

# Excerpts from the Commonwealth Heads Of Government Meeting Report 2002.

## Coolum Communiqué

### Fundamental Political Values

8. Heads of Government reaffirmed their commitment to the fundamental political values of the Commonwealth as set out in the Harare Commonwealth Declaration and reinforced by the Millbrook Action Programme. They reiterated in particular their commitment to international peace and order, democracy, good governance, human rights, freedom of expression and the rule of law.

25. They also encouraged member countries to accede to the Rome Statute establishing the International Criminal Court.

### International Economic Co-operation

31. They welcomed the initiative aimed at Africa's renewal through fostering closer co-operation and partnership among the industrial countries, Africa and the private sector worldwide, as enunciated in the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) and called upon all Commonwealth institutions to assist with the effective implementation of NEPAD.

### Climate Change

36. Heads of Government expressed concern about the consequences of global warming and climate change, especially for vulnerable small island states and other low-lying areas.

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## THE COOLUM DECLARATION THE COMMONWEALTH IN THE 21ST CENTURY: CONTINUITY AND RENEWAL

- our commitment to democracy, the rule of law, good governance, freedom of expression and the protection of human rights;
- our respect for diversity and human dignity; our celebration of the pluralistic nature of our societies and the tolerance it promotes; and our implacable opposition to all forms of discrimination, whether rooted in gender, race, colour, creed or political belief;
- our determination to work to eliminate poverty, to promote people-centred and sustainable development, and thus progressively to remove the wide disparities in living standards among us and

overcome the special challenges facing our small state and less developed country members;

We cannot accept that nearly half the world's population should live in poverty, nor that disease, illiteracy and environmental degradation should continue to blight the lives of many of our people, nor the fact that in too many societies women continue to face discrimination. The benefits of globalisation must be shared more widely and its focus channelled for the elimination of poverty and human deprivation.

we call on all nations to work to reduce the growing gap between rich and poor, and to enhance international support to democracies fighting poverty.

Recognising the links between democracy and good governance on the one hand, and poverty, development and conflict on the other, we call on the Commonwealth Secretary-General to constitute a high-level expert group to recommend ways in which we could carry forward the Fancourt Declaration. This group should focus on how democracies might best be supported in combating poverty, and should report to the next CHOGM.

We want the Commonwealth to be an effective defender of democratic freedoms and a peacemaker in conflict, and to work tirelessly in promoting people-centred economic development.

- **we determine materially to strengthen the Commonwealth's capacity to support its members' pursuit of democratic values and the rule of law.**

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## **Commonwealth High Level Review Group**

### **THE COMMONWEALTH'S VALUES AND ASSETS**

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- respect for diversity and human dignity; and opposition to all forms of discrimination, be it rooted in race, ethnicity, creed or gender;
- adherence to democracy, the rule of law, good governance, freedom of expression and the protection of human rights;
- the elimination of poverty and the promotion of people-centred development; and progressive removal of the wide disparities in living standards among our members; and
- international peace and security, the rule of international law and opposition to terrorism.

### **III.THE POLITICAL ROLE OF THE COMMONWEALTH**

9. The modern Commonwealth is an association of democracies committed to the principles of good governance, democratic processes, just and honest government and fundamental human rights, the rule of law and the independence of the judiciary, freedom of expression and the enjoyment of such rights by all individuals regardless of gender, race, colour, creed or political belief. The Commonwealth has committed itself to oppose all forms of racial oppression and to uphold human dignity. By setting out its core values in the Singapore and Harare Declarations of 1971 and 1991 and by having the courage to enforce adherence to these core values, the Commonwealth has set itself apart and established a standard to which others now aspire.

10. At the same time that it set out its fundamental political principles in the Singapore and Harare Declarations, the Commonwealth recognised that these values were inseparable from sustainable development, given that economic and social progress work to enhance the sustainability of democracy. We reaffirm the centrality of mutually reinforcing Commonwealth activities that support its fundamental political values.

## **(ii) Promoting and Enhancing the Commonwealth's Fundamental Political Values**

15. We believe there is a need to intensify efforts to assist members in strengthening democracy and democratic institutions through the provision of constitutional, electoral and legal assistance.

*16. We recommend that:*

*16.2 It is important to promote and strengthen national and regional human rights mechanisms and promote gender equality in all areas of national life, including in the political sphere.*

*16.3 Greater priority should be given to supporting member governments in the review and strengthening of democratic institutions, including constitutions, judiciaries and judicial processes, the training of legislative draftspersons, and public service reform.*

## **(iii) The Future Role of the Commonwealth Ministerial Action Group on the Harare Declaration**

17. The Commonwealth Ministerial Action Group (CMAG) remains the most tangible expression of the Commonwealth's commitment to the fundamental political values to which all Commonwealth members subscribe. As the custodian of the Harare Principles, it has been charged by Heads of Government to address all serious or persistent violations of those Principles by member countries.

18. They agreed that CMAG should continue to address serious or persistent violations of those Principles and that its future mandate should be considered further by the Commonwealth High-Level Group.

21. We felt that the issue requiring attention was the need to clarify procedures to apply in other circumstances where a member country is perceived to be in serious or persistent violation of the Harare Commonwealth Principles. We recommend that:

25. Gender equality is a fundamental value of the Commonwealth. It contributes not only to the advancement of political rights and empowerment of women, but also to peace-building, poverty reduction and economic and social progress.

27. The Commonwealth is well placed to play a constructive role on, and be an effective advocate for, international co-operation in areas such as sustainable development. Through capacity building to enable member countries to engage more effectively in international bodies and negotiations, and by promoting open dialogue on key sustainable development issues at major international meetings, the Commonwealth has the potential to promote a stronger commitment to poverty reduction and sustainable development in other international fora.