

## The Edinburgh Communiqué

1. Commonwealth Heads of Government met in Edinburgh from 24 to 27 October 1997. Of the 51 countries which attended the Meeting, 43 were represented by Heads of State or Prime Ministers. The Meeting was chaired by the British Prime Minister, the Rt Hon Tony Blair.
2. The Opening Session of the Meeting was addressed by Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II, Head of the Commonwealth.
3. Heads of Government expressed satisfaction at the return of Fiji on 1 October 1997 to the Commonwealth, as its 54th member state.
4. Heads of Government congratulated the Governments and peoples of India and Pakistan who have recently celebrated their 50th anniversaries of independence.
5. Heads of Government conveyed their appreciation for the excellent arrangements made for their Meeting and the warm hospitality extended by the British Government and people, as well as for the Chairman's admirable conduct of the Meeting.
6. Heads of Government adopted the Edinburgh Commonwealth Economic Declaration on Promoting Shared Prosperity, which they saw as a fitting complement to the Harare Commonwealth Declaration of 1991.
7. Heads of Government expressed concern about the special problems of the Least Developed Countries (LDCs). To enable them to share the benefits of globalisation, they invited donors to work for the target of 0.15 per cent of GNP for LDCs. They also resolved to promote the role of micro-credit in poverty reduction.

### Small States

8. Heads of Government received with satisfaction the attached Report of the Chairperson of the Ministerial Group on Small States. They also welcomed the Report of an Advisory Group, *A Future for Small States: Overcoming Vulnerability*, as an important Commonwealth contribution towards addressing the particular concerns of small states, and agreed on a package of measures to alleviate these concerns.

### Fundamental Political Values

9. Heads of Government reaffirmed their commitment to the fundamental values of the Commonwealth, as set out in the Harare Commonwealth Declaration of 1991 and emphasised that democracy, good governance, sustainable development and respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms were interdependent and mutually reinforcing. They commended the Commonwealth

Parliamentary Association for its work in strengthening the democratic culture and effective parliamentary practices, and its efforts to enhance the participation of women in public life.

10. Heads of Government reaffirmed their support for the valuable role played by the Secretary-General's good offices, at the request of the concerned member governments, to help resolve potential or actual conflicts.
11. Heads of Government received the Report from the Commonwealth Ministerial Action Group on the Harare Declaration (CMAG) covering three countries, viz. The Gambia, Nigeria and Sierra Leone, and accepted its recommendations.
12. They welcomed the completion of the electoral phase of the transition to civilian, democratic and constitutional rule in The Gambia and received the assurances of the Gambian authorities that they would further demonstrate their stated commitment to the Harare principles.
13. Heads of Government observed that the continued existence of a military government in Nigeria was a prime source of Commonwealth concern. They expressed concern about the failure to observe fundamental human rights, in particular the continued detention and imprisonment of many Nigerians, including Chief Moshood Abiola and General Olusegun Obasanjo. Accordingly, they decided that Nigeria should remain suspended from the Commonwealth.
14. They noted the positive contribution which Nigeria has been making to efforts through the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) in support of democratic government within the West African region, and expressed the hope that this reflected a determination to comply with the Harare principles in its domestic policies.
15. Heads of Government also empowered CMAG to invoke, in the period before 1 October 1998, Commonwealth-wide implementation of any or all of the measures recommended by CMAG if, in CMAG's view, these would serve to encourage greater integrity of the process of transition and respect for human rights in Nigeria. These included:
  - visa restrictions on members of the Nigerian regime and their families;
  - the withdrawal of military attachés;
  - the cessation of military training;
  - an embargo on the export of arms;
  - the denial of educational facilities to members of the Nigerian regime and their families;
  - a visa-based ban on all sporting contacts;
  - a downgrading of cultural links; and
  - the downgrading of diplomatic missions.

16. Heads of Government agreed that, following 1 October 1998, CMAG should assess whether Nigeria had satisfactorily completed a credible programme for the restoration of democracy and civilian government. They further agreed that if, in that assessment, Nigeria had completed a credible transition to democratic government and to observance of the Harare principles, then the suspension will be lifted; and if not and it remained in serious violation of the Harare principles, Heads of Government would consider Nigeria's expulsion from the association and the introduction of further measures in consultation with other members of the international community as recommended by CMAG. Such measures would include a mandatory oil embargo, a ban on air-links with Nigeria and the freezing of the financial assets and bank accounts in foreign countries of members of the regime and their families.
17. Heads of Government strongly condemned the military coup in Sierra Leone in May 1997, which resulted in the unconstitutional overthrow of its democratically elected government, and called for the immediate reinstatement of President Ahmad Tejan Kabbah, whom they welcomed to their Meeting. They endorsed the decision taken by CMAG, in accordance with the provisions of the Millbrook Commonwealth Action Programme, that pending the restoration of the legitimate government, the participation of the illegal regime of Sierra Leone in the councils of the Commonwealth should remain suspended.
18. Heads of Government welcomed UN Security Council Resolution 1132 (1997) imposing petroleum, weapons and travel sanctions on the military junta in Sierra Leone and authorising ECOWAS to impose economic measures against the regime. They urged member governments to co-operate in the implementation of these sanctions, and in ensuring the continued isolation of the regime in Freetown within the Commonwealth and the wider international community. They agreed to assist the victims of the situation in Sierra Leone in their own countries, as well as in other countries of the Commonwealth which may request such assistance. They pledged the support of the Commonwealth for the efforts of ECOWAS to resolve the Sierra Leone crisis, including the provision of technical and logistical support to enable ECOWAS to carry out its responsibilities. They also pledged Commonwealth support for the reconstruction of Sierra Leone upon the resolution of the crisis. In the meantime, they looked forward to further clarification of the reported agreement between the ECOWAS Ministerial delegation and the military junta that the latter would demit office and allow the reinstatement of President Tejan Kabbah in six months' time.
19. Heads of Government reviewed the composition, terms of reference and operation of CMAG. They decided that CMAG should continue its work as a standing ministerial mechanism to address serious and persistent violations of the principles of the Harare Commonwealth Declaration. They agreed that CMAG should, in the two-year period after the Edinburgh CHOGM, consist of the following countries: Barbados, Botswana, Britain, Canada, Ghana, Malaysia, New Zealand and Zimbabwe. They further agreed that in future CMAG's remit should extend to member countries deemed to be in serious or persistent violation of the

Harare principles, on the basis of established guidelines. They decided that the Commonwealth Secretary-General, acting on his/her own or at the request of a member government, should bring the situation in question to the attention of the CMAG membership, which would then include it or otherwise in its work programme in the light of its guiding principles.

### **Commonwealth Membership**

20. Heads of Government received and endorsed a report from the Intergovernmental Group on Criteria for Commonwealth Membership. They agreed that in order to become a member of the Commonwealth, an applicant country should, as a rule, have had a constitutional association with an existing Commonwealth member; that it should comply with Commonwealth values, principles and priorities as set out in the Harare Declaration; and that it should accept Commonwealth norms and conventions.
21. Recalling Palestine's historical association with the Commonwealth, Heads of Government welcomed the interest expressed by the Palestinian Authority in Commonwealth membership. They recognised that, under the Oslo Accords, Palestine may attain state sovereignty in 1999. Once this was so, the case for membership would be duly determined in accordance with the agreed criteria for Commonwealth membership. Heads of Government also considered applications for membership of the Commonwealth from Rwanda and Yemen and agreed that these should be kept under review in the context of the criteria endorsed by them.

### **Cyprus**

22. Heads of Government reaffirmed their support for the sovereignty, independence, territorial integrity and unity of the Republic of Cyprus. They called for the implementation of United Nations resolutions on Cyprus, in particular Security Council Resolutions 365 (1974), 550 (1984) and 939 (1994). They regretted that negotiations on a solution have been at an impasse for too long and strongly supported the process of direct intercommunal talks under the UN Secretary-General's mission of good offices. They expressed concern about recent threats of use of force and integration of the occupied territory by Turkey and reiterated support for President Clerides's demilitarisation proposal. They called for the withdrawal of all Turkish forces and settlers, the return of the refugees to their homes, the restoration of and respect for human rights of all Cypriots and the accounting of all missing persons. They expressed concern and disappointment that progress had been impeded by the efforts of the Turkish Cypriot side to introduce preconditions to the talks and called for a co-operative attitude from all sides for the achievement of a comprehensive, just and workable settlement on the basis of a bi-communal and bi-zonal federation. While noting the existence of the Commonwealth Action Group on Cyprus, they welcomed the initiative of the Commonwealth Secretary-General to nominate an observer at the UN-sponsored negotiations. They recognised that Britain as a permanent member of the Security Council and as a Guarantor Power has a special position in this matter.

## Belize

23. Heads of Government reaffirmed their strong support for the territorial integrity, security and sovereignty of Belize. They welcomed the consultations and co-operation between Guatemala and Belize on the implementation of confidence-building measures and called for continued dialogue at the highest levels. They encouraged Guatemala to recognise the constitutional borders of Belize to allow for an early settlement of their outstanding claim. They reiterated their request to the Secretary-General to convene the Commonwealth Ministerial Committee on Belize whenever necessary.

## Terrorism

24. Heads of Government reaffirmed their strongest condemnation of acts of terrorism in all its forms and manifestations, which destabilise the political, economic and social order of sovereign states. They reiterated their determination to combat terrorism, whether perpetrated by individuals, groups or states, by every means possible consistent with human rights and the rule of law. They also recognised the linkages between terrorism, illegal trafficking in drugs and arms, and money laundering. They welcomed the growing international consensus in fighting terrorism, and in particular the steps taken towards a UN Convention on Suppression of Terrorist Bombings, and hoped that this would contribute to the development of a comprehensive legal framework. They also called on all states to enact laws to make punishable acts of conspiracy within their jurisdictions to commit terrorist offences.

## Landmines

25. Heads of Government addressed the serious humanitarian crisis caused by anti-personnel mines and noted the negotiation of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on their Destruction, adopted in Oslo on 18 September 1997. They invited Commonwealth and other countries in a position to do so to consider joining the original signatories of this Convention when it first opens for signature in Ottawa on 3 December 1997. They stressed that an effective solution to the global problem of anti-personnel mines would only be possible through effective international co-operation in all relevant fora including, *inter alia*, the United Nations, the Conference on Disarmament, regional organisations and groupings and enhanced international assistance for mine clearance and for the care and rehabilitation and economic integration of mine victims.

## Mediterranean

26. In acknowledging the multi-faceted problems affecting the Mediterranean, Heads of Government welcomed the Euro-Mediterranean Conference in 1995 and its follow-up conference in Malta in 1997, and affirmed their support to the international and regional institutions committed to the promotion of peace and security in the Mediterranean region.

## **International Criminal Court**

27. Heads of Government expressed their belief that an International Criminal Court (ICC) would be an important development in the international promotion of the rule of law. They expressed support for the efforts of the UN Preparatory Committee to negotiate a Statute for an ICC and encouraged participation in those negotiations and in the Plenipotentiary Conference next year by as many Commonwealth countries as possible.

## **Commonwealth Functional Co-operation**

28. Heads of Government considered various aspects of Commonwealth functional co-operation, which they reaffirmed as essential for translating the benefits of membership to member states. They endorsed the attached Report of the Committee of the Whole and requested the Secretariat to intensify its efforts to establish priorities in these areas, based on the Commonwealth's comparative advantage.

## **Future Meetings**

29. Heads of Government accepted with great pleasure the offer of the Government of South Africa to host their next Meeting in 1999, and the offer of Australia to host their Meeting in 2001.

*27 October 1997*