

FS201

U FEBX 26-06 00215

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mahathir-icdait (replacing item fs196, fs197)

By wan a. hulaimi

vienna, june 26 (bernama) -- no nation can now say there is nothing it can contribute towards efforts to fight drug abuse and illicit trafficking, and the conference, by any yardstick must constitute a political commitment of the highest order, datuk seri dr mahathir mohamad said in his closing speech as president of the international conference on drug abuse and illicit trafficking which ended here today.

The conference, which started on june 17, may also contribute to another day in the annals of the united nations -- june 17 or june 26, the closing day -- was suggested for adoption as a day against drug abuse and illicit trafficking.

The malaysian leader said that the suggestion was worthy of further consideration and he commended it to be decided at the general assembly of the united nations.

In his address, datuk seri dr mahathir also observed that history was littered with high and grandiose pronouncing plenary session which ended early in the afternoon also approved a political declaration and a programme of comprehensive multi-disciplinary outline (cmo) as a compendium of measures which nations could take against drug abuse and illicit trafficking. -- more

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of the cmo, datuk seri dr mahathir said "it was the conference's response to the question whether the international community could translate their political commitment into effective and sustainable action."

"The document did not have the status of a legal charter," he said, "but must nevertheless be regarded as a morally binding pledge towards a collective effort in the part of all participating countries to implement the guidelines for reducing drug abuse and illicit trafficking."

The varied approach of the cmo added to its applicability and relevance whatever the particular situation of the country concerned, he said.

"where there is political will there will always be a way in the cmo," he added.

He then said that the conference - which brought together 138 countries and 173 nongovernmental organisations - represented at authoritative levels with 82 ministers of governments as well as experts and campaigners against drug abuse and illicit trafficking, must constitute political commitment of the highest order.

"The answer to the question whether our political response had been adequate must be a resounding 'yes'" he said.

but the next question they needed to ask themselves was whether they, as an international community, could translate their political commitment into effective and sustainable action, he added. -- more

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on the declaration of the conference, he said "the declaration we have just adopted today is a clear expression of our collective political will to respond to the drug menace.

"It underlines a shared responsibility to provide appropriate response and resources to combat drug abuse and illicit trafficking.

"It heralds the advent of a more systematic and balanced world approach. It will provide strong encouragement to the professional and other workers against drug abuse to sustain and upgrade their work."

He was encouraged, he said, by the many suggestions made in the plenary debate for follow-up activities to the conference not only to retain the high level of awareness of the problem but also to enable them to take stock of continuing developments and to monitor progress in of their efforts.

Among the proposals mentioned by datuk seri dr manathir were:-

+ proclaiming of a year devoted to the fight against drug abuse and illicit trafficking,

+ a follow-up conference, and

+ the establishment of an international drug abuse prevention resource centre under the auspices of the united nations.

The proposals could perhaps be followed up by the UN general assembly following preliminary review and recommendations by the commission on narcotic drugs and through the economic and social council, he said.

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he then alluded to his opening remarks when he mentioned the inadequate resources available to counter the drug problem in contrast to the massive amounts of cash brought by illicit trafficking of drugs.

" this is true not only at the international but also at the national level. At the national level, individual government will have to find the much-needed resources that must necessarily be diverted to tackle this urgent problem.

" at the international level, extra effort will have to be exerted to make available additional funding allocations if we are to make permanent gains on drug traffickers and the attendant spread of drug addiction. "

as president of icdait, he urged the governments: "now is the time to do this. The longer we wait, the bigger will be the fund needed."

But money alone could not make any impact if the mechanism in place -- the principal organs and bodies of the uninvolved in the fight -- did not effectively coordinate their activities, he added.

He also said there were views expressed favouring the formation of a tangible body to look into the implementation of the proposals discussed during the conference, but in the reality of the current financial situation worldwide this may not be possible.

" i would counsel that in the early instance, this be done through institutions already at hand. " -- more

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datuk seri dr mahathir then said that while enhanced international cooperation such as on-going efforts on the draft convention against illicit trafficking in narcotic drugs and psychotropic substance could begin plugging essential loopholes, much will still depend primarily on national efforts by individual countries.

" the parallel efforts at the national and international levels that must increase following this conference should help bring about improved results in our struggle against the drug problem."

he also praised the contributions of the non-governmental organisations which had been holding meetings concurrently with the conference.

"from the ngos we have obtained valuable insights into their efforts individually and worldwide in our common struggle," he said.

The malaysian leader, facing the assembled nations and other participants in the main conference hall of the austria center, and flanked by other important officials of the conference including conference secretary-general tamar oppenheimer, expressed his thanks to all who had participated to make the conference a success.

The weather, at the conclusion of the icdait, had turned sunny, after what looked like an unpromising beginning to an austrian summer.

" and to beautiful vienna, in fair or foul weather, and the very hospitable people and government of austria our appreciation for playing host to this conference," datuk seri dr mahathir concluded to loud applause from delegates.

earlier in the morning, the icdait plenary session had observed a minute's silence - at the suggestion of mexico - in memory of those who had died in the fight against drugs. -- bername