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OIC-Committee

INDONESIA TO PROPOSE M'SIA AS SEVENTH MEMBER IN OIC PANEL

KUALA LUMPUR, June 27 (Bernama) -- Indonesia will propose Malaysia's admission as a seventh member of the committee appointed by the OIC to oversee the implementation of the peace accord between the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) and the Philippine government.

Indonesian Foreign Minister Alwi Shihab said the proposal would be made at tomorrow's meeting of the committee comprising Bangladesh, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, Somalia, Libya and Indonesia (chairman)..

He said Malaysia's inclusion was important in view of its role in efforts to propagate Islamic teachings at the international level.

He expressed the hope Malaysia's membership of the committee would make it more successful in the role it was playing.

Alwi said Indonesia had worked hard to resolve the problems in the southern Philippines between the MNLF and the Philippine government.

He said he had discussions on the latest developments in Mindanao with Nur Misuari, the Governor of the Autonomous Region of Muslim Mindanao, today.

"We listened to both Misuari and the Philippine government to find the best possible solution to solving the problem," he said.

He said Misuari had asked for the implementation of the autonomous rule in Mindanao to be speeded up.

He hoped decisions taken at the 27th session of the Islamic Conference of Foreign Ministers here with regards to that would not pose problems to either parties.

Malaysian Foreign Minister Datuk Seri Syed Hamid Albar confirmed that Malaysia had been proposed to sit in the committee.

This would be discussed at tomorrow's ICFM political committee meeting, he told reporters at the end of the first-day session of the four-day meeting.

Syed Hamid said a member of the Committee of Six had even suggested Malaysia chair its meeting.

He said the situation in southern Philippines was raised during today's deliberations although the Sipadan hostage crisis was not discussed.

Other issues raised included the situation of minority Muslim communities in non-Muslim majority countries, the environment, science and technology as well as the West Asian peace agreement.

During the meeting, some countries said there was a need to ensure that Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad's keynote address be made as one of the foundations for the grouping's future direction.

Alwi said Indonesia tried to resolve the problem quietly for fear of being accused of interfering in the country's internal affairs.

In fact, Indonesian President Abdurrahman Wahid and his Philippine counterpart Joseph Estrada discussed the matter during their recent meeting in Tokyo.

He also noted that both the Philippine government and Misuari had been frank in airing their respective problems and hence, this matter should be resolved by the committee.

Alwi said the committee was striving to ease the burden of both parties and did not pressure either of them to reach a settlement.

" We place our full trust with the Philippines to resolve this matter amicably," he added.

-- BERNAMA

JM/MK HT TS