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OIC-Science

S&T CONFERENCE TO FORMULATE S&T POLICY FRAMEWORK

By: Harlina Samson

KUALA LUMPUR, Sept 9 (Bernama) -- Muslim scientists and technologists will converge here next month to formulate a science and technology policy framework towards industrial and economic development in Islamic countries.

The Organisation of Islamic Conference (OIC) conference on Science and Technology is being held as a prelude to the 10th OIC summit in Putrajaya in October.

Realising the importance of acquiring knowledge, especially in the field of science and technology as a basis for progress, the science and technology (S & T) conference is in line with the summit's theme "Knowledge and Morality for the Progress of Ummah."

The Academy of Sciences Malaysia (AKS), which has been entrusted with the task of organising the conference themed "Science and Technology for Industrial Development in Muslim Countries: Facing the Challenges of Globalisation", is all geared up for the important event.

In an interview with Bernama, AKS Executive Director Datuk Dr Samsudin Tugiman said the conference was expected to propose a S & T policy framework and plan of action towards industrial and economic development in Islamic countries.

"Science and technology is a platform or basis of an ummah to progress. It is based on knowledge and we need to capitalise on this to move forward," he said.

Dr Samsudin said the four-day conference, from Oct 7 to 10, which would bring together policy makers from national governments as well as representatives from relevant scientific organisations, research institutions, non-governmental organisations and other stake-holder groups dealing with S & T, was expected to come up with resolutions and an action plan to be submitted to the OIC Summit for endorsement.

The action plan was expected to be adopted and implemented by member countries in order to pursue industrial and economic development, he said.

The conference, organised under the OIC Standing Committee on Science and Technological Cooperation (COMSTECH), would, among others, assess S & T policies and priorities in Muslim countries, especially those that impinge on industrial and economic development.

It would also work to strengthen capacity building in S & T and identify effective strategies and mechanisms through S & T for industrial and economic development in Islamic countries.

Dr Samsudin said the conference would be divided into five sessions, including a high-level dialogue with Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad.

The other sessions are S & T Policy for Industrialisation; Capacity Building and Achieving Excellence; Technology Management, Innovation and Commercialisation and a special forum on "Contributions of Muslims to World Technology and Business."

He said keynote addresses would be presented by prominent Muslim scholars and also non-Muslim scientists, namely Comstech Coordinator General and Pakistan Chairman of Higher Education Commission Prof Atta-Ur-Rahman; Executive Director of Third World Academy Sciences, Italy, Prof Mohamed Hassan; United Nations Millennium Project Director Prof Jeffrey Sachs and Malaysian Industry-Government Group for High Technology Chief Executive Officer Datuk Dr Ahmed Tasir Lope Pihie.

A special discussion to share the experiences and contributions of

Muslim scholars in world technology and business would be held so that "they could share their experiences as well as the mechanisms for being successful in their world."

Saying that society should take note of the fact that there were thousands of successful Muslim scholars, technologists and businessmen contributing to the development and economic advancement in the developed countries, he said Islamic countries should capitalise on this.

"I think we have not capitalised on this so far. It will be good for OIC countries who have their citizens working in the developed Western countries to tap their resources.

"We must capitalise on this and we hope this forum will enable us to study and learn something about what needs to be done," he said.

On the plan of action, the Kuala Lumpur OIC conference on S & T would draw up "something practical and implementable" so as to allow member countries to adopt and implement them.

"It must be something implementable, while we talk on some of them in terms of a generic kind of approach and issue, we should come out with at least a few implementable projects or activities for the OIC member countries to conduct," he said.

Noting that there would be differences and barriers in terms of the level or knowledge, language and culture, Dr Samsudin said things such as capacity building, manpower resources, training, research and development could take off through some form of fellowships, setting up of centres of excellence and research institutions.

"If we can embark on this and come out with focus areas on science and technology that can help spur the industrial development of OIC member countries. it will be great," he said.

Noting that a special paper on the role of women in development would also be presented, Dr Samsudin said Malaysia wanted to put across the idea on how women could play an active role in the development of a country.

He said the role of women in development was a critical area that needed to be addressed and looked into seriously if the Muslim world wanted to advance in the next stage of development.

Pointing out that almost 50 per cent of a country's population were women who could contribute to the work force, he said women should be given the chance to play their role in nation-building.

Expressing optimism that there would be a high attendance for the conference, Dr Samsudin said so far 120 delegates, including 50 foreign delegates from 17 countries, had registered to participate.

He said the organisers expected at least 40 out of the 57 member countries to be represented at the conference.

For more information on the OIC Summit in Putrajaya, log on to www.bernama.com/oic_summit.

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