

# Group 15 leaders agree to consider expanding body

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From Fauzi Omar

CARACAS, Sat. — The Group 15 leaders have agreed to consider expanding the body to provide for a more balanced representation in membership.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said the general feeling in the leadership of the G-15 is that the group could be expanded because the present membership comprised only three countries from

Asia — Malaysia, India and Indonesia — while Latin America and the Caribbean had six and Africa five.

He told Malaysian reporters covering the second G-15 summit which ended here today that Asia and the Middle East had been mentioned as areas from which new members could be admitted.

However, according to a statement released by the summit secretariat yesterday, at least six nations

expressed interest in joining the group. The six are South Korea, China, Chile, Columbia, Kenya and Tanzania.

But Dr Mahathir said the criteria for accepting the new members have not yet been decided.

According to him the G-15 Foreign Ministers had been given the task to come up with the criteria and their recommendations would

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## G-15 Ministers to prepare paper on New World Order

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most likely be considered at the next summit to be held in Dakar, Senegal.

He added that until the criteria had been decided and agreed to by the G-15 leaders and the countries to be invited to join, nothing was certain yet.

At the moment, the G-15 comprises Malaysia, Algeria, Yugoslavia, Argentina, Egypt, India, Indonesia, Jamaica, Mexico, Nigeria, Senegal, Venezuela, Zimbabwe, Peru and Brazil.

Out of the 15, 11 heads of Government/State attended the second summit which Dr Mahathir described as a highly successful one that saw the G-15 making substantial progress.

"This is reflected in the seriousness shown by the heads who made it a point to attend the summit. Only those who had cogent reasons were absent," he said.

Those absent were Brazil, Egypt, Jamaica and Nigeria.

But, according to Dr Mahathir, all four leaders have expressed support for the decisions made.

He said Malaysia was happy with the results of this summit and would definitely be attending the third one in Dakar. It has also been agreed that India will host the fourth summit and Argentina the fifth.

Dr Mahathir said what particularly pleased him was the progress made on projects proposed at the inaugural summit in Kuala Lumpur in June last year, especially those entrusted to Malaysia to implement.

This was the bilateral payment arrangements, a mechanism to guarantee payment for trade transactions which Malaysia has already signed with 11 developing countries, the multilateral payment arrangement and the establishment of the South Investment Trade and Technology Data Exchange Centre (SITT-DEC) to be set up in Kuala Lumpur.

In the joint communique issued earlier today the G-15 leaders acknowledged the payment arrangements had progressed well and it was already seeing an increase in trade between the countries in the South.

"It is obvious the group has become a cogent and solid group which will contribute towards solving the problems of the South and making its voice and views heard in international forums including the United Nations," said Dr Mahathir.

Meanwhile, Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir said the G-15 Foreign Ministers had been given the task of preparing a paper on the views of member countries with regard to the New World Order, to be completed in January.

"We consider the view of the South with regard to the New World Order as important because we do not want the New World Order to be formed by the North for their own interests," he added.

Dr Mahathir said the summit also gave attention to environment issues and felt the views of developing countries should be taken into consideration at the United Nations conference on environment and development to be held in Rio de Janeiro in June next year.

He added that Malaysia had yet to decide whether or not to attend the Earth Summit and it would wait for the outcome of the preparatory committee meeting in Geneva and the ministerial meeting of developing countries in Kuala Lumpur.

Dr Mahathir was also happy with the convening of the first businessmen's meeting in conjunction with the summit as it proved very useful and gave the private sector representatives from G-15 countries the opportunity to establish contacts and obtain information towards promoting trade and investment among member countries.