

30 MAR 2002

Terrorism-Attendance

51 COUNTRIES CONFIRM ATTENDANCE AT OIC SPECIAL SESSION

KUALA LUMPUR, March 30 (Bernama) -- The response to the Malaysian initiated special session of the Islamic Conference of Foreign Ministers on Terrorism has been overwhelming, judging from the number of countries which have confirmed their participation at the three-day meeting beginning on Monday.

Foreign Ministry Secretary-General Datuk Ahmad Fuzi Abdul Razak described the participation as "very good".

"For a special session this is very encouraging," he said when met at the flagship hotel, the Palace of the Golden Horses Hotel here today.

He said that 51 countries out of 57-member nations of the OIC had confirmed their participation.

Malaysia's decision to hold the meeting was prompted by various developments after terrorist attacks on the United States on Sept 11 last year, especially its impact on Muslims and Islam.

The Sept 11 terrorist attacks in New York and Washington, blamed on Osama bin Laden and his Al-Qaeda movement, resulted in more than 3,000 deaths.

The three-day special session will be opened on Monday by Malaysian Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad.

The special session is expected to come up with a declaration outlining, among others, the definition of terrorism, its root causes and measures to overcome it.

Fuzi said that preparations to host the special session are going on smoothly.

Rehearsal for the opening ceremony was held at the hotel here to iron out any glitches during the session proper and security was extra tight with metal detectors being installed at all entry and exit points of the meeting venue.

Palestine Foreign Minister Farouk Kaddoumi, who will be here for the Special Session of the Islamic Conference of Foreign Ministers on Terrorism, is expected to be the centre of attention following the latest developments in his country.

Kaddoumi, scheduled to arrive tomorrow, will be heading his country's delegation and is expected to clarify to the OIC member states the ongoing struggle against Israel.

He will explain to the delegates the current scenario following the large scale Israeli military attack on Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat's headquarters, on Friday.

The Israeli attack was said to be in response to the terror attacks that killed 29 Israelis in three days, especially the suicide bombing by the Islamic militant group Hamas on Wednesday in a hotel in the Israeli resort of Netanya which killed 22 diners.

The Israeli attack on Arafat also came a day after the Arab summit decided, at its meeting in Beirut, Lebanon, to develop normal relations with Israel in exchange for its withdrawal from the territory captured in the 1967 Middle East War.

Besides Kaddoumi, Foreign Minister of the Afghan interim government Dr Abdullah Abdullah and many of the foreign ministers from OIC member countries are expected to arrive in stages tomorrow.

To date, 51 of the 57 OIC member countries have confirmed their participation at the three-day special session aimed at projecting the

Islamic stand on combating terrorism to the world.

Iran's Deputy Foreign Minister Dr Mohamad Zarif and Bahrain's Minister of State for Foreign Affairs Dr Mohamad Abdul Ghaffar Abdullah are already in Kuala Lumpur.

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