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PM's speech lauded as outstanding

DELEGATES to the 13th NAM Summit described Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad's opening speech as outstanding and should be heard by all leaders in the world.

The outspoken new chairman of NAM had, in his speech, categorically stated the root causes of problems facing the world and suggested solutions.

What seem to have echoed in the minds of many were the opposition to war, putting a stop to research on destructive weapons, ending Israel's oppression of Palestinians and calling on the rich to stop suppressing the poor.

Cambodian delegate Cham Prasidh, who is also Minister of Commerce, said the wealth of rich nations should be used to eradicate poverty in poorer countries and revive their economies.

"Dr Mahathir is vocal in outlawing war. He could not be more true in asserting that present-day war is far worse than that in the Stone Age as it is not aimed at warriors, but civilians, the women, children and old people.

"What is the purpose of spending billions of dollars to conduct research and development on destructive weapons that only lead to destruction of humanity?

"Even if they value their money so much and reluctant to give or lend it to the poorer nations, they should at least use it to help the poor in their own countries," he said.

Chief Press Secretary to the President of Nigeria Tunji Oseni said he was optimistic that war could be averted with a new global agenda to foster peace.

"Dr Mahathir has struck the right note not only for present reality but also the agenda for the future.

"NAM plays an important role in acquiring greater relevance in sorting out the current mess in the world."

Ethiopia's Ambassador to China Addis Alem Balema said war was destructive and weapons were invented with the motive to kill.

"Dr Mahathir is right. We should stop investing in weapons, especially the powerful nuclear weapons that will further impoverish the poor by destroying their property," said the head of the Ethiopian delegation.

Sri Lankan delegate and Member of Parliament (Anuradhapura district) Tissa Karalliyadde said he hated war as his country was in conflict for the past 20 years.

"Dr Mahathir's words have touched my heart indeed. I am on his side in outlawing war," he said.

Colombian delegate J.R. Salazar said Dr Mahathir's speech was very inspiring to all NAM member countries, especially in championing the cause of poorer countries.

He said there were countries that just failed to set their priority in investment. Some preferred investing in weapons than helping others to revive their economies.

Iraqi delegate Sabah Ahmad urged the United Nations Security Council to oversee the military budget of all countries and supervise all activities in arms trading.

"Dr Mahathir is right that the UN has to commit itself in this respect while NAM must struggle to control the arms trade.

"Weapons are items that do not bring prosperity or development, but only

block civilisation and hamper progress," he said.

Namibian delegate D.A. Ndatipo is appreciative of Dr Mahathir's efforts in fostering peace.

He said there was little effort by the rich nations to bring about peace but many of them were suppressing the poorer nations by squeezing out their "last drop of blood".

"The double standard set by the rich nations with regard to the Palestinian issue is irritating and has infuriated Muslims. Their assistance to Israel's acts of terror is unforgiven."

Echoing similar sentiments, Jamaica's Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade Minister K.D. Knight said although Dr Mahathir touched on a wide range of subjects, they were all for appropriate causes.

He said Dr Mahathir made his desires clear for a peaceful world.

"Dr Mahathir's speech was crystal clear that war is not a solution for problem solving," Knight said, adding that he fully supported Dr Mahathir's call for more multilateral approach to solving problems between nations.

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