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Chogm-Declaration

NEXT CHOGM MEETING IN SOUTH AFRICA

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EDINBURGH, Oct 27 (Bernama) -- The Commonwealth heads of government ended their four-day meeting today pledging in a five-page Edinburgh Communique to be a force for freer trade in the world, to fight world poverty and to meet again in South Africa in 1999.

The pledges reflected the leaders' determination to promote shared prosperity among members and in the world.

The Chogm for the first time, was themed on trade, investment and development: the road to Commonwealth prosperity.

The Commonwealth leaders endorsed the work of the six-nation Commonwealth Ministerial Action Group to continue monitoring developments in Nigeria, now given until October 1 next year to take the road back to democracy or face expulsion and Commonwealth and international sanctions. Malaysia is a member of the group.

The Commonwealth also promised Palestine that it would be considered for membership once it gained full sovereignty but applications from Rwanda and Yemen would be kept under review under a set criteria as endorsed by the Commonwealth heads.

Members accepted globalisation but also warned against its ravages, especially on small nations.

The Edinburgh Communique also reaffirmed the Commonwealth heads' condemnation of acts of terrorism "in all its forms and manifestations" whilst recognising the linkages between terrorism, illegal trafficking in drugs and arms, and money laundering.

It called on all states to enact laws to make punishable acts of conspiracy within their jurisdictions to commit terrorist offences.

Further it called on concerted action against landmines by urging members to sign the convention on the prohibition of its use, stockpiling, production and transfer and called for their destruction.

"Heads of government expressed their belief that an International Criminal Court (ICC) would be an important development in the international promotion of the rule of law," the Communique said.

In his closing remarks, British Prime Minister and meeting chairman Tony Blair echoed the words of South African President Nelson Mandela who said that outside the United Nations the Commonwealth was the most extraordinary and global community of countries, "incredibly diverse but actually richer for its diversity."

Speaking of the meeting before leaving for an official visit to Slovenia Malaysian prime minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said Prime minister Blair was more sympathetic to Chogm than previous prime ministers and he has shown a willingness to listen."

--BERNAMA

WAH AAM