

**Rector's greeting at the Islamic Studies Resource Center opening ceremony
(Kazan Federal University, 03/26/2015)**

Dear colleagues and guests!

It is a special day for us because Kazan Federal University finally welcomes the opening of the Islamic Studies Resource Center. The significance of this event is marked by the arrivals of our colleagues from the Working group of the Religious Education Development Program enacted by the Government of Russia.

Thank you all for finding time in your schedules for our ceremony. We sincerely hope that this new Resource Center will become a valuable asset for Islamic studies nationwide, will boost our Oriental studies in general.

Our University's traditions in this area are indeed longstanding. The department of Arabic and Persian languages was established in 1837; renowned researchers such as Christian Frahn, Vassily Radlov, Ilya Berezin, Aleksander Kazem-Bek, Nikolay Katanov and many others made significant contributions to the field of Oriental studies.

In this new era for Kazan University we firmly decided to once again become a world-level institution in Oriental studies, Islamic and Arabic studies. We aim to make significant contributions to our government's foreign policy strategy. President Rustam Minnikhanov in his recent interview emphasized that "Tatarstan is a kind of an entry point for cooperation between Islamic world and Russia".

We have hosted some very representative scientific forums for Islami studies as parts of the Religious Education Development Program. These are annual "Islam in a multicultural world" conferences, "Issues of Quran studies in Tatarstan and regions of Russia" (2010), "Renovationist movements in Islam" (2011), "Contemporary educational technologies: comparative experience of the Federation of Islamic Nations' Universities and CIS universities" (2012), "Educational innovations in Muslim educational institutions" (2013), etc.

We achieved all this while actively cooperating with colleagues, governments, religious communities and NGOs in Russia and other countries. Our partner institutions

such as Institute of Oriental Studies of the Russian Academy of Sciences, Higher School of Economics, Institute of Asia and Africa of Moscow State University, Oriental Studies Faculty of Saint-Petersburg University, Moscow State Institute of International Relations are all parts of Oriental and Islamic studies network, as well as such organizations as Spiritual Directorates of Russian and its subjects, Islamic History, Art and Culture Research Center, Organization of Islamic Cooperation, Federation of Islamic Nations' Universities and many others. We are very grateful to all of them for their kind help and cooperation.

I would like to specifically mention our longstanding friendship with Russian Islamic Institute in Kazan. KFU and RII faculty have jointly created more than 30 distance education courses, among them "Quran studies", "Introduction to Sharia law", "Quran: Reading and learning", "Ethics of Islam" and others.

Promoting Islamic studies as one of our foci of attention directly influences the educational process. All our humanities and social sciences departments make their contribution to Islamic studies. Among them are, of course, Institute of International Relations, History and Oriental Studies, but also Institute of Mass Communications, Social Sciences and Philosophy, Institute of Philology and Intercultural Communication, Yelabuga Branch, Faculty of Law and many others.

Languages deserve our special attention. Religion and ethnicity are inseparably intertwined. Islam is a predominant faith in Arabic and Turkish-speaking communities – more than 80 million people in migrant communities in dozens of countries. Here in KFU we have about 300 students of Arabic, 250 students of Turkish, many of them have Turkish Studies and Arabic Studies as their majors.

In 2014 our Institute of International Relations, History and Oriental Studies introduced a new major titled "Teaching professional with an extended knowledge of the Islamic civilization". Our "Oriental and African Studies" program is also very popular. 2015 will see the introduction of a new "Foreign policy and economic relations in the Turkic world" specialization. Institute of Management, Economics and Finance has majors in Islamic countries' economy.

Research in these areas is more and more important now with the rising interest towards Islamic banking and is in agreement with our efforts to alleviate global economic shocks and hostile policies implemented by some of our Western counterparts.

KFU now has more than two thousand overseas students, 40% of them coming from the Middle East and the Maghreb. Dozens of our young colleagues regularly visit Syria, Iraq, Egypt, Iran, and other countries to study languages.

This new Resource Center is a great base for Islamica Center of Excellence which will be in charge of studying the religious developments and religion-state dynamics in our republic and our region.

Let's all wish our Resource Center best of luck, fruitful work and scientific breakthroughs.

Thank you for your attention.