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Work harder to strengthen solidarity

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THE 10th OIC Summit is indeed an opportune time for member countries to strive harder to strengthen solidarity among its 57 member countries to achieve sustainable development, stability and peace, said Indonesia's charge d'affaires in Malaysia Suherman Obon.

Bearing in mind that strengthening the ummah is one of the underlying reasons for the establishment of the organisation, Indonesia has taken a bold and significant move by promoting cooperation and solidarity among member states.

He said that as OIC's Chairman of the Committee Eight, it had helped Mindanao Muslims in southern Philippines in seeking a fair and just solution via negotiations with the Philippine Government.

However, OIC has a bigger role to play. It is expected to broaden its focus encompassing sectors such as the economy, technical as well as the information and communications technology sectors.

He said that while political issues may be the core agenda of discussion, the summit should also exploit economic co-operation among many rich Muslim countries.

Trade among OIC countries was less than five per cent, signifying a vast potential market waiting to be exploited.

Indonesia, which has a population of 200 million Muslims, reiterated the need to push for a smart partnership that would be a win-win situation for all.

He said the business fraternity should do well to tap opportunities to build alliances to ensure progress and development.

OIC today faces bigger global challenges, thus the need to focus on more constructive efforts.

It was imperative that a common approach be adopted to solve international problems not only relating to political issues but also improving the economy, technology as well as social problems such as poverty, backwardness and illiteracy, he said.

He said he had confidence in the leadership of Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad, whom he described as not only a leader for Malaysia, but someone who was not afraid to lash out at injustices in the world.

With Malaysia as the host country, he said the summit could play a more effective role to promote the interests of its members, especially the welfare and peaceful existence of Muslims and the world.

He said it was without doubt that Malaysia would make the Summit a success as it had vast experiences, having organised numerous international conferences before.

The Putrajaya Summit should also initiate efforts to correct the misconceptions about Islam, which has been perceived as endorsing terrorism.

OIC, he said, should take the lead by demonstrating that Islam tolerated other religions.

As the world could see, Malaysia, with its multiracial population and religions, was able to lead a peaceful and harmonious life, he added.

True Islamic teachings had never sanctioned terrorism, he said. He has been with the embassy in Kuala Lumpur for the past two years.

"Islam on the contrary had always emphasised peaceful coexistence."

If the Jemaah Islamiyah issue had further misconstrued the true teachings of Islam, he said that Indonesia would catch the culprits and bring them to justice.

He said the Indonesian Government believed that terrorism can be wiped out only if the root causes such as poverty, injustice or unilateral action were addressed.

On that note, it can be said that combating terrorism demanded eradicating poverty, injustice and illiteracy, which could imply reviving the true values of Islam.

Suherman, who had served as a diplomat in Pakistan, Syria and Saudi Arabia, urged that an immediate stop be put to terrorism.

"One way to do this is for the OIC to endorse a single voice to condemn the unilateral action against countries without the sanction of the United Nations' Security Council.

"This calls for the creation of an effective mechanism for this collective voice to be heard by the powers that be.

"Efforts to crush terrorism should never be discriminatory in nature, whether on racial or religious grounds."

On the Middle East crisis, he said that all parties involved should solve the problem through negotiations rather than imposing military might, which brings on more complications.

A laudable move would be for the United States, European Union and Russia to guarantee that they would treat all parties involved on an equal footing, he added.

He said OIC member countries must also have the political will and commitment to raise the quality of their support for the Palestinian cause. Towards this end, he said, it would augur well for the OIC to reflect and work on the importance of unity, dignity, and progress of the world.