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ISLAMIC COUNTRIES MUST ACHIEVE 14 PCT WORLD SCIENTIFIC OUTPUT

KUALA LUMPUR, Oct 9 (Bernama) -- Islamic countries should achieve at least 14 per cent of the world's scientific output by the year 2020 through increased investments in Science and Technology, including in Research and Development (R&D), a conference on Science and Technology (R&D) was told today.

Conference Organising Committee Chairman Datuk Dr Salleh Mohd Nor said the meeting also recommended that OIC members increase investments in R&D to at least 1.4 per cent of their respective Gross Domestic Product (GDP) by 2020.

The conference brought together participants, mainly scientists and technologists from the Organisation of the Islamic Conference (OIC) member countries over the past several days to discuss the challenges facing Islamic countries in the globalisation era, with emphasis on Science and Technology.

These were contained in the recommendations adopted under what is regarded as "Vision 1441 (2020)," the guiding principle in steering Science and Technology for the next two decades for the Islamic world.

Other important agenda outlined was a recommendation to conduct an annual OIC Conference on Science and Technology in parallel with the Islamic Conference of Foreign Ministers' annual meeting.

Dr Salleh said it was important to establish a seed fund totalling US\$500 million to support, among others, the establishment of a Pan Islamic R&D Fund to promote R&D investments among member countries.

The seed fund would also be used for the establishment of a Muslim World Technology Investment Fund such as venture capital for the acquisition of technologies and growth of new technology-based companies.

The recommendations also called for greater industry participation and investments in R&D and technology development activities through provision of attractive fiscal and financial incentives as well as other support measures.

The thrust should include the establishment of a strong and dedicated institutional framework for Science, Technology and Innovations, incorporating scientific management and advisory system with active participation from all sectors and establish a network of academies of Science through the OIC to strengthen the Science and Technology management and advisory system at all levels.

Dr Salleh said the conference also recommended efforts to enhance and expand opportunities and participation of women in the mainstream of development in particular areas relating to Science and Technology in OIC member countries and to increase places for OIC nationals for undergraduate and post-graduate education in institutions of higher learning in member countries.

Other recommendations include the launch of Science and Technology management training courses for senior personnel as well as those from industries among member countries and expanding capabilities towards new and emerging technologies such as nanotechnology and photonics.

The recommendations also urged the OIC Standing Committee on Scientific and Technological Cooperation (Comstech) and the Islamic Development Bank (IDB) to harmonise the development of a comprehensive information portal/database on Science and Technology and industry of member countries.

It was also recommended that Malaysia, in collaboration with Comstech

and the IDB, initiate smart partnerships to harness scientific and technical strengths of existing and proposed centres of excellence among member states.

Dr Salleh said the recommendations, which were in the form of a resolution, would be handed over to Prime Minister and OIC incoming chairman Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad for further action.

-- BERNAMA

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