

Step up efforts to reform United Nations, says PM

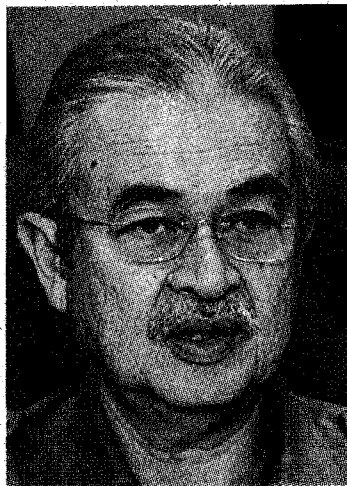
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KUALA LUMPUR: Efforts to reform the United Nations should be intensified as the world body remains the best avenue for ensuring multilateralism and is the preferred choice for finding solutions to the world's problems, Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi said yesterday.

The prime minister said that as the single most represented multilateral organisation, the UN must better serve the interests of the smaller, less powerful and less prosperous members.

"However, we should constantly make a distinction between genuine reforms which can make the UN more democratic against those which are designed to make the UN more cost-effective, leaner, efficient and co-ordinated," he said at the Heads of Malaysian Missions Conference here.

He said a commitment to multilateralism by all countries, in particular the big powers, would send a strong signal to all governments



Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi says the UN must serve the interests of smaller members

that the purposes and principles of the UN should form the basis of the conduct of relations between nations.

Abdullah said that in the campaign for a more equitable international economic and political order, Malaysia should continue to be fearless in calling for the elimination of injustices in the world.

"We should maintain our rejection of unilateralism as a methodology for finding solutions to world problems."

On the political front, he said Malaysia must continue to be vocal in championing the cause of Palestine because it was a just cause deserving of support.

"The non-resolution of the Palestinian problem is the single most important factor perpetuating the tension between the West in general and the Muslim world."

The prime minister said Malaysia, which holds the chairmanship of the Organisation of the Islamic Conference, must also continue to advocate the immediate withdrawal of foreign forces from Iraq because the invasion was illegal and unjustifiable.

He said the continuing presence of foreign troops in Iraq had exacerbated the feelings of antagonism towards the West.

"The invasion of Afghanistan, the aggression against Lebanon and the continuing occupation of the Golan Heights in Syria have added to the humiliation being felt by Muslims everywhere."

At the bilateral level, he said Malaysia was fully committed to the principle of non-interference in the internal affairs of other countries and the settlement of all disputes by peaceful means.

"Malaysia will continue to promote bilateral co-operation with as many countries and in as many sectors as possible," he said.

"Foreign policy cannot and must not remain static. Pragmatism shall continue to be Malaysia's diplomatic stance when dealing with problems and in conducting our relations, not only at the multilateral, but also at the regional and bilateral levels." — Bernama