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SMART-CHOGM

MUNYONYO STATEMENT ON WAY FORWARD TO BE PRESENTED AT CHOGM/CFMM

By: Mikhail Raj Abdullah

KAMPALA, Aug 22 (Bernama) -- Foreign Direct Investment (FDI), while being crucial to economic upliftment in South countries, must be both complementary to domestic economies and supportive of sustainable development, the Global 2001 Smart Partnership Dialogue was told here on Tuesday.

Investors should also bear in mind that FDI should be provided in a manner that entails smart partnership, with the investor and the recipient (host) country being involved in would turn out to be "win-win" situations.

These issues were highlighted in a mission statement entitled "The Munyonyo Way Forward", released at the end of the three-day dialogue at the Speke Resort in Munyonyo Village some 15km from here hosted by Uganda's President Yoweri Kaguta Museveni.

The statement also said that "the smart partnership movement will present the conclusions of this Munyonyo Dialogue to the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM) in Brisbane in October and to the Commonwealth Finance Ministers Meeting (CFMM) in St Lucia in 2002.

Lord Craig of Radley, a fellow of the Commonwealth Partnership for Technology Management (CPTM), which organises the smart partnership dialogues, said separately that "we believe the issues considered at the Munyonyo dialogue will contribute to the agenda of the 2001 CHOGM."

The Munyonyo statement also said that "in planning the way forward from Munyonyo, it was agreed that smart dialogues would be held in Africa and Malaysia in alternate years and this would be linked to the Caribbean and the West Asian/Mediterranean Smart Partnership activities".

The statement was issued during concluding discussions at the dialogue which for the first time was held in an East African country and attended by over 600 international participants including leaders of African states as well as Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad.

Those who had converged on the scenic resort on the shores of Lake Victoria also identified issues pertaining to the World Trade Organization (WTO), whereby any agreements should benefit members in an equitable manner,

The statement said there was a need to review the agriculture agreement in relation both to the European Union and to the needs of emerging economies.

African countries complain that the EU practises double standards: its rhetoric of free and open markets under the aegis of globalisation and liberalisation are not adhered to as it provides huge subsidies to protect its farm sector.

As a result, farm produce from mostly agrarian Africa finds it difficult to penetrate Europe, which is why developing countries want the WTO to review the agricultural agreement.

"At Munyonyo, however, we have identified one thing, that we are anti-inequity," the statement said.

"So, anti-inequity becomes a smart partnership value, but in a positive way of course, to ensure that for reasons of fairness and national self-interest, the globalisation process unfolds in a way which is fair and equitable for all the world's inhabitants."

The mostly African delegates also called for a balanced approach to intellectual property rights as well as the coordination of the WTO rules and philosophy with the debt-relief programs of the International Monetary

Fund, the World Bank and other relevant organisations in the interest of achieving sustainable development and accelerating essential programmes in the infrastructure and human resources field.

The mission statement also said that social issues have been given new prominence -- largely due to the effort of the First Ladies, including Datin Seri Dr Siti Hasmah Mohd Ali.

"This emphasis on social issues reflects the importance of an educated, skilled, healthy and reliable workforce in attracting FDI," the statement said.

A Smart Partners Cultural Link was introduced for the first time here at Munyonyo, whereby culture in the form of drama, film, music, arts and crafts was an industry in itself and could therefore be a target for FDI.

Dr Mahathir has invited all African leaders, heads of government from even non-African states and delegates to converge again next year for the next edition of the smart partnership dialogue in Langkawi - the birthplace of the dialogue in 1995. -- BERNAMA

MR MKO SEL