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LID-WOMEN

LID HELPS AFRICAN WOMEN TO BE BUSINESS-INCLINED

By: Arul Rajoo

LANGKAWI, Nov 19 (Bernama) -- African women are now more inclined towards entering business and brave enough to venture outside their "male dominated society," a Zimbabwean delegate at the Langkawi International Dialogue (LID) 2000 said today.

This, said Dr Ruth Labedo, was made possible through their participation in the LID since its inception in 1995 where more opportunities for women were created through the Smart Partnership concept.

"The dialogue has done well...we have come out. We are beginning to learn from others through this partnership," said Labedo, Zimbabwe's first provincial medical director.

Labedo said there were a lot of things that can be learnt from Malaysia, among them entrepreneurship, trade, how small and medium scale entrepreneurship are supported and how to survive in difficult times.

In fact, she said a group of businesswomen had travelled to this country on their own to look for business opportunities while arrangements were being made by J. Mutasa, President of the Indigenous Business Women Organisation, to send women for entrepreneurship training here.

She said Datin Seri Dr Siti Hasmah Mohd Ali, the wife of Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad, had agreed to organise the visit expected to take place in February.

Asked on the involvement of African women in business, Labedo said they still lagged behind as their culture never really opened up for women to be involved.

"Culturally, we are not expected to come out and expose ourselves...it's male dominance in everything. I was the first women provincial director 20 years after independence and I am still the first," she added.

Labedo said such dialogues had enabled African countries to see for themselves the progress made in this part of the world and created business links vital for the development of the continent.

She said that mechanisms to eradicate poverty were important.

Programmes that could develop entrepreneurship among women should be identified, she added.

Labedo said more African nations should be invited to participate in LID so that more people, especially women, would be able to benefit from it.

During the Special Session of Social Issues Group attended by First Ladies today, Labedo said they also pressed for the need to continue using DDT, an anti malaria chemical, in their countries.

She said there was a campaign by some non-governmental organisations in Africa to ban DDT.

"NGOs are using environmental issues to ban DDT. We respect their views but we respect more people and children's life. The First Ladies gave their support and one of them will speak at a conference in Cape Town on the matter," she added. -- BERNAMA

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