



COMMONWEALTH

NEWS RELEASE

09/42

26 September 2009

Commonwealth Ministerial Action Group - Concluding Statement 26 September 2009

The Commonwealth Ministerial Action Group on the Harare Declaration (CMAG) held its thirty-second regular meeting in New York on 26 September 2009.

The Meeting was chaired by Hon Datuk Anifah Aman, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Malaysia. It was also attended by Hon Marco Hausiku, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Namibia; Hon Murray McCully, Minister of Foreign Affairs of New Zealand; Hon Rohitha Bogollagama, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Sri Lanka; Hon Rufus George Bousquet, Minister of External Affairs of St Lucia; Hon Sam Kutesa, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Uganda (Vice-Chair); Mr Ivan Lewis, Minister of State in the Foreign and Commonwealth Office of United Kingdom; Mr Gabriel Pepson, Permanent Secretary of Foreign Affairs of Papua New Guinea, and Ms Beatrice Rosa Brobbey, Director Multilateral Relations, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Ghana.

2. CMAG also received a briefing from the Secretary-General on the visit of his Special Representative, Sir Paul Reeves, to Fiji from 8-11 September 2009, and on his own meeting with Interim Prime Minister Bainimarama in New York on 25 September 2009.

3. At the request of the Interim Government of Fiji, CMAG received a briefing from Fiji's Interim Minister of Foreign Affairs, Ratu Inoke Kubuabola.

4. CMAG recalled that, at its previous meeting on 31 July 2009, it had urged the Fiji regime to immediately reactivate the President's Political Dialogue Forum (PPDF) process, facilitated by the Commonwealth and the United Nations. CMAG had stressed that such a Dialogue must be independent, inclusive, time-bound and without any pre-determined outcome, and lead to credible elections in the country no later than October 2010. CMAG had urged Fiji to state in writing to the Secretary-General its firm commitment to reactivating the PPDF in those terms by no later than 1 September 2009, and decided that in the absence of such confirmation, Fiji would be fully suspended on that date.

5. The Group noted that although the Secretary-General received a letter from Interim Prime Minister Bainimarama on 21 August reaffirming his commitment to the principles of the Commonwealth, his response did not meet the terms set out by CMAG on 31 July. Accordingly Fiji had been fully suspended from the Commonwealth on 1 September 2009.

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**Fiji Islands: currently suspended from the Commonwealth.*

***Nauru is a member in arrears.*

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6. CMAG expressed regret that such a course of action had become necessary in order to protect the fundamental political values of the Commonwealth as set out in the Harare Declaration, including respect for constitutional democracy, the rule of law, and human rights. The Group hoped that Fiji would take the necessary steps to restore its full participation in the Commonwealth without delay.

7. In relation to the 2010 Commonwealth Games in New Delhi, India, consistent with the precedent of the earlier decision of CMAG, the Group requested the Commonwealth Games Federation to take into serious consideration CMAG's decision in relation to the suspension of the Fiji Islands, in determining Fiji's participation in the Games.

8. CMAG recommended that Commonwealth Heads of Government give further consideration to ensuring that all organisations in the Commonwealth family respect and support fundamental Commonwealth values as endorsed by Commonwealth Heads of Government, including the decisions taken by CMAG in that context.

9. CMAG welcomed the visit to Fiji by the Secretary-General's Special Representative for Fiji, Sir Paul Reeves, from 8-11 September 2009. CMAG noted the importance Fiji attaches to its relationship with the Commonwealth, and welcomed the willingness of the Interim Prime Minister and his government to hold discussions with the Special Representative. CMAG expressed disappointment and concern, however, that Sir Paul had been constrained from meeting with other political leaders while in Fiji, and emphasised that in order for the Commonwealth's engagement with Fiji to be meaningful and to continue, it must be inclusive of the participation and viewpoints of all sectors of Fiji's political leadership.

10. CMAG also reiterated its strong concern about ongoing violations of human rights, including freedom of speech and assembly, occurring under the Public Emergency Regulation (PER) in Fiji, and urged the Interim Government to rescind the PER immediately.

11. CMAG regretted that neither the Interim Government's discussions with Sir Paul, nor the Interim Prime Minister's meeting with the Secretary-General, nor the Foreign Minister's presentation to the Group at its meeting, had indicated willingness on the part of the regime to address the concerns of the Commonwealth regarding the long delay in restoring democracy in Fiji. In response to the Strategic Framework for Change proposed by the Interim Government the Group emphasised that the commencement of an inclusive national dialogue without further delay is fundamental to the restoration of sustainable constitutional democracy.

12. CMAG reiterated that the Commonwealth was willing to remain engaged with Fiji in support of any good faith efforts toward the restoration of democracy, including the facilitation of a credible political dialogue process towards that end, in accordance with fundamental Commonwealth principles. CMAG called on the Interim Government to urgently confirm its readiness to resume such a dialogue process, as well as electoral preparations, as a basis upon which Commonwealth engagement could move forward.

13. CMAG reaffirmed its support for the Secretary-General's good offices role in Fiji. It requested the Secretary-General to continue monitoring the situation in order to keep CMAG informed as appropriate while Fiji remained under full suspension,

and with a view to assessing whether and when further direct engagement between the Commonwealth and the Interim Government might be warranted.

New York
26 September 2009