

10 FEB 2003

NAM-Colombia

NAM SHOULD FORMULATE NEW INITIATIVES, STRATEGIES

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KUALA LUMPUR, Feb 10 (Bernama) -- The 114-member Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) should formulate new initiatives and solid strategies to enable member countries to play pro-active roles in global politics and international relations.

Colombian Ambassador to Malaysia Fernando Marin Valencia said with clear goals, strategies and procedures, the movement could actively confront and resolve global issues.

"Colombia believes that the NAM can be a very important agent in the definition of a fair and just international order.

"The movement must not have the attitude of merely reacting to the emerging issues and the policies adopted by the developed countries," he told Bernama during an interview ahead of the 13th NAM Summit to be held here from Feb 20 to 25.

In this context, he said Colombia felt the movement needed to re-define its agenda in a rational way that allowed the projection of the movement like authorised spokesmen of the world in international forums.

The envoy said "togetherness in working out work methods is not only consistent with NAM's culture" but also positive in the face of innovative ideas that are ventilated in the international scene.

He said Colombia, being one of the previous chairs of the NAM, maintained its confidence on the validity and importance of the principles that inspired NAM's creation, such as respect for human rights and international law, equality, non-intervention, peaceful solution of conflicts and co-operation amongst nations.

"Colombia views the NAM as a political and moral force for those countries on their way to development," he said, stressing that the movement was relevant in balancing rich with poor countries.

Colombia hosted the movement's summit in 1995 in Cartagena while the last summit was held in Durban, South Africa in 1998.

Valencia, who was just posted here six months ago, expressed confidence that the Kuala Lumpur Summit themed "Continuing the Revitalisation of the NAM" could enhance the movement's presence in multilateral forum and look for common positions in multilateral negotiations.

However, he cautioned that the revitalisation and enhancement of the movement would also depend on the political will of its member countries.

Reaffirming its best wishes for the success of the chairmanship of Malaysia, he was confident that with Malaysia's international experience and leadership abilities, the country could lead the movement well.

"Malaysia is a very important country and it was able to develop itself into the most successful amongst the developing countries. (Prime Minister) Dr Mahathir (Mohamad) is a good leader and we are confident that Malaysia can do a great job leading the NAM for the next three years," he said.

On whether there is a need to have a permanent secretariat for the movement, Valencia said the possibility of establishing such a secretariat had been discussed several times, but there was no consensus.

As the movement had been able to survive for 42 years without a permanent secretariat, Colombia believed that it would pose several problems like financial contributions and choosing the bureaucracy, he said.

On NAM's role in addressing some of the global issues like terrorism and its threats, unilateralism, imbalance between the rich and poor nations

and dominance of rich over poor countries, he said current challenges were transnational in nature.

"To face these challenges, the only answer is international cooperation. No single country can deal with these challenges on its own," he said.

Valencia said the NAM should also consider the "political" aspect of the economic issues as there was a trend to leave the main impulse of economic development to market forces.

Saying that there were problems that remained unresolved such as the debt problem, which is an economic matter, he said it would not be resolved without political will.

The NAM had tried in the past to establish different mechanisms for economic cooperation among its member, but there was very little success.

Nevertheless, he said NAM meetings were a great opportunity for diplomatic and economic contacts among member countries as most of them did not have the capacity to have diplomatic missions in all the other countries.

On whether the NAM faced difficulty to reach a consensus on issues because of the sheer number in the movement, Valencia said it was not due to the number of its members but rather due to differences in bilateral issues.

The NAM, which held its first summit in Belgrade in 1961 and now has 114 member countries in Africa, Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean, was formed at the height of the Cold War by countries wishing to be free from the influence of the United States-led Western Bloc and the Soviet Union-controlled Eastern Bloc.

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