

31 AUG 1998

NAM-Abdullah

M'SIA HOPES FOR AGREEMENT OF NAM MEMBERS ON SECURITY COUNCIL MEMBERSHIP

By: E.Sivabalan

DURBAN, Aug 31 (Bernama) -- Malaysia hopes that all members of the Non-Aligned Movement will set aside their respective national or regional interests to ensure that the restructuring of the United Nations Security Council can be achieved soon.

Foreign Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi said that the problem now was that NAM member countries want their respective regions to be represented as a permanent member of the council together with the United States, Britain, China, France and Russia.

"We even face a problem in resolving this issue (among the NAM members)," he said.

NAM comprises 113 developing nations from Asia, Africa and Latin America.

Speaking to Malaysian journalists in this South African port city, he said that the issue of the restructuring of the Security Council, proposed two years ago, could not be resolved if NAM members could not reach an agreement on the matter.

However, he expects the 12th NAM Summit which begins here on Wednesday to make several important decisions on the issue of the restructuring of the council.

Abdullah, who arrived here yesterday, will represent Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad at the two-day Summit to be preceded by the NAM Foreign Ministers Meeting which begins today.

Dr Mahathir is not attending the Summit as he is tired after conducting a series of visits to the states recently to explain to the people the economic crisis facing the country and the various measures being taken to overcome the situation.

Abdullah said that all the five permanent members of the Security Council had (deliberately ) delayed acting on the proposal as they had their own agenda.

He said that they had submitted their own suggestions pertaining to the restructuring proposal, making it more difficult for the issue to be resolved.

"If NAM is not forceful, we will face problems in pursuing our effort," he said.

Abdullah also hoped that NAM members would understand and respect the wishes of all members to discuss any issues or problems at the Summit.

He said that every issue that might be raised by member countries whether in respect of their own countries or on behalf of their own regions, should be given attention.

"We need to obtain support from all so that relevant matters can be inserted in vital documents (of the Summit). Africa also wishes to seek recognition over its problems," he said.

Abdullah was commenting on local press reports that issues of the economic crisis and nuclear disarmament may not be given serious attention at the Summit compared to the issue of terrorism like bomb attacks in several member countries in Africa recently including in the host country.

Malaysia and several other member countries are expected to focus on the economic crisis faced by the Asian region and several other developing countries including South Africa while African countries are expected to give priority to the issue of terrorism.

On Aug 7, bomb attacks occurred at the US embassies in Nairobi and Dar

es Salaam, claiming 257 lives while 5,000 were injured. The US, in striking back, launched cruise missiles against alleged terrorist targets in Sudan and Afghanistan.

Last Tuesday, another bomb attack occurred at "Planet Hollywood" in Cape Town, resulting in one person dead and 27 others injured.

Abdullah said that he understands that NAM members from Africa may focus on the issue of terrorism.

On Malaysia's stand at the Summit, he said that Kuala Lumpur would make a statement that NAM was still relevant and wants it to serve as a forum to discuss vital matters concerning South-South cooperation besides the issue of the economic crisis.

-- BERNAMA

ES RM