

Delegates commend Dr Mahathir's speech

KUALA LUMPUR, Mon. — Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr. Mahathir Mohamad's speech at the opening of the second ministerial conference of developing countries on the environment and development has been described as "strong, straight to the point and reflecting the aspirations of the South."

Delegates commended the Prime Minister on maintaining his reputation for delivering frank and hard-hitting speeches.

Sweden's Under-Secretary of State from the Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources, Mr Persson Goran, said the speech was frank and it would trigger lots of sympathy for the South.

"Dr Mahathir's words reflected the opinions of the South and also showed ways to overcome environmental problems," he said.

"This is the type of statement we have been waiting for ... it is what we want," said Malta's United Nations director at the Foreign Ministry, Mr Savidor F. Borg.

He said Dr Mahathir's speech, though void of confrontation, gave the right perspective to the difficulties faced by the South.

"It was a beautiful speech ... great punch. It would inspire many countries to respond in equal measure. As a voice of the South ... it was

a wonderful speech," Permanent representative to the United Nations Tan Sri Razali Ismail said.

Indian Minister of State for Environment and Forest Kamal Nath said he liked Dr Mahathir's frank approach to the outstanding environmental issues.

"It is better to face the realities and do away with the subtleties," he said.

Kenyan Minister for Environment and Natural Resources Philip Leakey said the speech was a good and strong message to the developing and industrialised countries.

"The South and the North should use the speech as a base to find an agreement on all the outstanding issues like financial resources. Hopefully, it will close the gap between the North and South on our difference of opinion," he said.

On Malaysia's call to the global community to target at least 30 per cent of the Earth's terrestrial area to be greened by the year 2000, he said the suggestion was acceptable and should be wholly supported.

Barbados Minister of Labour, Consumer Affairs and the Environment Carl D. Clarke said Dr Mahathir delivered "a very well-reasoned speech" containing a "timely message".

Urging all countries to support Dr Mahathir's views, he said the environ-



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ment was suffering from past mistakes and would be further degraded if environmental issues were not considered seriously.

African National Congress representative to Malaysia and Singapore Ismail Coovadia said the speech was strong, hard-hitting, realistic and to the point.

"Dr Mahathir must be commended for taking the lead on behalf of the South and bringing the welfare of our present and future generation to the eyes of the international community."

On the video clip *An initiative for the greening of the*

world, Coovadia said it presented a strong and factual argument and the developing and the developed countries should respond accordingly.

Palestine ambassador to Malaysia Ahmad Al Farra said Dr Mahathir's speech should be one of the most important documents in the meeting as it addressed all the issues plaguing the South countries.

"Dr Mahathir has addressed what the South countries have to do in the right way," he said, adding that progress could be made on many issues if the delegates from the South could study and discuss the opening address.

Al Farra said the North may not be happy with the speech but it was an essentially frank perspective.

Australian Minister for the Arts, Sport, the Environment and Territories Ros Kelly said Australia understood the Malaysian and developing countries' position on UNCED.

However, she said developing countries should not demand "huge, blank cheques" from developed countries for the implementation of the proposed Global Fund.

Tunisian permanent mission for the protection of the environment's first secretary Ghazi Jomaa said Dr Mahathir's speech aptly expressed the sentiments of all

developing nations.

He agreed that if environmental damage was to be minimised, then developed countries must be prepared to help bear the cost.

Nigerian ambassador to Malaysia Abdul Rahman Gara said the speech was very courageous.

He said North and South countries must move to close the gap on their differences for the sake of conserving the environment.

Asian Wetland Bureau director Faizal (Duncan) Parish said Malaysia's stand was supported by many non-Government organisations.

"You have in your country a good variety of forest, ranging from lowlands to steep hills. If the 50 per cent mentioned by your Prime Minister includes a bit of everything, then it is a significant move and we support it," he said.

"If this is the case, then Malaysia has a sound and sustainable policy on its forests," he added.

Environmental Protection Society of Malaysia president Gurmit Singh felt the speech concentrated too much on the tropical timber issue and should have also highlighted toxic waste disposal, the extravagant lifestyles of the West, financial resources and the transfer of environmentally-sound technology.