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Championing the cause of Muslims

reports on "World Conference of Islamic Scholars 2003" by Firdaus THE three-day World Conference of Islamic Scholars ended yesterday with the adoption of a nine-point resolution to further champion the cause of Muslims, particularly to unite the ummah through credible economic, information and knowledge networking.

Among the pertinent points of the resolution is the establishment of a permanent secretariat in Kuala Lumpur for Muslim scholars, academicians, economists and thinkers to consolidate their work for the betterment of Muslims worldwide.

The move to establish the permanent secretariat, to be fully funded by Malaysia, received overwhelming support from the more than 900 scholars and thinkers attending the conference.

The secretariat, to be established immediately after the conference, will be open to all Muslims who are keen to contribute towards the uplifting of the ummah.

"It's more like a Muslim think-tank but with a specific framework and plan of action. Our aim is to gather the great minds within our ummah for the noble cause of guiding Muslims in the right and practical direction.

"We have Muslims who are experts and professionals in almost every field and the aim of the permanent secretariat is to establish a working network and tap valuable information for the benefit of Muslims worldwide," the chairman of the conference, Tan Sri Dr Abdul Hamid Othman, said.

Speaking at a Press conference after the closing ceremony of the conference at the Marriot Hotel, he said Kuala Lumpur would draw up the appropriate framework for the secretariat as soon as possible.

"This is an initiative which is similar to our efforts in promoting Islamic banking and the International Islamic University.

"We spearhead the idea; it is a gradual process but we are confident that the Muslim world needs proper co-ordination via such working arrangements. We cannot afford to continue to dwell on dress code or argue who is more Islamic among us because there are greater challenges and threats facing the ummah."

He said the secretariat would also act as a one-stop centre to better promote ideas and products of Islamic nations, among Muslims and non-Muslims as well.

"We must promote our products in good faith and without inviting unwanted jealousy from any quarter. There are enough Muslims to be a market for their own products," he said.

The resolution, which was announced by conference implementation committee chairman Datuk Mohd Nakhaie Ahmad at the closing ceremony, also emphasised the need for Muslims to embark on holistic efforts to restore Islam's glory.

Stressing the need to free the ummah from backwardness, poverty and oppression, the resolution also placed great importance on further enhancing the role of women in the Muslim world.

The resolution also points out the need for Muslims to create a single identity based on the true teachings of the religion and the principle of human dignity without adopting narrow-minded interpretations, extremist ideologies and acts of terror.

Points adopted by scholars in the final resolution also took into consideration Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad's contention that Muslims need to be open-minded in mastering other fields of knowledge

apart from religious studies, and the urgent need for Muslim nations to consolidate their military expertise and innovations to defend the ummah.

The resolution clearly spelt out the need for Muslims to consolidate their skills and knowledge to establish a military force which was not dependent on foreign powers. This, according to the adopted points, could be achieved by continuous and close co-operation among Islamic countries in the field of research, military equipment manufacturing and marketing.

On economy, the resolution suggests systematic, effective and competitive management of Muslim nations' resources by establishing smart and strong networks and co-operation among the ummah.

Hamid told the Press conference that the inaugural conference was a success as it had managed to gather and consolidate the thoughts of respected scholars in the Muslim world.

"This is the first such initiative and we are happy that it has proven to be beneficial towards uniting the ummah in many given fields. We have reached important agreements, especially in arresting the misinterpretation of Islam.

"The various misinterpretations of Islam and using Islam for political gains is a serious threat to the ummah. It is also our (Malaysia's) greatest threat but we are happy that the scholars are all against such manipulations," he said.

Earlier in his speech at the closing ceremony, he thanked the hundreds of scholars, academicians, thinkers and university students who contributed to the deliberations of the conference.

He likened the conference to the confluence of many streams, emerging as a river at the end.