

04 FEB 2003

NAM-Nigeria

TERRORISM AND GLOBALISATION STILL THE PRESSING ISSUES

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KUALA LUMPUR, Feb 4 (Bernama) -- With Iraq facing the growing prospect of a United States-led invasion, delegates of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM), who will soon be meeting at the 13th Summit here from Feb 20 to 25, may again be faced with the task of trying to reach a consensus on the definition of terrorism besides discussing the issue of globalisation.

Nigerian High Commissioner to Malaysia, Ibrahim Yarima Abdullahi told Bernama that these were among the pressing issues which had been adversely affecting the member countries, thus the failure to address these issues would hinder further efforts to forge ahead with their development programmes.

The envoy said discussion on Iraq's fate, one of the latest world affairs, would be unavoidable because if war occurs, it would not only affect the combatants but the neighbours as well as the rest of the world.

"Nobody likes war as it has very serious and negative consequences. It involves loss of lives, economic escalation and social ills," he said.

Ibrahim said that although terrorism had been discussed at length since the Sept 11 events in the United States (US), more were needed to curb the emergence of terrorists and acts of terror.

He said many countries had their own ideas and views on the definition of terrorism, thus no cohesive approach could be reached when it came to tackling the issue.

"Attempts by members of the Organisation of the Islamic Conference (OIC) at its Foreign Ministers' meetings here last year and in Sudan, were useful in that they have prevented the US from officially considering Islam as a terrorist organisation as was the case initially," he said.

But that, unfortunately, had not stopped the US from intimidating the Muslims or Islamic countries, he added.

The High Commissioner said everybody sympathised with the US for what had happened on Sept 11 and when it vowed to fight terrorism, most countries supported its move by taking steps toward it themselves.

"But when the US started putting Iraq (which was of a different issue altogether) together with the Sept 11 episodes, many people began questioning whether we were doing the right thing. With the US imposing itself on others, some people may feel deprived of the space for peace thus the feeling of being oppressed make them become terrorists," he pointed out.

Ibrahim said he wished the unipolar, in this case the US, would encourage others to share its burdens in a way that it would benefit the world and would not undermine the weaker ones.

He said it had become a trend now to encourage regional relations because the voice of a group would be much more effective and that the issues would be more of interests to many rather than on an individual state.

In this respect, the diplomat said, NAM was still relevant as a forum for member countries to channel their problems and air their opinions and suggestions.

He said NAM had served a very useful purpose as it had provided stability to the world's political system. Although the cold war was over, NAM was still relevant and useful due to its history which it had brought the South-South countries together.

"To that extent, I think that NAM can still play an important

role...maybe slightly different from its original ideals but where new focus, new thinking of ideas will be useful to keep its importance in the present situation and in the future," he said.

He said with Malaysia taking over the reign of chairman for the movement for the next three years, he was confident that NAM could be revitalised to become a more effective organisation.

Ibrahim said leaders of the South-South countries had excellent ideas, just like Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad and hoped that all countries would take the opportunity to participate actively at the forthcoming summit.

"It is also an opportune time to discuss the issue of globalisation at this kind of forum. We are all interested because we are all affected by it (globalisation). I have always been interested in what Dr Mahathir has to say about globalisation.

"You cannot close your country against globalisation so it's a question of how to accommodate and address it, " he said.

He was confident that many of the participating leaders would be coming fully armed with their own ideas as to how to continue with the usefulness of NAM.

Ibrahim said since the inception of NAM, Nigeria had been a leading member of the movement and all through its existence had been a very active member of the United Nations and all multilateral organisations, particularly in the South-South movement.

"In this respect we are with Dr Mahathir who has been showing particular interest and support for the South-South countries, and Nigeria would therefore come here with a very open but strong mind to encourage the South-South to work together to improve the lot of our peoples, " he said.

He said Nigeria's President Olusegun Obasanjo, who would set foot for the first time on Malaysia's soil, was expected to lead a strong delegation at the 13th NAM Summit in Kuala Lumpur.

On how NAM could help African countries get out of some of their problems, Ibrahim said the South-South countries would benefit by just being present at the summit as NAM would provide the platform for them to know one another and identify their strengths.

"The African countries would then help each other and provide support where necessary, perhaps through the AU (African Union) later," he said.

He said the recent renaming of the Organisation of the African Union (OAU) to African Union (AU) allowed new ideas to be brought in, thus member countries would be able to focus on new pertinent tasks.

"Just like the NAM, the OAU was a dynamic institution which had served its purpose given to it by its founding fathers (first presidents and prime ministers). Africa was composed of very weak states and mostly at that time under colonial rules.

"One of the toughest job was to liberate the colonised countries and those under apartheid, like South Africa. Now that those objectives had been achieved, the next step would be to spell out what are the fights we have to go into where the focus now is on economic matters," he said.

On whether a permanent secretariat is necessary, Ibrahim said he did not think so as NAM would continue to be as relevant for as long as the leaders put in new ideas and that the ideas and issues were of interest to all member countries.

"A permanent secretariat would seem like taking on another United Nations and I personally don't agree with it.

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