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> INTERNATIONAL FORUM ON THE MAKKAH DECLARATION

Abdullah: We must join hands to kick-start plan

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KUALA LUMPUR: Everyone in Muslim countries must join hands to accelerate the implementation of the Makkah Declaration, a 10-year action plan to develop the Muslim world adopted by the Organisation of the Islamic Conference (OIC) two years ago, the prime minister said.

"After 20 months, we still have not moved beyond the planning and co-ordination stages," Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi said.

Abdullah, who is OIC chairman, urged governments to encourage individuals, corporations and non-governmental organisations to adopt projects listed in the plan.

He said this could yield results as it gave a sense of ownership, expanded the pool of resources available in the OIC and provided motivation for speedy execution.

"All proposals for this purpose are to be examined and approved by the OIC general secretariat," he said in his keynote address at an international forum on the Makkah Declaration: Implementing the Economic Agenda of the Muslim World here yesterday.

He listed five core aspects that Muslim nations should look into when they embarked on the action plan, namely sustaining collective political will; beginning with reform within, in hearts and minds; recognising the centrality of developing human capital; allocating the necessary resources;

and mobilising the international community to uplift the welfare of the ummah.

Organised by the Institute of Strategic and International Studies (Isis) to assess progress in implementing the declaration, the three-day forum attracted 84 participants from various countries.

Present were Islamic Development Bank president Tan Sri Ahmed Mohamed Ali Al-Madani; ambassador Thierno Nabika Diallo, adviser to the OIC secretary-general; World Islamic Economic Forum chairman Tun Musa Hitam; and Isis chairman and chief executive officer Datuk Seri Mohamed Jawhar Hassan.

Abdullah suggested establishing a partnership between the West and the Muslim world to

achieve the development goals of the declaration.

He said a partnership would restore confidence and close the "dangerous divide" between the two sides.

"The West has much to gain from the emergence of a more peaceful, stable and prosperous Muslim world."

He also urged Muslim nations to engage Muslims in the non-Muslim developed countries.

"We should not forget them. Many of them are experts in sectors like banking and finance."

Malaysia, he said, would like to share its successful initiatives with OIC members, such as land development, Islamic banking, poverty eradication and gender equality programmes.