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OIC

MAKING OIC CONTRIBUTOR TO GLOBAL PEACE, STABILITY

KUALA LUMPUR, Oct 15 (Bernama) - The United States and its allies have turned a deaf ear on protest and concern by the world community on their so-called war against terrorism in Afghanistan.

Although the U.S. has been receiving support in tracking down suspected terrorists following the Sept 11 attacks in New York and Washington, many countries are against the current military offensive in Afghanistan.

U.S. and Britain launched strikes in Afghanistan on Oct 7 after the Taliban refused to hand over Osama bin Laden, the man Washington named as the prime suspect in the attacks in the U.S.

Malaysia is among the first countries to support efforts to nab those responsible for the Sept 11 incident but Kuala Lumpur rejects war as a means to achieve the objective.

It is understandable if the U.S. ignore calls made individually by smaller countries. But when a similar response is given to that by the 57-member Organisation of Islamic Conference (OIC), a body responsible for looking after Muslim countries, then something must be done to address the situation.

Foreign Minister Datuk Seri Syed Hamid Albar in his statement at the Doha meeting had said that the current global political scenario should be looked at as a testing moment for the OIC to re-examine its roles and relevancy.

The U.S. launched its military campaign in Afghanistan three days ahead of the special session of the OIC Foreign Ministers in Doha, Qatar, and continued their action at even greater magnitude after the OIC meeting.

The OIC meeting had come out with a communique, which among other things opposes to war in Afghanistan but supports efforts of tracking down the perpetrators of the Sept 11 tragedy through various other non-offensive methods.

With the rapidly changing situation in the current and future events, the OIC must therefore transform itself from an organisation which only deals with problems in conferences to an organisation of powerful Islamic countries with a united and solid voice, capable of contributing to global peace and stability.

It is imperative for the OIC to start putting serious efforts at least in ensuring what it agreed at the Oct 10 Doha special session be effectively implemented particularly in correcting negative images of Islam following the Sept 11 attacks.

In this respect Malaysia's proposal for the immediate implementation of OIC resolutions pertaining to the International Islamic News Agency (IINA) and Islamic State Broadcasting Organisation (ISBO) must be taken up earnestly to prepare appropriate programmes to disseminate balanced news and reports about Islam.

Among other things, there is a need to present to the world that Islam is a religion of peace, tolerance and moderation.

The Emir of Qatar Sheikh Hamad Bin Khalifa Al-Thani, in his opening address at the Doha meeting, had stressed that the Muslims pursued the cause of peace and tolerance and upheld the rights of non-Muslims living under Islamic rule, even at times when they were in the strongest and most powerful.

"Our condemnation of terrorism is not aimed at removing suspicion from Islam. It is denunciation of extremism which is prevailing in human

societies and not confined to a specific creed, culture or race.

"Moreover, it is necessary for countering extremism to address its causes that stir hatred and lead to violence," Sheikh Hamad had said.

In this context, Malaysia is seen by many countries as an Islamic country where non-Muslims enjoy religious freedom.

The other measure, which is of equal importance, is the holding of an international conference on terrorism under the auspices of the United Nations to find the causes and plan practical solutions to overcome the problem of terrorism.

Malaysian Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad has been calling on the world community to hold this conference, stressing the importance of identifying the root causes of terrorism so that effective measures could be taken to address the problem.

Past experiences should allow Islamic countries to draw formula that would enable them to counter the hateful phenomenon that does not differentiate between one race or another nor recognise political or geographical boundaries or social or economic doctrines.

Immediate actions must also be taken to hasten up the collection for the OIC Fund to extend aids to the Afghan civilians, who have suffered for decades from wars and conflicts that displaced millions of their sons and completely destroyed their infrastructure.

Malaysia has been vocal in calling for the world community to extend humanitarian aids to the Afghans and has set up its own trust fund to assist the Afghan people, who are suffering under the attacks.

One other important aspect for the OIC member countries to take cognizance of is the need to build up their strength to earn respect from the rest of the world.

Dr Mahathir Mohamad had stressed on many occasions the need for Muslim countries to develop their own economic and military strength so as not to depend on others for their survival.

According Syed Hamid, all of Malaysia's proposals had been adopted at the Oct 10 Doha meeting, including the holding of an international conference on terrorism under the auspices of the UN as well as conveying its sympathy to the tragedy that hit the U.S. and condemning strongly the Sept 11 attacks.

During the meeting Malaysia also welcomed the statement by the U.S. on the establishment of a Palestinian state and would like to see this vision implemented.

It also proposed an inter-faith dialogues and interaction for the purpose of explaining the real teachings of Islam.

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