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G15-Rafidah

G15 MUST OVERCOME RHETORICS, SAYS RAFIDAH

By: Ahmad Zukiman Zain

Cairo, June 14 (Bernama) -- The group of 15 developing countries (G15) should take advantage of the grouping's 10th summit here to identify its actions so that it could play an effective role in the international arena, said International Trade and Industry Minister Datuk Seri Rafidah Aziz.

She said after 10 years of its inception, the grouping was no longer able to discuss in general and without firm commitment to act on issues relating to cooperation and in the interest of developing countries.

"It is hoped that besides the long communique that is usually issued, this meeting will outline several highlights which will become the basis for follow-up action," she told Malaysian journalists covering the G15 summit, which is being held for the second time in Egypt.

Rafidah, who arrived here this morning, will have meetings with other trade ministers of the G15 tomorrow in preparation for the summit meeting which starts on Monday.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad is scheduled to arrive at the Egyptian capital, the largest African city, on Saturday.

Foreign Minister Datuk Seri Syed Hamid Albar is scheduled to arrive on Friday for preparatory meetings with his counterparts the following day.

The G15 now has 17 member countries since Kuala Lumpur hosted its inaugural summit meeting in 1991.

Besides Malaysia and Egypt, the other member countries are Algeria, Argentina, Brazil, Chile, India, Indonesia, Jamaica, Kenya, Mexico, Nigeria, Peru, Senegal, Sri Lanka, Venezuale and Zimbabwe.

Rafidah said the trade ministers' meeting tomorrow will scrutinise 20 existing projects of the G15 as well as international issues particularly the World Trade Organisation's (WTO) negotiation process, effects of globalisation and electronic commerce (e-commerce).

She said the G15 must carefully study each issue pertaining to WTO so that it could take a common stand.

"For example, the WTO has already started to discuss industrial tariff and as such the G15 must determine the appropriate tariff for which they should take a common stand. The same applies to competition policy," she said.

By identifying the issues, the grouping would be able to distribute the work among their respective representatives in Geneva so that the interests of the G15 and developing countries could be looked after in all WTO issues.

On globalisation, she said the grouping must look at its effects on their export trade, industrialisation policies, technological advancement and human resource development.

Another area that should be looked into was e-commerce as it had great potential to enhance cooperation among member countries.

In this context, such network had already been established namely the "Sibexlink", a project sponsored by Malaysia.

Malaysia had spent US\$4.16 million to develop Sibexlink which enabled the private sectors in member countries to deal with one another through the network as complementary to normal trade.

"Unfortunately, although Sibexlink would be the nerve for e-commerce, there are still seven member countries of the G15 including Egypt who have yet to join the network," Rafidah said.

Several proposals had also been presented including the one by Egypt on capital market cooperation and the Indonesian proposal on the establishment of an international financial institution for the G15, she added.

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