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SAID-REVIEW

COMMITMENTS TO SMOOTHEN SMART PARTNERSHIP SEEN AT SAID 2000

By: Mohd Arshi Daud

KUALA LUMPUR, Aug 30 (Bernama) -- With the concept of smart partnership now well absorbed by the southern African countries, the recently concluded SAID 2000 held in Mozambique saw commitments to smoothen cooperation and foster closer understanding among its members.

Of greater significance was the call for the formation of electronic-communication between national hubs, Commonwealth Partnership for Technology Management (CPTM) hubs and business partners that would facilitate business link and exchange of experience in doing business.

A delegate described this as vital in strengthening confidence among foreign investors because some foreign businessmen were affected by non-conformity to agreements while some projects were delayed by red tapes.

At the end of the three-day SAID 2000, host Mozambican president, Joaquim Alberto Chissano said that information on smart business partners and on business environment in each smart partnership member countries would be compiled in an electronic data bank.

Case studies on doing business in southern Africa would also be gathered, with the first example being the experience of the Malaysian businessmen, he added.

CPTM is a non-profit organisation that promotes opportunities and co-operation between public and private sectors in emerging economies.

CPTM jointly organised the Southern Africa International Dialogue 2000 (SAID 2000) with the National Task Force of Mozambique and the Malaysian Industry-Government Group for High-Technology (MIGHT).

The SAID 2000 participants concluded that it was unfortunate that the western media controlling the digital world, tended to misrepresent and distort news of the developing countries.

To counter this bias reporting by the western media, SAID 2000 had also decided on the setting up of an electronic system to access news direct from the source, rather than the wire services, added Chissano.

Participants of SAID 2000, comprising state leaders, businessmen, government officials, media and trade unionists who congregated under huge white marquees assembled in a park in Maputo -- the capital of Mozambique also deliberated on other issues.

This included the negative impact of globalisation, ways and means of poverty eradication and the pressing health problems affecting the region namely HIV/AIDS and malaria.

Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad, who led the Malaysian delegation to SAID, said he noted that SAID leaders had now gone beyond talking over the subject of smart partnership.

The Prime Minister observed a change in attitude among the leaders as they now talked less about politics and were more interested in smart partnership efforts for economic development and welfare betterment of their people.

Dr Mahathir also took a swipe at the globalisation process by saying that the promises of "glorious benefits" and "a ticket to a better life for everyone" in the developing world had failed to materialise.

His attacks of the inequities of globalisation had filtered down well in Mozambique where its cashew industry was destroyed in the name of free trade.

The imposition of trade liberalisation in cashews five years ago by the World Bank saw thousands of tonnes of raw nuts exported to India, starving

the local processing industry of its raw material thus causing the industry to collapse.

Dr Mahathir also said that his criticism over the process of globalisation was shared by the Southern Africa leaders but many were not in the position to express it.

This was because they depended on borrowings from the World Bank, the International Monetary Funds and received aids from Western countries, he added.

Dr Mahathir was the only Asian leader who participated in SAID 2000. Among other leaders who attended SAID 2000 were president Robert Mugabe of Zimbabwe, president Dr Sam Nujoma of Namibia, president Yoweri Museveni of Uganda and South African deputy president, Jacob Zuma.

SAID is modelled after the smart partnership meeting of the Langkawi International Dialogue.

SAID 2000 is the fourth one to be held. The first was held in Kasane, Botswana in 1997, followed by Swakopmund, Namibia the following year and Victoria Falls, Zimbabwe last year. Next year's host will be Uganda.--

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