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DIALOGUE-MULTILATERALISM

MULTILATERALISM DEAD, SMART PARTNERSHIP MUST REVIVE IT

By: Mikhail Raj Abdullah

MBABANE, (Swaziland) Aug 14 (Bernama) -- Malaysia, along with eight African countries' leaders, concerned with what they describe as the demise of multilateralism in the global arena, have called for it to be revived via the smart partnership formula.

Tan Sri Omar Abdul Rahman, the chairman of the Commonwealth Partnership for Technology Development (CPTM), said several leaders of the Third World were deeply concerned that multilateralism was "dead" as evidenced by the United States along with Britain completely ignoring the United Nations and unilaterally invading Iraq.

Briefing Malaysian journalists at the opening deliberations at the Global 2003 Smart Partnership Dialogue at Euzulwini near here Thursday morning, he said leaders were "sad" that the UN was pushed aside with the agenda of one country being forced to become the norm for all others when it did not benefit anybody.

Leaders attending the closed-door interactive breakfast session on "Enhancing Global Cooperative Security Through Smart Partnership Dialogues" were in unison in calling for "multilateralism" to be brought back as unilateralism only seemed to benefit one or two superpowers.

Some leaders said superpowers acting on their own, employing unilateralism to propagate their own selfish motives was a source of concern.

Among the leaders who participated in the interactive breakfast session included Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad, South Africa's Vice-President, Jacob Zuma, Zimbabwean President Robert Mugabe, Botswana President Festus G. Mogae, Mozambique's President Joaquim Chissano and Sudan's President, Gen. Omar Hassa Ahmad Al-Bashir and Namibian President Sam Nujoma and Ugandan President Yoweri Museveni.

King Mswati III of Swaziland is playing host to this year's edition of the Southern African International Dialogue.

Dr Omar also said that the smart partnership dialogue which ends Saturday would also deliberate social issues such as women's empowerment as well as efforts to combat HIV-AIDS.

He said the moderation for the social link issues would be led by the Queen Mother of Swaziland, Indlovukazi and the Prime Minister's wife, Datin Seri Dr Siti Hasmah Mohd Ali.

Meanwhile, V.M Chandran, the director of Manfield Development Sdn Bhd and a regular at the Smart Partnership dialogues both in Southern Africa and Langkawi, said that in separate closed-door discussions on culture and media, there were arguments on tradition versus modernity.

He said that some Swazi officials felt that the highlighting of issues pertaining to modernity might threaten traditional values and in the process rob a culture of its identity.

Nevertheless, Chandran said that some participants felt that it was the media's responsibility to inform the people of issues on modernity, failing which it will retard the society's development.

Other participants said that the two cannot be ignored which was why it was necessary for the media to have balanced reporting on both modernity and tradition and a formula found to integrate both.

Safeguarding tradition while embracing modernity has been a issue in Swaziland and other parts of Africa, as some were concerned that too drastic and modern changes might sweep tradition and culture aside.

Later today, deliberations would continue on the endowment fund for CPTM targeted at 11 million pounds. -- BERNAMA  
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