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Commonwealth-Anyaoku

COMMONWEALTH TO CONTINUE BUILDING DEMOCRACY, SAYS CHIEF ANYAOKU

KUALA LUMPUR, Oct 26 (Bernama) -- The Commonwealth will continue its focus on building democracy, good government and working for sustainable economic development in the next millennium, its Secretary-General, Chief Emeka Anyaoku, said today.

However, it would also face new issues and challenges such as environmental destruction and international crime as the increasing worldwide problems required global solutions, he said.

"Looking to the future, the contribution the Commonwealth makes to tolerance and understanding will be expressed in terms not just of service to its members, but in terms of its service to the wider international community," he said in a keynote address on "The Commonwealth at 50" at the Commonwealth Press Union's biennial conference, here.

The four-day conference which begins today was opened by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad.

Anyaoku said the Commonwealth, as a builder of bridges between communities, countries and regions at all levels of development, could set an example for others to follow.

He gave a brief history of the Commonwealth as well as its progress since its establishment in April 1949.

The Commonwealth's foundation was laid by the prime ministers of Australia, Canada, New Zealand, South Africa, India, Pakistan and Ceylon (now Sri Lanka) together with Britain.

"From the beginning, we were an association committed to racial equality and national self-determination. As such, we became a natural choice for many of the world's new nations.

"We revelled then in our diversity and we still do, be it cultural, constitutional or ethnic," Anyaoku said.

He said the Commonwealth's most successful and innovative venture, used by over 40 countries, was to design a software package for developing countries to manage their foreign debt load where it calculated repayment terms, interest rates and showed the interest that could be saved by refinancing expensive loans.

The Commonwealth, with its experience in understanding and managing diversity, could help provide an example for cooperation and development for the rest of the world into the new millennium, he said.

-- BERNAMA

RAZ JK