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Leaders exchange views on how multilateralism can be revived

THE issue of the demise of multilateralism dominated yesterday's session of the smart partnership dialogue as leaders exchanged views on how best it could be revived.

Speaking at a closed door session on "Enhancing Global Cooperative Security Through Smart Partnership Dialogues: Win-Win versus Win-Lose", some of the leaders said multilateralism has collapsed completely after the invasion of Iraq by the United States.

And they were looking at how the smart partnership concept could revive multilateralism.

There was grave concern among the developing countries that the powerful nations had reverted to unilateralism and acted in their own interests.

Commonwealth Partnership Technology Management chairman Tan Sri Omar Abdul Rahman, who attended the session with the leaders, said there was widespread concern about the downside of unilateralism and that the benefits were not equally shared.

"Multilateralism has been around for a very long time and it is a sad thing that it has been pushed aside by the powerful nations," said one of the leaders.

On Wednesday, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad enlightened other leaders on how the United Nations, the sole multilateral institution, has been completely emasculated and made impotent by the superpowers.

He said there were still other international organisations in which the developing countries were members but all of them were interested in protecting the privileged few than the welfare of the many.

The leaders who attended the session were King Mswati III, President Olusegun Obasanjo of Nigeria, President Omar Hassan El-Bashir of The Sudan, President Captain (Rtd) Alhaji Yahya J.J. Jammeh of The Gambia, President Joachim Chissano of Mozambique, Deputy South African President Jacob Zuma, Tanzania's President Benjamin William Mkapa, President Yoweri Museveni of Uganda, President Robert Mugabe of Zimbabwe, President Sam Nujoma of Namibia and President John Kuffour of Ghana.

In the Ezulwini "open house" session, King Mswati touched on the success of the smart partnership concept in the context of Swaziland.

The discussion centred on the recent national dialogue held by the Swazi Government in which it had succeeded in bringing all parties including Government, private sector, labour, media and cultural organisations under one roof to thrash out issues affecting the country.

The leaders also launched the CPTM Endowment Fund last night.

So far, the Governments and private sector have pledged STG7.9 million (RM48.2 million). The Malaysian Government contributed RM6.1 million while 22 Malaysian companies pledged RM27 million.

Uganda contributed RM1.52 million, Mauritius, Bangladesh and Swaziland RM611,000 each and Namibia RM465,000.

The fund will be managed by CPTM Endowment Fund Limited.

The fund was set up early this year after a discussion between Dr Mahathir and Museveni in London because of anticipated financial difficulties facing CPTM following the increasing operational cost it is incurring in London where its headquarters is located.

CPTM was formed by the heads of government of the Commonwealth at the Auckland Summit in October 1995. The Smart Partnership dialogues were

among the activities organised by the CPTM in its efforts to disseminate the best practices in technology management to the Commonwealth countries.

It is learnt that the fund was needed after developed countries like Britain, Canada, Australia and New Zealand stopped their funding of CPTM activities.