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US spurns golden opportunity at Apec

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THE Apec Meeting in Los Cabos turned out to be another summit that followed the US agenda and lost a golden opportunity to effectively combat terrorism and global economic uncertainty.

Instead it adopted a host of security measures to counter terrorism but took little heed of the need to grapple with some of its underlying causes.

Globalised terrorism will, therefore, continue to undermine the world economy, which in turn will aggravate world poverty and oppression - and could thus encourage more terrorism.

For instance, the world economy and economic prospects in Southeast Asia will suffer as a result of the bomb blast on the tourist paradise of Bali in Indonesia on Oct 12.

In the absence of research, if terrorism is to be countered at its very core, I would venture to suggest some reasons for this rise in the globalisation of terror:

- \* Deep frustration that universal grievances and injustices are not being addressed.

- \* Oppression and suppression, as in the case of the Palestinians, is surely another cause for terrorism. The Palestinians have struggled long and hard to be independent and free from the illegal Israeli occupation of Palestinian territory.

Consequently, the Palestinians are filled with extreme anger against and hatred of Israel and the US which strongly supports Israel with arms and aid.

- \* Extreme poverty and economic injustices could be a further cause for terrorism whose practitioners have nothing to lose, as often there is little choice between death and acute deprivation. Consider the plight of Iraqi children who die of malnutrition and starvation and lack of basic medicine because of the sanctions imposed by the victors of 1991.

- \* The Third World has been exploited through colonisation for centuries and in most cases, left seriously depleted in good governance and resources.

- \* The rich and powerful countries provide extensive subsidies to their farmers at the expense of cheaper agricultural products from the Third World.

- \* Thus, cows and cattle in the European Union are subsidised to the extent of US\$2 (RM7.60) a day, while more than half the world's population of about six billion earns a paltry US\$1 a day, because they are not allowed to compete with highly subsidised Western farmers.

The following are some suggestions to combat globalised terrorism and economic decline:

- \* The US and its allies should force Israel to withdraw from the illegally occupied Palestinian territories.

- \* The US, as the sole superpower, should be even-handed in dealing with the Middle East crisis instead of bowing to Israeli pressure, from its own Jewish citizens as well as Israel itself.

- \* Poverty alleviation should be given much greater priority by the rich countries, instead of "lip service" to the two-thirds of the world's population who are suffering from a lack of the basic human needs that have been pro-claimed in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

- \* The international financial system should return to the basic

principles of the Bretton Woods Agreement which will bring back economic stability and prosperity to all countries, instead of some manipulative rich and powerful countries.

\* Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad's proposal for rich countries to provide just one per cent of their GNP to the proposed International Infrastructure Fund or equivalent would help stimulate world infrastructure and economic growth.

Thus, world economic growth would be based on genuine production and productivity, and not on mere money speculation.

\* The United States could become a world force for good and not domination and imperialism.

The new Bush doctrine of "Preventive war and pre-emptive action" that could plunge the world into the Third World War or greater global terrorism and economic slowdown should be rejected by the UN.

Instead, the US could seize the golden opportunity to lead the world into a new economic order dedicated to peace and freedom from want so as to give real meaning to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

Then it will be possible to effectively fight Global Terrorism and enhance the prospects of equitable and sustained global economic growth.

This lead should have been taken by the US at the Apec Meeting in Mexico. However, the US should strive again for world peace and prosperity and not another war - before it is too late.