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'Role country plays in world arena recognised'

KUALA LUMPUR, Fri. - Malaysia's election to the United Nations Security Council proves that the world recognises the significant role the country plays in international affairs.

Foreign Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi said today the country's foreign policy, one based on principles, was the reason for the international community's confidence in Malaysia.

"The Security Council is a powerful body in the United Nations and there are many issues it can tackle," he said at a Press conference at Wisma Putra.

On Wednesday, Malaysia was elected to the Security Council for the third time as a non-permanent member for the 1999-2000 session.

It had the highest number of votes with 174 out of 176 cast. Besides Malaysia, Argentina, Namibia, Canada and the Netherlands were also elected.

Argentina had 171 votes, Namibia 167, Canada 131 and the Netherlands 122.

Abdullah said that Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad and he would write to all UN members, thanking them for electing Malaysia.

"We will also thank Asian countries which nominated us as the sole representative from the region for the non-permanent Security Council seat."

He said the role and outstanding leadership of Dr Mahathir also helped Malaysia in securing the overwhelming support.

When pointed out that the five permanent members of the Security Council - the United States, Russia, Britain, China and France - had the veto powers over matters, Abdullah said this was a fact which had to be accepted for now.

"We cannot do anything about it. We have to act effectively and with principles when looking for solutions to certain problems," he said.

"I am confident the countries will not use their veto powers if an issue concerning a country is dealt with effectively and with principles."

There are many issues which have to be resolved including the Palestinian cause and the crisis in Kosovo.

On Nato's threat to use air strikes to force Yugoslav President Slobodan Milosevic to withdraw his forces from Kosovo, Abdullah said:

"Our stand is that any action against a country should have the backing of the United Nations."

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