

14 OCT 2003

OIC-wrap-up

SUMMIT TO OUTLINE PLANS TO STRENGTHEN OIC

By: Shakir Husain

PUTRAJAYA, Oct 14 (Bernama) -- The Putrajaya Declaration to be issued at the end of the 10th Organisation of the Islamic Conference (OIC) Summit here will outline specific plans to strengthen the organisation.

Foreign ministers of the Islamic countries, at the end of their two-day preparatory meeting today, came up with recommendations aimed at overcoming the weaknesses that have afflicted the 57-member organisation.

Malaysian Foreign Minister Datuk Seri Syed Hamid Albar said the summit declaration would be different from communiqués issued at past OIC meetings.

"There is a strong commitment and desire to see that we do not make plans based on niceties or beautiful phrases. But we want to see action," he told reporters at the Putrajaya Convention Centre. The ministerial recommendations will be presented to the Leaders' Summit on Thursday and Friday.

United Nations Secretary-General Kofi Annan, who was scheduled to speak at the OIC business forum on Wednesday, will not be attending the summit because of negotiations over Iraq at the Security Council in New York.

"This (attending the summit) would have been very positive for him, but since he has got other business, he apologised for not being able to come," Syed Hamid said on Annan's absence from the summit.

The OIC will present a letter of gratitude to chairman of the 10th summit, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad, for his contributions to the development of the ummah.

A vote on the matter tabled by Sierra Leone was unanimously accepted by member countries.

The Putrajaya Declaration will put in focus issues like enhancing intra-OIC trade and investment, developing science and technology, spreading education and OIC structural reforms.

The members will also issue a statement on the need to make the OIC a credible and cohesive organisation. It was felt that as the representative of the world's 1.3 billion Muslims, the organisation had not received the importance that it deserved in international affairs.

According to Pakistan Foreign Minister Khurshid Mehmood Kasauri, his country's proposal to set up a commission of eminent persons had been approved at the ministerial meeting.

The commission will recommend measures within a year to revitalise the organisation so that its "political weight is felt internationally."

The summit will also issue statements on Palestine, Syria, Lebanon and Iraq.

Facing Israeli violence, the Palestinians have found strong support from the OIC for their struggle.

The member states have also expressed solidarity with Syria, which has been threatened with military attacks by Israel.

However, differences remain on how to deal with the Iraq issue.

Turkey has asked the OIC to mobilise a peacekeeping force to stabilise the post-war Iraq. The OIC wants the United States-led occupation forces to leave Iraq and give the United Nations the central role to rebuild Iraq.

Bangladesh Foreign Minister M Morshed Khan said the choice of a new secretary-general would be made through discussion.

Both Malaysia and Bangladesh have expressed their intention to propose candidates for the post when Abdelouahed Belkeziz, the current OIC chief,

leaves his post next year.

"I can assure you one thing, that for Bangladesh and Malaysia there will not be two fighting candidates. We will come to a decision through discussion," he said after talks with Syed Hamid.

-- BERNAMA

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