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Abdullah: We must act

THE OIC and Non-Aligned Movement must act - and not merely deliberate - to manage, resolve and prevent conflicts in the world, particularly among member States.

Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi, speaking on behalf of NAM chairman Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad, said the two organisations must be action-oriented, even if it meant taking small but meaningful steps.

"The unspoken truth is that the developed world does not expect us to act in unison. They expect from us much talk and little action.

"They expect us to be disunited and disorganised. They expect to be able to continue to divide us and dominate us. It is here, in Malaysia, that I hope we can defy expectations."

Abdullah said that to continue to be relevant, NAM and OIC must be forward-looking, pro-active, continue to uphold the principles of equity, justice and fair play and resist the pressures that were constantly being exerted on them.

"Indeed, the struggle for a world free of conflict and war should be the common struggle of both NAM and OIC in this new era.

"We should substitute the culture of conflict and war with that of peace based on understanding, tolerance and accommodation. In this regard, the on-going process of dialogue between civilisations plays a particularly important role and should be given the strong support it deserves."

Abdullah, who would assume the OIC chairmanship when Dr Mahathir retires on Oct 31, said if the world was in an unsatisfactory state of affairs, the developing world could not entirely blame others for it.

"We, the developing world, are ourselves partly to be blamed - for not putting our houses in good order, and for submitting ourselves to the dictates of others.

"Many of our countries remain poor and are vulnerable to external pressures and influence. In spite of the abundant natural resources in many of our countries, we lack the knowledge and expertise to productively use these resources."

He said the lack of unity and clear strategies in advancing the interests of developing countries had resulted in them being marginalised in the international decision-making process.

"Thus, we continue to be dependent on the North when in fact, in the context of South-South co-operation, it is possible for us to develop mutually-sustaining and beneficial economic relationships."

He said that it was, therefore, clearly vital for the OIC and NAM to stand shoulder-to-shoulder to strengthen the multilateral process and make every effort to ensure diplomacy and civilised conduct among nations were based on international law.

"The challenges faced by the OIC in the context of a vastly transformed global environment are many and varied.

"Our two organisations must continue to provide strong and undiminished support for the Palestinian people in their struggle against occupation and oppression, and for their inalienable right to establish a sovereign and independent Palestinian State, with East Jerusalem as its capital."

Abdullah noted that in light of the increasingly oppressive policies of Israel, NAM and OIC's continued and unshakeable solidarity with the people of Palestine was especially critical.

He said the Israeli attack on Syria was also viewed with grave concern.

"It was a provocative act that does not serve the cause of peace, but further aggravates the volatile situation in the Middle East. There is also an urgent need to bring stability to Iraq."

Abdullah said NAM and OIC must also continue to be at the forefront in the global effort for the total elimination of weapons of mass destruction.

He added that the two organisations must also actively promote the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East, as envisaged in a number of resolutions adopted by the United Nations Security Council and General Assembly.