

# Bid to unite NGOs against war

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PUTRAJAYA: The Perdana Global Peace Forum will gather non-governmental organisations (NGOs) in the country to help promote peace and stop wars.

The forum hopes the local NGOs would link up with other NGOs around the world to achieve this, including criminalising war and those who promote it

"We hope to mobilise NGOs by their nature of activities and we will map out strategies by looking at their capabilities and connections and their influence with NGO friends in other

countries. We need to change the mindset of the people. Going to war is not the only option," forum chairman Tun l)r Mahathir Mohamad said.

He was speaking to reporters on the second day of the forum, attended by 67 NGOs in the country. The theme of the forum is "Action Plan For The Global Network For Peace".

Mahathir said he also hoped members of the forum's international advisory panel would use their connections with NGOs in their respective countries to spread the news.

The panel members include Dennis Halliday (former UN

humanitarian coordinator in Iraq), Hans-Christof Von Sponeck (former UN assistant secretary-general and UN humanitarian coordinator in Iraq), Dr Helen Caldicott (founder and president of Nuclear Policy Research Institute), Prof Dr Michel Chossudovsky (University of Ottawa), Prof Francis Boyle (University of Illinois School of Law) and Datuk Mukhriz Mahathir, the coordinator of Peace Malaysia.

Mahathir said the message that Iran should not be attacked had to be sent clearly and this "might influence the decisions taken by those who want to attack Iran".

"During the Iraq war, there

were many protests and pressure around the world, but the United States and Britain continued with their plans to attack.

"If you don't listen to the people ... you are going to have problems. Look what is happening to Tony Blair. He is not as confident as before and there [is much] opposition to his policies and many people who supported him before are not supporting him now."

The panel members would also meet leaders of other countries to get the message across, Mahathir said, adding the cooperation among NGOs should not be underestimated either.

He said the need to mobilise the

NGOs is very urgent now with the US planning to attack Iran.

However, there have been questions on whether NGOs would have any success in deterring this, since the UN - being a world body - had failed to stop the US from attacking Iraq.

Commenting on this, Mahathir said voters in countries such as the US can change this by not voting for President George W. Bush.

Halliday said it is important that Malaysia, being the chairman of the Organisation of Islamic Conference, Non-Aligned Movement and part of Asean, use its influence to get the message across to the UN that it is against war.