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## Reception in Honor of the Member States of the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC) to Introduce Sada Cumber, U.S. Special Envoy to the OIC

### Secretary Condoleezza Rice

Benjamin Franklin Room  
Washington, DC  
March 10, 2008

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(5:15 p.m. EDT)

**SECRETARY RICE:** Good afternoon and welcome to the State Department. It's really a pleasure to introduce the new U.S. Special Envoy to the Organization of the Islamic Conference or OIC, as we call it, Mr. Sada Cumber. This is the first time that a U.S. President has made such an appointment to the OIC, an important organization whose member states include some of our closest friends and partners. And it signals the deep respect for the values and the ideals of Islam that are held by the President and by myself, the U.S. Government and of course, the American people.

This appointment is one part of a much larger effort that our government has undertaken to increase our engagement with Muslim communities worldwide. We in the United States recognize that we have a lot to learn about the more than 1 billion people across the world who live and practice the faith of Islam. Our new Special Envoy to the OIC will enable us to further our understanding of the community of Islamic nations through a positive and mutually respectful exchange.

This appointment is also an opportunity for the United States to expand our cooperation with Muslim communities worldwide to defend and promote the principles that we hold dear: human rights and human dignity, social justice and equal opportunity, liberty and the rule of law. These are not American values or Western values. They are universal values, values that are lived and practiced by the majority of Muslims in the world, many of whom are citizens of democracies. The OIC plays a vital role in promoting moderation, dialogue and understanding and we welcome the statements that this organization has made in support of those values.

There is one further purpose that this appointment will serve: to help the United States to explain the principles of our nation and the policies of our government to Muslim communities worldwide. The notion that the United States is at war with Islam, as we sometimes hear, is simply propagated by violent extremists who seek to divide Muslim communities against themselves, to judge who is and who is not a pious Muslim and to commit any atrocity, even against their fellow Muslims, to impose an intolerant ideology on their societies. Our new Special Envoy to the OIC will combat these misperceptions about the United States that are spread by our enemies and will support Muslim societies around the world who seek, as we do, to build an international community united in justice, prosperity, and peace.

The fact is, Islam is an important and growing part of the American fabric of life. Millions of our fellow citizens are Muslims, worshipping at over 1,200 different mosques across our nation. In addition, the American Muslim community has roots in 80 different countries around the world. Our growing Muslim population is a great and welcome addition to the diversity of our country. And our new Special Envoy to the OIC must, in particular, speak on behalf of the aspirations of all American Muslims.

Now when it came to determining who would represent the United States in this important new role, President Bush and I knew that we needed a proven leader and an individual of character. And we have found those virtues and more in Sada Cumber. Mr. Cumber is an American businessman from Austin, Texas. There are a few of those Texans around. He has 25 years of experience in the technology industry as well as an active public sector involvement in business development and entrepreneurship. In addition, Mr. Cumber has long supported the strengthening of civil society and economic development in developing countries.

Sada will serve as the President's representative to the OIC. He will seek to promote mutual understanding between the United States and Muslim communities around the world and to build forward-looking partnerships to advance common purposes. I welcome his plans to travel extensively to OIC member states and to non-member states to engage Muslim communities around the world. In fact, one of Mr. Cumber's official duties will be to attend the 11<sup>th</sup> OIC Summit, which is set to take place in Dakar, Senegal in just a few days. I understand you're going to leave tonight in order to do that, so he's already on the job.

I'm very happy, Sada, that you have agreed to serve our country in this very important role. I look forward to working with you. And now, will you take the podium for a few remarks? (Applause.)

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