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ICFM-Reform

STRUCTURAL CHANGES NEEDED IN OIC TO FACE NEW MILLENNIUM

By: E.Sivabalan

KUALA LUMPUR, June 22 (Bernama) -- The Organisation of Islamic Conference (OIC), the second largest organisation after the United Nations, will have to undergo structural changes to make it more relevant, said Foreign Ministry deputy secretary-general (I) Datuk Ahmad Fuzi Abdul Razak.

As host of the 27th Islamic Conference of Foreign Ministers (ICFM) beginning here on June 27, Malaysia would emphasis upon OIC member countries on the need to make the changes, he said.

"The OIC should perhaps review its approach in addressing the major issues of common concern," Ahmad Fuzi said in an interview with Bernama.

About 1,000 delegates from OIC member countries will attend the four-day ICFM, the second to be hosted by Malaysia. Kuala Lumpur hosted the earlier meeting in 1974.

Ahmad Fuzi, who is also the Chairman of the Coordinating Committee of the 27th ICFM, said: "There is a general awareness on the need to do something. Everybody have been talking about it but the difficulty is to achieve a consensus among member countries."

Citing an example, Ahmad Fuzi said the plenary session of the ICFM has given too much time for statements and discussions on resolution for adoption at the end of the session.

"There is little room for the foreign ministers themselves to engage in indepth discussions," he said.

Ahmad Fuzi said he expects some political issues such as Chechnya to be raised by some member countries in the light of the Russian onslaught against the Chechen Muslim fighters.

This issue, he said, would have to be addressed carefully because there were elements of violation of the principle of interference of another country. "Chechnya is still part of Russia".

"We hold strongly to this principle (of non-interference). But the humanitarian problems faced in Chechnya should also be of concern to all OIC member countries," he said.

Ahmad Fuzi stressed that the important thing was for Islamic nations to be united in facing the challenges, including globalisation which was sweeping the world amid an air of uncertainty among developing countries.

He said in the wake of the era of globalisation, the OIC needs to stress on the importance of "unity of the Ummah".

Ahmad Fuzi said Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad had raised the issue of disunity among Muslim nations in several OIC meetings.

Asked why many of the projects proposed or implemented by the OIC never got off the ground, he said: "It don't think it is short of ideas."

"It is important that whatever that has been proposed by member countries is backed with funds. It is impossible to get OIC to fund all its programmes," he said, adding that many OIC member countries have not been making their annual contributions to the OIC to enable the organisation to carry out its programmes.

Ahmad Fuzi said the future of the OIC would depend on the commitment and political will of member countries as well as the ability to carry out its mission.

He said the OIC was still considered important and more countries, including some which are not full-fledged Muslim countries, have become members or have shown interest to be observers/invitees.

"For small countries, it is better to be in the OIC as they can take advantage of the organisation to express their views and bring to international attention those issues that directly effect their national interest.

"And for Malaysia, it is better to be a member in as many international

organisations as possible," he said.

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