

**Seventh Meeting of the Commonwealth Consultative Group on Environment  
(CCGE), 7 February 2001, UNEP, Nairobi**

**Summary Statement of the Co-Chairs**

Commonwealth Environment Ministers met on 7 February 2001 for the seventh meeting of the Commonwealth Consultative Group on Environment (CCGE). The meeting was convened to coincide with the 2001 session of the Global Environment Ministers Forum/United Nations Environment Programme Governing Council in Nairobi. The CCGE was co-chaired by Hon Seymour Mullings, Jamaica's Deputy Prime Minister, and the Rt Hon Michael Meacher, MP, United Kingdom Minister for the Environment<sup>1</sup>.

Ministers focused their discussion on the World Summit on Sustainable Development, which will take place in Johannesburg in 2002. They called for the Summit to promote the cause of sustainable development in a truly integrated way through a clear commitment to poverty alleviation and by ensuring that development objectives were attained in conjunction with environmental goals. Ministers supported the key principles and approaches to the World Summit on Sustainable Development that were outlined by Hon. Valli Moosa, South Africa's Minister for Environmental Affairs and Tourism. The Summit should review progress in implementing the commitments made at the 1992 UN Conference on Environment and Development in Rio, but it must also be forward-looking. Rio+10 should be an inclusive process that produces practical and action-oriented outcomes. Contentious outstanding issues from the Rio agenda should not be allowed to dominate the Summit: as far as possible they should be resolved before the event, so that the agenda can focus on a selected number of key issues. These include: the core issue of poverty alleviation; health (especially issues related to water-borne diseases); the position of children in under-developed and degraded environments; ensuring that sustainable development is pursued in a way that relieves the burdens on women; the impact of biodiversity-loss on the poor; issues related to environmental governance and institutions for environmental governance; and financing for sustainable development including the operation of the institutions involved.

Ministers agreed that international environmental governance is an important issue, including for the Johannesburg Summit. The present structures for international environmental governance disempower small states and developing countries. Ministers called for a more streamlined and coherent system, with simplified and more transparent and comprehensible processes, that are accessible to wider publics. International environmental governance arrangements should be within the United Nations and inclusive, to enable broad-based participation in the process of decision-making. Ministers were unanimous in their support for strengthening UNEP and continuing to base the organisation in Nairobi.

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<sup>1</sup>Commonwealth Environment Ministers, when they met informally in Malmö on 30 May 2000, agreed that they would meet next a day before the meetings of the Global Environment Ministers Forum/UNEP Governing Council in February 2001. It was agreed in consultation with governments that this would be a meeting of the Commonwealth Consultative Group on Environment.

Other issues that Ministers identified for Rio+10 were energy, water, youth, the role of the private sector in delivering and financing sustainable development, issues related to debt and HIV/AIDS, disaster preparedness, and addressing the vulnerability of small states. The view was expressed that implementation of the Rio agreements had been hampered by unfulfilled commitments on technology transfer, finance, and capacity-building, and by critical capacity constraints in efforts to implement international environmental agreements.

Ministers agreed that the Commonwealth is well placed to play a constructive role on the environment and sustainable development, including in the preparations for the World Summit on Sustainable Development, by providing a forum for open and high-level dialogue between member states, which could help to build bridges between different groups. It can also develop an effective advocacy role on sustainable development, and support member states in their implementation of international environmental agreements.

Ministers agreed to transmit a message to the High Level Review Group that is examining the future role of the Commonwealth. Ministers recommended that the Group “identify the environment and sustainable development as an important element in that role”, and suggested that the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting in Brisbane in October explicitly acknowledge the importance of the Commonwealth role in these areas by placing environment and sustainable development high on the agenda for discussion.

Ministers supported regular meetings of Commonwealth Environment Ministers, dialogue on questions related to the environment and sustainable development at the highest political level and between other sectoral groups of Ministers, as well as assistance to Member States to contribute more effectively to the relevant international discussions, including the World Summit on Sustainable Development.

Ministers welcomed a report of the Commonwealth Workshop on Trade and Sustainable Development, which took place at Sundridge Park, UK from 20-22 January. Ministers endorsed the approach taken in the workshop, and the continuation of interdisciplinary dialogues on this and other sectors. They also welcomed a proposal by the United Kingdom to fund another workshop, possibly on an issue related to the Johannesburg Summit.

Ministers agreed to meet next again immediately before the 22<sup>nd</sup> UNEP Governing Council meeting/Global Environment Ministers Forum in 2002. Senior Commonwealth officials might meet before that, perhaps in the wings of other meetings.