

# Abdullah wants OIC to battle poverty first

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THE Organisation of the Islamic Conference has a moral obligation and an economic reason to help poor members eradicate poverty, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi said.

Member countries that are weak economically weaken the body. He called on Muslims to confront the current "ugly realities" and reiterated the need to reform the OIC.

"We need to be honest with ourselves and identify the root cause of poverty in the Muslim world. Eradicating poverty in Muslim countries should be the first item on our larger agenda," Abdullah said in his keynote address at the second World Islamic Economic Forum yesterday.

The OIC comprises 57 member countries but more than half, or 31, have been classified by the United Nations as least developed low-income countries. The total Gross Domestic Product of all OIC countries adds up to just five per cent of the total world GDP.

However, there are also rich Muslim countries

that currently supply some 70 per cent of the world's oil and gas needs.

The second item on the agenda should be greater unity among Muslims domestically and internationally. "Sectarianism should not be made a source of discord among Muslim societies and inter-sectarian violence must stop completely," Abdullah said.

And the third agenda is the removal of antagonism between the West and the Islamic world. "This is the biggest crisis facing Muslim countries in modern times. Muslim nations have been humiliated by the hegemonic tendencies of the global powers."

