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Abdullah-NAM

CURRENCY CRISIS TO TAKE CENTRE STAGE AT NAM SUMMIT

By: E.Sivabalan

KUALA LUMPUR, Aug 21 (Bernama) -- Malaysia and other developing nations will push their rich partners for further assistance to overcome their liquidity problems and minimise the related financial and exchange risks in their economies at the 12th Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) Summit in South Africa later this month.

Foreign Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi said today the assistance from the developed nations and the Bretton Woods institutions would be crucial, particularly to those afflicted by the financial crisis.

The summit, to be held in Durban from Aug 29 to Sept 3, would also urge the developed countries, together with the developing countries, the International Monetary Fund, World Bank and the United Nations, to accelerate the review of the world financial system to ensure that short-term capital flows were supportive of expanding trade, employment and development, he said.

In an interview with Bernama, here, he said the matter would be discussed at the summit as a follow-up to the Ministerial Meeting of the Coordinating Bureau of NAM which was held last May in Cartagena, Colombia.

Abdullah said the issue of financial crisis would be high among Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad's priorities at the summit.

"This issue would surely be taken up by the prime minister at the Durban Summit," he said.

Government heads and national officials from over 100 states with different levels of social and economic developments and political orientations will gather in Durban for the summit.

Abdullah, who will be in Dr Mahathir's delegation to the summit, said Malaysia hoped that the currency turmoil that has hit several Asian countries including Malaysia would be included in the final document of the summit.

"An appropriate reflection relating to the gravity of the problem, we expect, will also be incorporated in the final document of the conference," he said.

NAM comprises 112 developing countries and holds its summit every three years. The last summit was held in Cartagena, Colombia in 1995.

The movement was formed following the Afro-Asian Conference in Bandung, Indonesia, in 1955 and has its genesis in post-war decolonisation and third-world reaction to the alignments of the United States/Soviet superpower rivalry.

It was established formally at the Belgrade Summit of 1961 after which a declaration was issued outlining the basic philosophy of the movement which included a stated intention not to form a bloc and the promotion of peace and stability through negotiation.

Asked if NAM was in a position to tackle the financial and economic turmoil in several Asian nations amid accusations that the movement has outlived its purpose, Abdullah said: "Certainly NAM is in a position to tackle this issue."

He said that at the last NAM summit, the movement had "rationalised" its role in the post-Cold War era.

"NAM heads of state/government had stated that the validity of NAM and its fundamental principles were to be fully preserved and that NAM would constitute a forum which provides a basic framework to coordinate interests and positions of member states on political, economic and social issues.

"NAM, therefore, is as relevant as it was in the past," Abdullah said.

On questions raised on the relevance and role of NAM since the end of the Cold War and the disappearance of ideological power blocs, he stressed that NAM had to refocus its role and address current issues confronting the member countries of the movement.

"By tackling current issues and adopting common positions in various fora, NAM would not only be a movement to be recognised but would also command the respect of others," he said.

The minister said that by renewing its role and making it responsive to the times, NAM would shed the image held by some that it has outlived its usefulness and also that it is no longer relevant.

Asked what Malaysia expected NAM's role to be in the next century, Abdullah said NAM would need to be further strengthened to meet the challenges of the coming millennium.

"NAM should be responsive to the current changes and challenges confronting the world," he said.

He said it was hoped that as a movement, NAM would be able to adopt coordinated and common positions in the UN as well as in other international fora.

NAM should also interact with other groups, including those from the developed countries, on the whole range of global issues that affected mankind in general, he added.

"Through such interaction and networking, NAM would be able to build a partnership with other players in the global scene, thereby enhancing its ability to participate in the decision-making process on major global issues that affect both developing and developed countries," Abdullah said.

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