

## **Twenty-Eighth Meeting of the Commonwealth Ministerial Action Group on the Harare Declaration (CMAG)**

**New York; 29 September 2007**

### **CONCLUDING STATEMENT**

The Commonwealth Ministerial Action Group on the Harare Declaration (CMAG) held its twenty-eighth meeting in New York on 29 September 2007. The meeting was chaired by Hon Dr. Michael Frendo, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Malta. Other members of the Group who attended the meeting were Hon Dato' Seri Syed Hamid Albar, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Malaysia (Vice Chairman), Hon Stephenson King, Prime Minister and Minister of External Affairs of St Lucia, Hon Mohlabi Kenneth Tsekoa, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Lesotho, Hon Samuel Abal, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Papua New Guinea, Rt Hon David Miliband, Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs of the UK, Hon Rohitha Bogollagama, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Sri Lanka, and Michael Small, Assistant Deputy Minister, Canada, and Ambassador Begum Taj, United Republic of Tanzania.

#### **Fiji Islands**

CMAG reviewed developments in the Fiji Islands since its last, extraordinary meeting in London on 8 December 2006, when, following the military overthrow of the democratically elected Government, it suspended Fiji Islands from the Councils of the Commonwealth, pending the restoration of democracy and rule of law in that country.

The Group took note of the statement by Commodore Bainimarama to the UN General Assembly on 28 September 2007.

The Group expressed grave concern at the re-imposition of the Public Emergency Regulations in Fiji in September 2007; the recent pronouncements of Commodore Bainimarama that the deposed SDL Party would not be allowed to contest the next elections; the militarisation of the Fijian administration including the presence of senior military personnel in leading government positions; and, reports indicating that the independence of the judiciary was being seriously compromised and that human rights violations were continuing.

The Group reiterated that it was essential that elections be held by the deadline of March 2009, if not sooner, and that all parties be allowed to participate fully and freely. It called on the interim government to expedite preparations for the elections.

Conscious of the history of coups in Fiji, the Group re-affirmed the need to engage in an inclusive reform process in which all Fijian people and parties,

including civil society, participate. The Group reiterated its firm belief that the constitutional future of Fiji could only be determined through a representative, elected parliament, and that dialogue on Fiji's future governance arrangements should follow elections.

The Group welcomed the dialogue which had been opened with the interim government and encouraged the Secretary-General to continue his efforts to engage. The Group also called for all other multilateral and bilateral efforts in this regard likewise to focus on supporting the Pacific Islands Forum-led process.

The Group expressed again its concern for the economic welfare and well-being of the people of Fiji, and reaffirmed that any actions taken should bear this in mind.

The Group requested the Chairman of CMAG, accompanied by such other CMAG Ministers as may be agreed, to visit Fiji to convey its concerns to the interim government and report back to the Group at its next meeting.

The Group decided to retain Fiji on its Agenda.

## **Pakistan**

CMAG also reviewed developments in Pakistan since its last regular meeting in September 2006. It received a report from the Foreign Minister of Malta on his visit to Pakistan in June 2007, as well as from the Secretary-General on his more recent visit in September 2007.

CMAG recalled the CHOGM Communiqué of November 2005, and reaffirmed in particular "that the holding by the same person of the offices of Head of State and Chief of Army Staff is incompatible with the basic principles of democracy and the spirit of the Harare Commonwealth principles...until the two offices are separated, the process of democratisation in Pakistan will not be irreversible." The Group further recalled that Commonwealth Heads of Government had "urged Pakistan to resolve this issue as early as possible, and not beyond the end of the current Presidential term in 2007 at the latest."

The Group welcomed the Commonwealth's continued engagement with Pakistan, in line with their earlier decisions, with the objective of encouraging its return to full democracy and the maintenance of the rule of law.

CMAG took note of the recent submission by the President's Legal Counsel to the Supreme Court that the President would give up his role of Chief of Army Staff by 15 November 2007, if he were to be re-elected for another term as President. It reiterated its expectation that the separation of the two offices would be completed in accordance with the letter and spirit of the Constitution and within that timeframe.

CMAG noted the commitment of the Government of Pakistan to hold free and fair elections, in accordance with the Constitution. It also welcomed the invitation of the Pakistan Government to the Commonwealth to observe these elections. It expressed the hope that the elections would meet internationally accepted standards of fairness and transparency, including allowing all parties to compete in a pluralistic environment.

The Group decided to retain Pakistan on its Agenda.

### **Next meeting**

CMAG agreed that it would next meet in Kampala on November 22, just prior to the CHOGM scheduled for November 23-25, 2007.

Commonwealth Secretariat

New York

September 29, 2007