

The World Federation participates in Al Zahra Day – Speech delivered by Deputy Secretary General

Audhu Billahi Minashaytaneer Rajeeem

Bismilahir Rahmaneer Raheem

Rabbi Shahri Sadri Wa Yasirli Wahlul Uktatum Minl Lisani Yafkahu Kawli

My Dear Elders, Brothers and Sisters

Salaamun Alaykum:

I would like to thank the organisers today for inviting me to talk on behalf of The World Federation of KSIMC and to share some of the progress made. It is always a real pleasure to attend the functions of our seniors who display so much love for our community, so much community spirit.

The World Federation and all of our institutions exist to serve. In recent times, The World Federation has gone through some very rocky times. The community has never seen anything like it. We have, if we are being honest, seen all the wrong things recently. We have seen things that can only discourage our young volunteers from giving their time to the community. We have seen things that can only reduce the generosity of our philanthropists and we have seen things that would dishearten the sturdy support of our community members.

But my dear elders, my message today is that we must not falter. We must all stick together and work hard for the betterment of the KSI community and the wider Shia community.

The World Federation provides this platform to serve the KSI community worldwide and to assist the Shia community where possible. This work of assisting our brothers and sisters is more important than any political difference and must remain our overriding priority. Let us therefore work hard to help our institutions overcome recent difficulties and to work to build a strong, positive, vibrant future for our small yet resilient community.

In addition, we must never forget the strong religious ethos engrained within all our institutions – be it the Jamaats, Regions or The World Federation. We must all be just, fair and practice Taqwa. These are easy words, but I am sure you will agree with me are a pre-requisite to any leadership of the KSI community.

One of the key goals is to create greater sustainability for The World Federation. That is why this week on the Wiladat of Bibi Fatima (AS), we launched the Marhum Mulla Asgher Foundation Fund with the target of raising USD \$10 million over 5 years. These funds will be used to invest (as per the direction of an investment committee which will be set up and headed by the Treasurer and accountable to the Executive Council). The idea would be use to the yield to pay for the administrative charges and so to reduce the 7% levy over time to 0%. This would be a huge achievement for The World Federation, a vision that has been unfulfilled for over 15 years.

At this juncture I would like to shed some light on the work of the Relief and Economic Development department for which I am very fortunate and privileged to be the head of.

During the last year, we have worked on various projects. From sponsorship of seniors in Mumbai, Tanzania, Kenya and Pakistan to building wells, water pumps and latrines in Mwanza, Lucknow, Dar Es Salam and

Mombasa. We have, with our support, built hundreds of houses in Pakistan and allocated USD \$200,000 to a housing project for our Khoja Brothers in Dar es Salaam.

There is still so much to do. Our current priorities are to raise awareness and funds for the devastating cyclone in Madagascar which took place last month, the fire which killed over 120 Shias in Bangladesh last Friday and to launch the Ramadhan Relief Fund.

Last year, Ramadhan Relief was carried out in over 20 countries – from India to Indonesia, from Bosnia to Myanmar, from Kenya to Sri Lanka. The World Federation is once again seeking to raise USD \$500,000 for Ramadhan Relief. We will inshAllah be collecting funds for both sadat and non sadats, as well as excess Fitra from Jamaats. We can only do this with your support and prayers. The idea is to help those in extreme poverty, many of them are our own Khoja brothers. We must help them in this month and inshAllah reap the rewards from Allah (SWT) in the hereafter.

I would also like to clarify that The World Federation's Relief team does not purely assist Shia brothers, a great deal of work is done to assist our own Khoja community – in India and East Africa. We need to focus in on Africa due to the spiralling growth in expenses, the difficult economic circumstances and the ageing population in Tanzania, Kenya and Uganda of our own community. The welfare needs there amongst our own community and are only increasing and we must be able to rise to these challenges.

Apart from the USD \$200,000 Dar es Salaam housing proposal, we are now urging The Africa Federation to devise more schemes so that we can together, in partnership, build low cost housing for the Khojas of East Africa. Various models are being looked into including seed funding where our institutions would provide some of the funding to the deserving to buy a house in the form of a soft loan; an ownership model in the form of rent as you go whereby ownership would be transferred to the family after a certain number of years.

During the last term The World Federation assisted, in partnership with The Africa Federation, a few microfinance programmes for our Khoja brothers and sisters in Africa. Much more must be done and again we are urging The Africa Federation to partner with us in economic upliftment programmes for the benefit of our community. We pray to Allah (SWT) that these programmes are implemented quickly and in an efficient manner.

In conclusion, I feel that The World Federation has so much to offer. We must focus on developing spiritually, economically and educationally. The cornerstone of our institution lies with our religion and if we stick to it in earnest, we will not go wrong. I believe that the future of our community inherently aligns itself with the future of our institutions. My call therefore to you, my elders, is to do whatever it takes to support our institutions. We need them for our spiritual nourishment, for our communal bond and for protection from unislamic influences.

Finally, Let us pray to Allah (SWT) to strengthen our community, to grant those working for the community the Tawfeeq to serve and to hasten the re-appearance of our 12th Imam (AJFS).

Wass Salamun Alaykum Wa Rahmtulahi Wa Barakatu

Shan-E-Abbas Hassam
Deputy Secretary General
The World Federation of KSIMC