



Media Brief: Background on Rwanda's Membership Bid

In 2007 in Kampala, Uganda, Heads of Government reviewed the recommendations of the Committee on Commonwealth Membership and agreed a set of core criteria for membership of the organisation as well as a four-step process for dealing with expressions of interest by aspiring members.

The process comprises:

- (i) an informal assessment undertaken by the Secretary-General;
- (ii) consultation by the Secretary-General with member states;
- (iii) an invitation to the interested country to make a formal application;
- (iv) a formal application presenting evidence of the functioning of democratic processes and popular support in that country for joining the Commonwealth.

Following the Kampala decision, the Government of Rwanda conveyed its interest in joining the Commonwealth in January 2008. This initiated the four-step process.

The Commonwealth Secretariat and the Republic of Rwanda have engaged in a series of consultations, which included four Secretariat missions to Kigali and a meeting between the Secretary-General and HE Mr Paul Kagame, President of Rwanda, in London.

The Secretary-General wrote to Heads in June 2009 conveying his informal assessment of Rwanda's expression of interest to join the Commonwealth. The Secretary-General requested views from Heads on Rwanda's aspiration for membership of the Commonwealth.

In August 2009, the Secretary-General wrote to Heads indicating strong support among member states for Rwanda to be invited to make a formal application for Commonwealth membership. The Secretary-General subsequently wrote to the President of Rwanda, inviting him to submit such an application.

In October 2009 the Secretary-General received a letter from President Kagame transmitting Rwanda's formal application for Commonwealth membership, which included a Joint Resolution by the Rwanda Legislature and a Memorandum in support of Rwanda's application for Commonwealth membership. This has since been transmitted to Heads.

This application for membership by the Government of Rwanda will be placed before Heads for consideration at the forthcoming CHOGM 2009 in Trinidad and Tobago.