



COMMONWEALTH

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08/25

10 June 2008

Marlborough House Statement on Reform of International Institutions

Commonwealth Heads of Government, representing one third of humanity and more than one quarter of the world's sovereign governments, collectively expressed the concern of our 53 member states at Kampala in November 2007 that the current architecture of international institutions no longer responds adequately to the challenges of the 21st Century.

2. Since then, the world has witnessed continued financial turbulence, and record levels of prices for food and fuel. These challenges have further illustrated the fundamental weaknesses of a number of today's international organisations that are charged with promoting economic stability and sustainable development. Such institutions do not have adequate capacity, governance structures, or in-built responsiveness either to anticipate or to address global needs in a timely fashion. In some cases, such as energy and the environment, there is an absence of institutions with the mandate to deal globally with these issues of global public policy.

3. We have therefore met as a representative Group of Commonwealth leaders¹ to identify underlying principles and the actions that should be taken, as a global priority, to achieve reform of international institutions and lead to new institutions where necessary.

4. We recognise that sovereign states must have the capacity and freedom to determine national goals and implement national policies and strategies. Equally, we recognise that many national goals cannot be achieved without international collaboration and support.

¹ President Bharrat Jagdeo (Guyana), Prime Minister Navinchandra Ramgoolam (Mauritius), President Maumoon Abdul Gayoom (Maldives), President Mahinda Rajapaksa (Sri Lanka), Prime Minister Feleti Sevele (Tonga), Prime Minister Patrick Manning (Trinidad and Tobago), President Yoweri Museveni (Uganda), Prime Minister Gordon Brown (United Kingdom), President Jakaya Kikwete (United Republic of Tanzania), Vice President Alhaji Aliu Mahama (Ghana), Deputy Prime Minister Najib bin Tun Razak (Malaysia).

*Fiji Islands was suspended from the councils of the Commonwealth in December 2006.

**Nauru is a Special Member.

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5. Global crises require truly global and universal responses. The inadequacy of the current responses calls into question whether incremental and ad hoc approaches to reform will create a new generation of international institutions fit for today's world.

6. The institutions that were established in the mid-20th Century enjoyed strong political agreement at the time on the ends to be achieved by them and the means of doing so, underpinned by a commitment to multilateralism. That commitment is now at risk. The majority of independent sovereign states today are politically subordinate and inadequately represented in these institutions. It is unacceptable, and indeed weakens these institutions, that the greater part of the world community of states participates and benefits less than fully in them.

7. Well designed international institutions have a fundamental role to support all countries to meet their economic, political, humanitarian and security challenges. Through collective co-operation, embodied in international institutions, the global community will foster the conditions for a fully inclusive and equitable global society. The commitment of the world's major powers to multilateralism and its underlying values remains central to any successful settlement on a new architecture of international institutions in this century.

8. As members of the Commonwealth, we recognise the strength of multilateral co-operation founded on consensus amongst countries with diverse backgrounds, interests and cultures. We believe that reform and construction of new international institutions should be built on the following guiding principles:

- Institutions must enjoy the legitimacy not only of their member states but also of the wider international community in order to command confidence and commitment.
- It is essential that all countries have equal voice and fair representation.
- A voice for all countries is only valuable if it is listened to and is reflected in decision-making. It is essential that institutions are responsive, with the interests of all members, especially the smallest and poorest, being taken into account.
- The activities and governance of institutions must be flexible, responding to new challenges, national priorities and the specific circumstances of member states, and changing global realities.
- Institutions must have clear responsibilities and the conduct of their business must be transparent and accountable to the entire membership and the wider public.
- It is essential that they be effective and capable of addressing today's global challenges.

9. We are committed to reform that creates an effective multilateral system, and that supports a more democratic global society with greater equity and fairness. The new generation of international organisations should reflect a new cooperative spirit.

10. We welcome the reform processes and debates under way in many international institutions. The United Nations has a unique role and legitimacy, and we acknowledge the

reforms that are occurring to strengthen the coherence of the United Nations system and the efficacy of its development and humanitarian activities in particular. It is imperative that the UN's "Delivering as One" initiative is further implemented with urgency. It is also vital that the UN continues to develop a global framework of rules and collective action in an inclusive and democratic way.

We intend to accelerate UN reforms and their effective implementation, as a matter of urgency, through lobbying and advocacy in the UN itself as well as other international fora.

11. We also acknowledge the discussions and welcome actions taken to date to reform the International Monetary Fund. However, these and proposed reforms of other international financial institutions including the World Bank, must now be addressed further with greater ambition. These institutions as well as their policies and instruments should be redefined so that they serve the needs of all members and the broader global community.

We intend to pursue the redefining of the purposes and governance of the Bretton Woods institutions, including working towards a Commonwealth consensus and wider international support for an international conference to achieve these goals.

12. The effective management of the global environment is one of the most pressing international priorities of our generation. The impacts of environmental degradation are most starkly felt in the smallest, poorest and most environmentally vulnerable countries. A new system of environmental governance must be fully integrated with development priorities and concerns, and be responsive to the needs of these countries. In addition, a financing mechanism needs to be developed that underpins the linkage between development and the environment, and notably supports investment in long term sources of energy and environmental efficiency.

13. A comprehensive system of international governance is essential, and collaboration is necessary to meet current and projected environmental challenges. Commonwealth leaders have already acknowledged that the Commonwealth is uniquely placed to play a leading role in light of its diversity and unqualified support for work through the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. It is imperative that we collaborate now to build high levels of Commonwealth consensus on positions in the UNFCCC negotiations, in order to achieve early results and the strongest possible foundation on which to build the requisite global governance structure. Commonwealth positions should be built around our shared view that the outcomes of the UNFCCC negotiations should address all aspects of the environment including climate change, energy balance, and the impact on global human development within the context of sustainable development.

We intend to pursue the possibility of an international conference to achieve improved global environmental governance, including the possibility of a new international organisation or reform of existing arrangements, again working on the basis of a Commonwealth consensus and wider international support.

14. The Commonwealth is committed to advancing a programme of reform of international institutions. The existing crises in finance, food, and fuel demand no less. We

acknowledge that high quality reform will not be achieved unless all those with a stake in future global governance have their voices heard. We are conscious that the conferences that we propose to pursue will require careful preparation and wide consultation to achieve the essential universal acceptability.

15. The Commonwealth will work closely with the institutions concerned. To that end, we will work with the wider Commonwealth community, including at an extraordinary meeting of Commonwealth Heads of Government on 24 September 2008. We have given guidance to the Commonwealth Secretary-General to develop an Action Plan on Reform of International Institutions. We will use the full extent of Commonwealth networks, including our civil society and professional associations.

We intend, individually and collectively, to carry forward our reform agenda to relevant international fora. We will seek to enlarge the breadth of international commitment to our Commonwealth reform agenda, and call on others to join us in this endeavour.

Marlborough House
10 June 2008