

PM: Our views reflected in the draft of declaration

From Calvin Goh

KUALA LUMPUR, Wed. — Malaysia is satisfied with the contents of the draft of the Harare Commonwealth Declaration as it does not differ from Malaysia's views, Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today.

The Prime Minister said Malaysia was satisfied with the way the draft focussed its attention on issues regarding good governance, a Commonwealth terminology for democracy, the linking of aid to human rights and democracy in the recipient countries.

Dr Mahathir had earlier chaired the meeting of the High Level Appraisal Group (HLAG) which studied the draft which was prepared by expert officials.

He was speaking to Malaysian journalists at his suite in the Sheraton Hotel here.

A British draft was also submitted at the meeting, Dr Mahathir said, adding that it contained essentially the same things as that prepared by the experts.

The HLAG decided it could use the British draft after it was re-worded.

"We wanted to emphasise on certain matters which are of concern to the developing countries and this was agreed on," Dr Mahathir said.

Asked if the points he raised in his speech at the United Nations General Assembly were reflected in the draft, Dr Mahathir said the language used was different but the ideas were there.

In the UN, the Prime Minister spoke, among others, of democracy. He had said

condition in such matters.

The HLAG members appeared to understand the issue, Dr Mahathir said.

"So, we are quite satisfied with the draft," he said.

The HLAG also touched on the issue of observer groups for elections. As there were no guidelines previously for the group, the matter was thrashed out by the HLAG.

Malaysia pointed out that such groups were observatory in nature and were not an inquiry group. When on such missions, they should satisfy themselves that the laws and regulations of the countries do not prevent the people from going to the polls to exercise their democratic rights.

The HLAG comprises 10 heads of Government. Besides Dr Mahathir as chairman, the other members are the heads of Government from Australia, Bahamas, Britain, Canada, India, Jamaica, Nigeria, Singapore and Zambia.

The British draft was accepted by the HLAG as it was shorter and had not lost the contents that were included in the draft made by the officials.

Dr Mahathir said it was not a question of pleasing the British but rather a matter of expediency.

On South Africa, the HLAG felt that there must be a meeting with African National Congress leader Nelson Mandela to ascertain the actual situation in the country before anything is planned for it.

Dr Mahathir, as chairman of the HLAG, together with Organisation of African Unity (OAU) chairman Gen-

that there should not be attempts by one country to impose its interpretations of democracy on another.

On good governance, a point which was debated by the group for quite a while, Dr Mahathir said Malaysia understood what the term meant but stressed that defining the term should not be left to just anybody.

Malaysia also raised the issue pertaining to aid and trade and the attempts by certain countries to make human rights issues a con-

eral Ibrahim Babangida, chairman of the frontline states, Dr Kenneth Kaunda, Commonwealth Chief Emeka Anyaoku and Zimbabwean President Robert Mugabe met Mr Mandela last night.

They are expected to report their findings to the HLAG.

Earlier, at a media briefing, Chief Anyaoku said all 10 heads of Government attended the HLAG meeting, which he said was held in a spirit of friendliness and

good humour.

He said the 10 leaders appeared to have found the thrust for the priority of the Commonwealth in the coming decade. Details were to be discussed at the Commonwealth Heads of Government meeting (CHOGM), which began today.

Chief Anyaoku then gave an outline of the areas — pluralism, democracy and good governance; the importance of social and economic development and the ways the Commonwealth

could further economic development of member states, especially the smaller ones; the enhanced importance of human rights; Commonwealth's important role in facilitating consensus building in the global community.

They also talked about the role of women in society; the Commonwealth's role in dealing with problems of global interests, like the environment; and unique attributes of the Common-

wealth in human resource development.

He said the HLAG confirmed the expectations that at the end of the exercise there would be a declaration in which the commitment and renewal of the Commonwealth and its future activities would be clearly spelt out.

The HLAG, set up at the last CHOGM in Kuala Lumpur in 1989, has been given the task of examining the future of the Commonwealth in the 90s and be-

yond.

He also announced the names of the 13 Commonwealth observers who would monitor the Zambian presidential and parliamentary elections on Oct 31.

The team will be led by Justice Telford Georges, from Dominica, who has served as Chief Justice in Zimbabwe, Tanzania and the Bahamas, and includes Malaysian Election Commission chairman Datuk Harun Din.