NAM, RELEVANT THAN EVER BEFORE

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The XV Summit of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) is currently in session in Sharm El Sheik, Egypt. Attended by Heads of State of Governments of over 120 member nations, it is the biggest international forum after the United Nations.

As the successor to the Afro-Asian Conference of States held in Bandung in 1955 April, the principles set out in Bandung as binding relations between sovereign States fighting for economic emancipation became the core principles of NAM. The first NAM Summit was held in Belgrade in 1961 and was convened by such illustrious leaders as Sri Jawaharlal Nehru of India, Kwame Nkrumah of Ghana, Gamal Abdel Nasser of Egypt, Ahmed Sukarno of Indonesia and Josip Broz Tito of Yugoslavia. Born at the height of the Cold War as a coordinating body for South - South cooperation and an independent multilateral forum for developing nations, NAM has withstood many upheavals in international economic and political domains. At the collapse of the Soviet Union and the socialist bloc of nations that ended the Cold War, many were predicting the demise of NAM too. They argued that NAM had lost its relevance as the division of the world into two rival power blocs had ended. That's not all. When the developing countries lost the political and economic assistance of the Socialist community of nations there were many attempts by the West to forcibly recruit as many members of NAM as a fifth column inside NAM. True, they succeeded to some extent and some NAM Summits were unable to make headway in the confused world set up at the time. However, NAM was able not only to defend its principles but also to unify its ranks and surge ahead with added vigour thanks to the pioneering efforts of a few countries such as Malaysia, Cuba and our own Sri Lanka. Today when holding its XV Summit, NAM stands more united and more conscious of its anti-imperialist and anti-neocolonialist role. The Non-Aligned Foreign Ministers who just concluded their meeting in Sharm El Sheik preparing the final documents for endorsement by the Heads of State noted that "the present global scenario presents great challenges in the areas of peace and security, economic development and social progress, human rights and the rule of law to Non-Aligned countries." Observing that globalization in the present form perpetuates or even increases the marginalization of developing nations, the Ministers emphasized that "globalization must be transformed into a positive force for change for all peoples, benefiting all countries, and contributing to the prosperity and empowerment of developing countries, not their continued impoverishment and dependence on the developed world." NAM has also correctly understood the impediments and threats to world peace as increasing tendency by certain States to resort to unilateralism and unilaterally imposed measures, non-fulfillment of the commitments and obligations assumed under relevant international legal binding instruments especially on weapons of mass destruction, terrorism, conflicts, violation of human rights and international humanitarian law and the use of double standards in international relations. The current Summit has displayed unanimity of opinion on the need to oppose unilateral evaluation of countries and their actions and the exertion of pressure by external powers on sovereign countries. It was also categorical in rejecting the tendencies to apply so-called extra-territorial laws of certain countries multilaterally. It reaffirmed its belief in the United Nations, its Charter for the preservation of peace and security and maintaining peace. Recent history confirms that the NAM has been a consistent defender of the sovereignty of nations and their right to choose a system of governance of their own. This was illustrated in the case of the military coup in Bolivia where NAM condemned it in unequivocal terms and called for the restitution of the democratically elected Head of State. Sri Lankans would also remember with gratitude the forthright stand taken up by NAM in the Human Rights Council in Geneva defending Sri Lanka's position vis a vis human rights and the humanitarian operations in the North. Today, the Non - Aligned Movement has been strengthened by the swelling of its ranks, by the consolidation of its ideology and structure and the rise of its stature in the international arena. Its voice is being heard with respect at all international fora. Gone are the days in which Western cynics could relegate it to the backyard with contempt and ridicule. Slowly and steadily but surely the tables are being turned in its favour.Courtesy: Dailynews.lk