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MALAYSIA PROPOSES WAY FOR EARTH GREENING
Maha thir-environment

KUALA LUMPUR, April 22 (Bernama) -- Malaysia has proposed to the world a comprehensive programme for the greening of one third of the earth's terrestrial area and it announced that the country itself will ensure that at least 50 per cent of its land will remain permanently under forest cover.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad, in unveiling the proposal today, also called for the establishment of a global fund to support the global -greening target.

Detailing the Malaysian, proposal, he said as a first step the global community could target at least 30 per cent of the earth's terrestrial area to be greened by the year 2000.

+The world now has 27.6 per cent of its land under forest cover and We need only increase this by 2.4 per cent over the next eight years, + he said when opening the Second Ministerial Conference of Developing Countries on Environment and Development at the Crown Princess Hotel here.

Environment ministers and senior officials from 54 developing countries, observers from 11 developed nations and representatives of eight international organisations are attending the three-day conference. -- more

▼27/04/14-30MST

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The meeting is for the developing countries to work out a common stand to be taken at the Earth Summit or United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) in Rio de Janeiro in June.

Dr Mahathir said the target Malaysia was proposing was not unreasonable.

He added: +All nations must set national greening targets and those which have no suitable land must contribute adequate funds to developing countries with available land.

+The North, in particular, should not find this difficult because it has the funds, the technology and the resources. +

He said the North could divert the subsidies for their inefficient farms towards a massive reforestation of these farm lands instead.

No new funds were therefore needed and yet the result would be a greener and bigger carbon sink.

+As for Malaysia I wish to announce that the Government of Malaysia undertakes to ensure that at least 50 per cent of our land area will remain permanently under forest cover, + the Prime Minister said. -- more

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In calling upon the world community to **urgently** set up a global fund to support the global greening target, he said the fund would **serve to** finance reforestation and afforestation programmes as well as forest rehabilitation and maintenance.

Contributions to the fund should be based on the population, wealth and the ability to meet greening targets as well as other relevant factors.

Countries which have levels of carbon dioxide emissions that exceed a defined threshold should pay on the basis of an agreed schedule.

But, Dr Mahathir pointed out, nothing in the proposals must compromise the principle of the sovereign right to development.

He said the **greening** of the world would hopefully inspire a **new spirit** of international co-operation and partnership in which global resources were fairly shared..

+If successful, we would have solved at least partially an important environmental problem., + he added.

Dr Mahathir said if the environment was going to be cleaned, those most responsible for polluting it must act. --,more

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Eighty per cent of the pollution in the world was due to activities in the industrially developed North and it was they who must first clean up their backyard, he added,

Their NGO's (non-governmental organisations) should stay at home and apply pressure on their own governments, their industrialists and **their** military leaders,

Dr Mahathir said the **developing** countries must of course do their bit and the first thing was for them to come together to work out a common stand.

He added: +Let there be no break in our ranks when we talk about environment. We will share the burden strictly in proportion with our culpability and our capacity.

+By no means can we accept that we sacrifice our development in order that the rich and the powerful can enjoy ever improving standards of living.+

It was the rich who must be prepared to sacrifice their progress in the interest of the development of the poor. -- more

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Dr Mahathir said development and economic growth could not but be accompanied by some undesirable effect on the environment.

While the developed countries had already damaged fully their environment, this was no reason for preventing developing countries from seeking to develop.

If environmental damage was to be minimised, then the developed countries must be prepared to subsidise the cost.

+If the cost of development is higher because of present environmental considerations, then the developing countries of today are being unfairly penalised. This is unacceptable,+ he said.

The Prime Minister hoped that the historic opportunity at Rio would not be wasted for Rio, he said, could be the occasion to take important historic steps for a true global partnership.

He said the South had suffered enough and it was wrong that it should be made scapegoats for the past sins of the North. -- more

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Dr Mahathir said the South could not remain the repository of the resources for the North, including locking up its forest to serve as the global green lung and its genetic resource laboratory.

+The North must help the South to develop for it is in their environmental, economic and security interest that they do so,+ he added.

The Prime Minister said freedom was a commodity much touted by the North and woe betide any developing country which did not grant freedom to its citizens.

Yet, he said, the North considered it right and proper to deprive the people in the developing countries of their freedom to exploit their own natural wealth.

In campaigning against tropical timber and in boycotting it, they were denying the people of the South the freedom to make a living, to extract what little wealth they had and to be free from hunger, disease and poverty, he added.

+How can they still-talk of freedom when it is they who deprive us of freedom?+ -- Bernama

▼27/04/15-14MST