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Terrorism-Syed Hamid (Declaration)

OIC FM LEVEL PANEL ON TERRORISM TO BE SET UP

KUALA LUMPUR, April 2 (Bernama) -- Organisation of the Islamic Conference (OIC) will set up a committee at the level of Foreign Ministers to initiate follow-up measures to handle the terrorism problem, Malaysian Foreign Minister Datuk Seri Syed Hamid Albar said today.

He said the committee would foster interaction and discuss in detail such measures as part of the OIC effort to handle the issue of terrorism.

Syed Hamid said the 11-member panel would comprise representatives from three countries from each region and include the current Chairman of the Islamic Conference of Foreign Ministers (ICFM).

The committee would act in coordination with other multinational agencies such as the United Nations and the European Union, he told reporters on the sidelines of the ICFM meeting on terrorism here.

He said the committee would be among the proposals contained in the Kuala Lumpur Declaration to be issued at the end of the three-day Special Session of the ICFM ending tomorrow.

Syed Hamid said the committee would consult with expert groups in fields where there was a need for consensus or international accord.

He said the KL Declaration would also have an action plan to resolve the problem of terrorism.

The plan, among other things, would seek international agreement on defining terrorism so that it would not be linked to any religion, race or culture.

"At this point, our interpretation of terrorism does not cover opposition to colonial rule or legitimate independent struggles," he said.

Syed Hamid said under the action plan, workshops and seminars would be held at international level to correct any wrong perception of Islam and its image.

Islam's image was adversely affected when it was linked to terrorism following the Sept 11 terrorist attacks on the United States, said to be masterminded by the Al-Qaeda group led by Osama bin Laden.

Syed Hamid said the KL Declaration also contained a socio-economic plan to improve the quality of life of the people in Islamic countries.

The plan would identify ways to overcome socio-economic causes that could lead to terrorism or gain support for it.

He said Malaysia along with other Islamic nations attending the meeting here were working on the draft declaration which would be tabled at the plenary session tomorrow.

"We are heading for a consensus on this," he added.

In another interview later, after receiving the Deputy Foreign Minister of Saudi Arabia Dr Nizar Obeid Madani at the conference venue, Syed Hamid said finding a definition for terrorism was a difficult and complex task.

"Even at the United Nations there has not been any agreement as yet on this."

"What we will like to work on now is to get an agreed definition of terrorism so that it will become a contributing factor in the final negotiations for an international convention on combating terrorism," he said.

He also said that the OIC delegates to the Special Session on Terrorism here had not come up with a specific definition of terrorism "but would take into consideration Dr Mahathir's keynote opening address yesterday."

"The Prime Minister's speech needs to be taken in the context that it

sets the tone for the discussions..... which will allow us to look at various issues involved. But it doesn't mean that all the issues raised by the members with regard to the meaning of terrorism can be resolved at this three-day conference," Syed Hamid said.

He also said that although delegates might not reach a consensus on the definition of terrorism, discussions on it should not stop.

"If the whole world stops talking then we will not be able to resolve the question of terrorism at all. Terrorism is not new but after Sept 11, the the world is focused on this incident. So it is good for us to sit down and discuss the very divergent views, such as what amounts to an act of terror. Without discussing it we'll be living in a blind world," he said.

"The fact is that if we can establish dialogue, hold discussions, give an opportunity for the OIC to express its views, there will be less unbalanced reporting about Islam and less profiling about the religion," he said.

--BERNAMA

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