicians.

Memmedyerov: “Armenia must withdraw from our occupied lands”

In his opening speech Secretary General of President of Republic of Azerbaijan Ramiz Mehdiyev mentioned that within the Islamic countries Azerbaijan was the first democratic republic, also first one to give women right to vote and encouraged the establishment of theatres and opera houses. Mehdiyev also said that “Azerbaijan’s influence in the region increased with Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan oil pipeline, Kars-Tbilisi-Baku railway and Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan natural gas pipeline. Therefore Azerbaijan has become a country that connects Western and Eastern transit routes.

In his speech, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Azerbaijan Elmar Mammadyarov said that Armenia has been occupying Azerbaijan soil and according to United Nations resolution Armenia must withdraw.

Chairman Şensoy “Think Tanks should be pro-active”

In his speech TASAM Chairman Süleyman Şensoy referred to the term “two state one nation” that has been used to explain friendship and brotherhood between Turkey and Azerbaijan. Within this perspective Süleyman Şensoy explained it is a historically important step that both countries have been working for an initiative among Islamic countries.

Şensoy said Turkey was grateful for Azerbaijan’s support during last 2-3 months with regards to tension between Turkey and France about so called Armenian genocide. He also said he is expecting the same support for Turkey from other Islamic countries.

Chairman Şensoy explained that: During the 1st and 2nd Forum which was organized by TASAM in Istanbul, it was decided to establish a platform that includes Islamic Countries’ Think Tanks and to launch a website in 4 different languages. The website has been active for 2 years and since then its contend has been helping Think Tanks in Islamic countries. The “Wise Men Council” involving 12 members according to international standards which was formed after 2nd OIC Think Tanks Forum declaration, should be taking initiatives on basic problems and conflicts in the Islamic world; if necessary “Wise Men Council” should visit conflict zones and make professional studies on the issues of development and education.

The World has Undergone 100 years of Change and Transformation in the Past Decade

Chairman Şensoy mentioned Change and Transition in the Islamic World will be discussed in this forum. He also said: “In order to understand the current situation of Islamic World; we should analyze and try to understand the current developments in the world. In the past decade; the world witnessed many new developments. The world has undergone 100 years of change and transformation. In order to settle our discussions in this forum about the Islamic World; I would like to point out new parameters that were shaped in the past decade and will be shaped in the coming 10-20 years briefly. As we all know with the end of Cold War; the world transformed from bipolar system into multi-polar system with the rise of the five global powers from West and East.

New Term Parameters are being Clarified

One of the new parameters in the world is that the international competition has evolved into “high competition” with the emergence of multipolar system and massive developments in the technology and communication. A new parameter; “integration” has emerged with multi polar system. We see the emergence of integration and cooperation models based on the structure of European Union. For example: There are 6 regional organizations in Africa, also there are many sub-regional organizations involving 33 Latin American and Caribbean countries that are trying to establish regional cooperation. We know that China has been working on the idea of “Asian Union”. As you can see, we are heading in a period where the world integration will be occurring in a vast speed.

The third parameter is micro-nationalism and it is developing side by side with the integration. Some experts are projecting that new states will be joining United Nations within 10-20 years. Republic of South Sudan is an example to this phenomenon.

Another new parameter is “transition from predictability into foresees ability”. Multi-polarity and high competition in international system rely on foreseeable policies rather than scientific predictions. For the past 3 years; various international organizations including NATO were taken form according to this transition. In a multi-polar and high competitive world system anything is possible. Also the world is now entering a new era called “crisis management process”. This process has begun with the economic crisis in Europe and U.S.A. Countries and organizations will have to adopt the policy of crisis management process in the future. It is unpredictable when will the world be stable in the coming years.

Everything Depends on the Quality of Human Resources

If we take account all of the parameters; all countries have one common problem. As TASAM, this is the most important lesson that we have learned for the past 10 years from our studies on foreign policy. Transformation of quality of human resources is the most important step towards into the future for both Islamic and non-Islamic countries. As Islamic countries, if we can transform the quality of human resources in every sector, we will be able to produce wealth and technology for generations. Therefore, I would like to emphasize that Islamic countries should invest in projects based on human resources rather than non-feasible infrastructure projects.

For the past decade, Islamic World has become a centre for transition and change. A hundred years ago similar transitions had occurred. Popular uprisings which have begun in Middle East and North Africa are rapidly growing. Personally and institutionally, we are projecting that these uprisings will spread into various countries in South Asia which are predominantly Islamic. In order prevent any internal conflicts or wars, Islamic countries should be in solidarity in this process. In this sense;

Islamic countries are in need to cooperate and benefit from the experiences of other countries like Turkey.

For instance if we ask; what are the main aims of Western countries in this process called “Arab Spring”, we will encounter 3 basic conclusions. First one is to create “a new economically liberal zone” for the crisis ridden western economies. Second one is to establish “a new security zone” depending on economically liberal zone (in the following months and years, we will discuss the membership of new countries to NATO). And lastly, to isolate China and Russia with this new economically liberal and secure zone. We think that within these parameters; Think Tanks from Islamic countries should be pro-active in this process. I would like to give a brief example; according to a research made in U.S.A; there are 1770 Think Tanks and only 100 of them are popular and working on foreign policy. The others except these 100 hundred Think Tanks were focusing on sectoral and non-popular issues. Think Tanks should be active in all sectors in order to promote new ideas, models and projects to the decision makers. Lastly, I would like to say that as Islamic countries “power” should not be our only parameter but also to be just... I would like to thank Azerbaijan for their hospitality and thank you for your participation.”

Major Issues in Islamic Countries were discussed

In the forum, the issue of “Socio-economic and Political reforms-Basic Dynamics”, “Innovations in Public Diplomacy”, “Economic and Human development”, “Vision development for International and National Policies”, “Establishment and Maintain of New Think Tanks” were discussed.

The forum which started on 3 March 2012 in Baku lasted for two days and ended with the announcement of “Baku Declaration”.

4th OIC Think Tanks Forum will be held in Cairo

4th OIC Think Tanks Forum will be held in Cairo, Egypt in 2012. It is decided that 5th OIC Think Tanks Forum to be held in Bagdad, Iraq on 21-22 February 2014 and 6th OIC Think Tanks Forum to be held on 5-6 March 2015 in Islamabad, Pakistan.