Aboul Gheit's address at the opening of the 40th session of the Council of Arab Ministers of Justice

28 November 2024

Your Excellency Dr. Najm bin Abdullah Al-Zaid,

Chairman of the 40th Session of the Council of Arab Ministers of Justice,

Your Highnesses and Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is with great pleasure and honour that I welcome you to the headquarters of the League of Arab States. I am delighted to join this distinguished assembly of esteemed symbols of justice and distinguished legal minds on the occasion of the opening of the 40th session of the Council of Arab Ministers of Justice.

At the outset, allow me to extend my heartfelt congratulations to His Excellency Dr. Najm bin Abdullah Al-Zaid on assuming the presidency of the 40th session of this Council. I am confident that his extensive expertise and dedication will significantly enrich the Council’s work. I also wish to convey my sincere gratitude and deep appreciation to His Excellency Dr. Khaled Shawani, Minister of Justice of the Republic of Iraq, for his valuable leadership and tireless efforts during his presidency of the Council in its previous session. Additionally, I extend my thanks and appreciation to the Chair and members of the Executive Office for their exceptional efforts in preparing for this session and ensuring the implementation of the Council’s activities and programmes.

Your Highnesses and Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The convening of this session is of profound importance, both in its timing and in the critical issues on its agenda. These matters reflect the Council’s unwavering commitment to advancing, consolidating, and coordinating legal and judicial cooperation among Arab countries across all domains.

As you are aware, our Arab region faces grave and multifaceted challenges, placing immense responsibilities on our shoulders. It is imperative, now more than ever, to enhance the system of joint judicial collaboration, strengthen its mechanisms, and activate its tools so that this esteemed Council can effectively fulfil its obligations in confronting these dangers and mitigating their consequences.

We convene today amid extraordinarily difficult circumstances. Our brothers and sisters in Gaza continue to endure a barbaric genocide—an act of collective punishment targeting over two million innocent civilians, nearly half of whom are children. They have been subjected to a reckless and vengeful onslaught, executed with a ferocity that defies humanity, all under the indifferent gaze of the international community. This criminal aggression has extended to Lebanon, wreaking havoc on lives, property, and nature, in blatant disregard for international laws and norms.

However, today we take solace in the fact that, through the tireless efforts of the Lebanese government, alongside the steadfast support of our Arab brothers and international allies, a 60-day ceasefire agreement has been secured. We remain hopeful that its terms will be fully honoured and call for an urgent ceasefire agreement in Gaza in the nearest time possible.

A year ago, I stood before your esteemed Council and stated unequivocally that the massacre we witness daily—images of which rend our hearts—will not only remain an indelible mark of shame upon Israel but also a stain on the conscience of the international community. This collective silence, at a time when silence itself has become a crime, compounds the tragedy.

In alignment with Arab political and diplomatic efforts to support the Palestinian people and their legitimate rights, the General Secretariat, alongside numerous Arab nations, has presented comprehensive written and oral pleadings before the International Court of Justice. We continue to lend our unwavering support to all Palestinian diplomatic and legal initiatives in international forums and courts. In this context, I must highlight the historic advisory opinion issued by the International Court of Justice on 19 July 2024, which affirmed the illegality of the Israeli occupation of Palestinian territories and underscored the necessity of its termination. Moreover, the International Criminal Court’s issuance of two arrest warrants against the Israeli Prime Minister and a former Minister of Defence on charges of war crimes represents a landmark development in the pursuit of justice.

Today, the international community bears a grave responsibility to uphold and enforce the rulings of the International Court, providing tangible support for the principles of justice and fairness to which the Palestinian people are entitled.

Your Highnesses and Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I have thoroughly reviewed the agenda before you, encompassing critical issues such as combating terrorism, its financing, and money laundering, as well as addressing cybercrimes. These pressing matters demand enhanced Arab and international cooperation to combat the pervasive threat of terrorism—a scourge that spares no nation, region, gender, or faith. This challenge can only be surmounted through comprehensive global strategies underpinned by effective and unified measures.

In this regard, I reiterate the League of Arab States' unequivocal rejection and condemnation of all forms of terrorism, irrespective of their motivations or justifications. Equally significant is the agenda item concerning the enhancement of cooperation between the Secretariats of the Councils of Arab Ministers of Justice and Interior. This reflects the critical importance of seamless coordination between these two esteemed bodies, which serves as a cornerstone in combating terrorism, organised crime, and corruption. This collaboration stands as a model of exemplary joint Arab ministerial efforts.

Another pivotal topic that merits our attention is the unification of Arab legislation through the adoption of Arab guiding laws developed by this esteemed Council. The Council’s approval of numerous guiding laws has provided Arab member states with a valuable framework for drafting their national legislation. These laws serve as a distinguished reference, aiding many Arab nations in strengthening their legal frameworks.

Your Highnesses and Excellencies,

In conclusion, I extend my profound appreciation and gratitude to this distinguished Council for its tireless dedication and significant contributions to advancing joint Arab action in the realms of justice and law. Your efforts to confront the immense challenges and responsibilities before us, while elevating our legal systems and legislation to new heights, bring great pride to our societies.

Thank you.