

07/09/2000

Efforts continuing to form South coordinating body

Mustapha Kamil in United Nations

UNITED NATIONS, Wed: Last-minute notice prevented full attendance of the five leaders of South countries at the group's special meeting here yesterday. Nevertheless, efforts were continuing to form the proposed South Coordinating Commission (SCC).

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad, who attended the meeting after a three-day hectic working visit to Chicago, said the special meeting for the Group of 77 (G-77) nations was productive.

Most of the leaders were represented by their foreign ministers. Dr Mahathir said they would forward the positive outcomes of the special meeting to their leaders.

The special meeting was a follow-up to the meeting by four of the five leaders in London recently. It was to assist the G-77 in facing the UN Millennium Summit in New York.

In talks on the proposed SCC, Dr Mahathir said he thought facilities from the present South Centre in Geneva should still be used, instead of a whole new set-up.

He said the meeting discussed the formation of a viable structure for the SCC and holding meetings every five years.

The SCC is conceived as a permanent body - to replace the existing South Centre in Geneva - to coordinate developing countries' position on world trade and financial issues.

The idea of setting up the SCC was mooted at the G-77 Summit in Havana, Cuba, in April.

Dr Mahathir also said since the mandate of the five appointed G-77 country leaders was to expire end of this month while its work was not completed, the meeting agreed to extend the mandate given to the five leaders.

The leaders are Nigerian President Olusegun Obbasanjo, Jamaican President P.J. Paterson, South African President Thabo Mbeki, Algerian President Abdelaziz Bouteflike and Dr Mahathir.

Bername reports: Dr Mahathir told the special meeting that a more effective approach is needed for future summits of leaders from the developing countries so that their voices can be heard more clearly by the international community.

At present, he said, it is impossible to have a meeting of G-77 leaders like the way the G-8 (group of seven developed countries plus Russia) are able to do, resulting in ineffective meetings and delays in decision-making.

Dr Mahathir said in his speech that the South Centre, currently used by the original 46 members of the G-77, needs to be open to the rest of the members and should be turned into a concrete mechanism that can exert greater pressure on other world bodies.

"We need to act decisively to map out a better future for our countries and our people and to work towards the establishment of an international economic system, which will be just, equitable and democratic," he said.

Dr Mahathir reminded members that many developing countries were exposed to serious financial problems brought about by the systemic nature of financial instability as a result of unregulated short-term capital flows.

The Prime Minister had earlier called on Cuban President Fidel Castro at the Cuban Permanent Representative's office here.

(END)

