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NAM-Summit

G-8 MEMBERS MAY ATTEND NAM SUMMIT IN SOUTH AFRICA

By: E.Sivabalan

DURBAN, Aug 28 (Bernama) -- The United States and other members of the Group of Eight (G-8) have been invited to attend the 12th Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) Summit here next week to hear for themselves the position of the developing nations on global issues.

According to Jackie Selebi, Director-General of the South African Foreign Affairs Department, Pretoria, as the host of the summit, had the right to invite the G-8 members which also comprise Britain, Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan and Russia.

Sources said there had been some opposition to the proposal to invite certain Western powers to the summit. Cuba was said to have objected to the proposal to admit the US as a guest state of NAM, which currently has 27 guest states.

Briefing the media on the summit at the Durban Exhibition Centre here, Selebi said the presence of the G-8 countries would ensure that "the message gets across."

"It would be better to have them here to hear to what we (developing nations) have to say," he said.

However, Selebi, who is also the summit secretary, did not say whether the G-8 countries had confirmed their participation at the Aug 29 to Sept 3 summit in this South African city.

Selebi also said that United Nations Secretary-General Kofi Annan, who will attend the summit, had requested a special meeting of members of the South African Development Community (SADC) to discuss the recent missile attacks by the US against alleged terrorist bases in Sudan.

Meanwhile, South African Deputy Foreign Minister Aziz Pahad said Cuban and Palestinian presidents Fidel Castro and Yasser Arafat were among 53 heads of state and government who had confirmed their attendance at the summit.

The others include Jerry Rawlings (Ghana), A.B.Vajpayee (India), Mohamad Nawab Sharif (Pakistan), Alberto Fujimori (Peru), Chandrika Kumaratunga (Sri Lanka) and Robert Mugabe (Zimbabwe)

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad has also confirmed his participation.

Singapore Prime Minister Goh Chok Tong and Indonesian President B.J.Habibie are among those who will be represented by their foreign ministers.

NAM, established formally at the Belgrade Summit of 1961, currently consists of 113 members. Belarus is expected to become the movement's 114th member at the Durban Summit.

The movement holds its summit every three years. The last summit was held in Cartagena, Colombia.

Aziz said 93 of the 113 member countries had formally registered their participation.

He said about 2,000 to 3,000 delegates were expected to attend the summit while 500 more would come from the local and international media to cover the event.

The summit would be run by a 2,500 workforce including 1,200 security personnel.

He said 476 BMW cars would be used to ferry the VIPs to the International Convention Centre, the summit venue.

South African President Nelson Mandela will assume the chairmanship of

the NAM while the issues to be discussed include the impact of globalisation, trade liberalisation, nuclear disarmament and South-South Cooperation.

NAM senior officials will convene their meeting for two days beginning Saturday, followed by the foreign ministers meeting on Monday and Tuesday while the heads of state and government will kick off their two-day summit on Wednesday.

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