

Play honest broker, US told

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Abdullah: Fair play key to solving decades-old conflict in Middle East

■ By NST reporters
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PUTRAJAYA, Thurs. — The United States must play the role of honest broker if a solution is to be found to the prolonged strife and bloodshed in the Middle East, Organisation of the Islamic Conference chairman Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi said today.

Abdullah, who is also Malaysian Prime Minister, said the US must return to the rules of international justice and fair play if it wanted a solution to the decades-old Palestinian-Israeli conflict and the strife in war-torn Iraq.

In a strongly worded speech which found support from 14 OIC member countries attending an urgently convened meeting of the grouping, Abdullah said the US would fail the international community if it did not assume the honest broker's role and instead continued to support unilateral Israeli attacks on Palestine.

The unanimous verdict was that the meeting was a success. Foreign Minister Datuk Seri Syed Hamid Albar said: "We are glad that we came out with the consensus even on very difficult clauses that were included in the final documents.

"The mood and the spirit of today's meeting indicate that the OIC has a role to play."

Two declarations were issued at the close of the meeting. One denounced the escalation of Israeli violence in Palestine and called for a UN peacekeeping force in Palestine, while another called on the UN Security Council to adopt a resolution giving the world body a central role in Iraq's reconstruction.

Opening the one-day OIC Special

Meeting of the Middle East at the Putrajaya Convention Centre, Abdullah said together with the other members of the Quartet (the European Union, Russia and the UN), the US should use "the full weight of its diplomatic capabilities" and return to international instruments available, such as the road map and relevant UN resolutions.

"The rules of international justice and fair play call for and require all parties concerned to be involved in the process of finding a resolution."

The OIC condemned Israel's unilateral disengagement plan to with-

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— Abdullah

draw from the Gaza Strip, its killings of civilians and destruction of Palestinian institutions and its economy.

Abdullah said Israel was "emboldened and supported by outside powers", and its disengagement plan was contradictory to the provisions stated in the road map.

The road map was conceptualised by the Quartet in 2002 with the goal of creating an independent and sovereign Palestinian State living side by side with Israel.

"It is essential that Palestinians be



HAND OF FRIENDSHIP: Abdullah greeting Palestinian Foreign Minister Farouk Kaddoumi and other foreign ministers from the Organisation of the Islamic Conference countries. — NST picture by Hadzme Jaafar ■ SEE ALSO PAGE 2

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