

16/06/1997

## D-8 countries sign joint declaration on membership

Farush Khan in Istanbul

LEADERS of the eight Development Eight (D-8) countries yesterday signed a joint declaration which, among others, is to open its membership to other developing countries subscribing to its vision of promoting economic ties.

Called the Istanbul Declaration, it decided that co-operation would encompass all areas, including political consultation and co-ordination at the international fora.

The declaration was read by Turkish Prime Minister Necmettin Erbakan who initiated the establishment of the D-8 grouping.

Other "non-exhaustive areas" agreed upon at the summit-level meeting were trade, industry, finance, banking and privatisation, rural development, science and technology, poverty alleviation, agriculture, health, environment and tourism.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad signed on behalf of Malaysia at the end of the summit attended by leaders of other member countries Indonesia, Turkey, Egypt, Iran, Pakistan, Bangladesh and Nigeria.

The eight countries have a population of almost 800 million - 80 per cent of the world's Muslims - and have a combined trade volume of US\$400 billion (RM1,000 billion).

The D-8 had adopted six principles which are "peace instead of conflict, dialogue instead of confrontation, equality instead of discrimination, co-operation instead of exploitation, justice instead of double standards and democracy instead of oppression".

These principles are reflected on the D-8 green-white emblem which carried six stars.

The 12-point declaration also agreed Bangladesh will hold the next D-8 meeting in Dacca in November or December 1998.

The declaration welcomed the decision of the Turkish government to appoint an Executive Director to provide co-ordination during its chairmanship of the organisation and to provide facilities for the Executive Director in Istanbul and meet its expenses during that period.

It also decided that an appropriate mechanism be established to liaise with other relevant international organisations, particularly the Organisation of Islamic Conference (which has 54 members).

The declaration expressed the D-8 member countries' resolve to co-operate with both the developing and economically developed countries in the realisation of its goals.

The D-8, it said, agreed to enhance the insufficient volume of trade among the member countries and increase the group's exports to the outside world.

It stated that the D-8 will be a forum with no adverse effect on bilateral and multilateral commitments of the members countries emanating from their membership to other international or regional organisations.

In the declaration, the countries also expressed their commitments to foster a global partnership in the world economy based on a constructive dialogue through a democratic and participatory process.

Meanwhile, Dr Mahathir met Turkish President Suleyman Demirel and Erbakan on Saturday during which they discussed efforts to increase co-operation in the various fields between the two countries.

Among the areas discussed were on science and technology, automobile industry and opportunities to improve trade and investment in their free

trade zones.

Speaking to Malaysian reporters, Foreign Minister Datuk Abdullah Ahmad Badawi said Turkey proposed a form of co-operation between the two countries in defence.

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