

Firm stand

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NAM leaders endorse 'no war' declaration

KUALA LUMPUR: THE Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) has reiterated its opposition to war in no uncertain terms as it concluded its summit here.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad told reporters after the close of the 13th NAM Summit that "we are against war whether multilateral or unilateral."

Although NAM and Malaysia were committed to the United Nations, they were not for the slaughtering of people in any way, including through the dropping of bombs.

He was asked whether he had changed his position from one of being opposed to unilateral military action against Iraq to being agreeable to such an attack if it had UN backing.

To another question on how Iraq could be aided in the aftermath should there be a war, Dr Mahathir said: "Whatever we can do we will do, like rebuilding some of the destroyed buildings."

"That is the habit of the world. You destroy then you rebuild. It's a waste of money," he added.

He also said NAM and OIC were not military alliances.

"We can't go to war in case one of our members is attacked. But we can get moral support and that can be quite effective in the long run."

The stand of the 116-member NAM against war was endorsed in the Final Document, in which the heads of state and government voiced their firm condemnation of all unilateral military actions.

Such actions would include those made without proper authorisation from the UN Security Council.

According to the Final Document, "the heads of state or government expressed their rejection of unilateralism, which is increasingly leading to the

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erosion and violation of international law, to the use and threat of force and to pressure and coercion by certain countries as a means to achieving their policy objectives."

Earlier, in the Kuala Lumpur Declaration, NAM leaders vowed to translate their rhetoric into action, giving a new breath of life to the movement during a summit that roundly condemned the war the US and its allies want to wage against Iraq.

The KL document, which expresses NAM's desire to revitalise the movement, called for a change to its work methods and to respond to new realities so that it remains useful to its members.

Adopted at the end of the two-day summit yesterday, the declaration stresses on a multi-polar world through the strengthening of the UN.

The leaders are resolute on making efforts to uphold the UN's charter in the promotion of world peace through dialogue and diplomacy and "the avoidance of the use of force to resolve conflicts."

They are of the view that the UN is an indispensable body for the maintenance of peace and security, the promotion of human rights, and respect for international laws.

To ensure that the voice of the South remains loud and clear, the KL Declaration says that NAM will hold constructive dialogues with its part-

ners especially the G-8 so that there will be greater understanding between the North and South.

This is to ensure that NAM's views are taken into account before important decisions affecting developing countries are made.

"Be pro-active, rather than reactive, to international developments, especially those that impact on the members, so as to ensure the movement is not sidelined but remains at the forefront of the international decision-making processes."

The declaration also notes that NAM, after more than 40 years of its founding, must review its role and work methods to keep up with times and realities, besides becoming more

effective and efficient.

"With the end of the Cold War and the emergence of unipolarity, the trend towards unilateralism and the rise of new challenges and threats such as international terrorism, it is imperative for the movement to promote multilateralism, better defend the interests of developing countries and prevent their marginalisation."

Apart from the KL Declaration and the Final Document, the summit also adopted separate statements on Iraq and Palestine.

Malaysia took over as NAM chairman from South Africa at this meeting. The next summit is scheduled in Cuba.

This was the most well attended summit ever.