

**The Ninth Meeting of the Commonwealth Consultative Group on Environment (CCGE),
4 February 2003, Nairobi, Kenya**

Summary Statement by the Chair

Commonwealth Environment Ministers and Senior Officials met on 4 February 2003 for the ninth session of the Commonwealth Consultative Group on Environment (CCGE). The meeting was convened to coincide with the 22nd Session of the Governing Council of UNEP/Global Environment Ministers Forum held in Nairobi, Kenya. Sri Lanka's Minister of Environment and Natural Resources, the Hon. Rukman Senanayake, chaired the meeting.

Ministers focused their discussion on Commonwealth follow-up to the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) and preparations for the review and international meeting on implementation of the 1994 Barbados Programme of Action on the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States (Barbados+10).

With respect to the Commonwealth's role in supporting implementation of the outcomes of WSSD, Ministers highlighted a number of areas where, in the context of its limited resources, the Commonwealth Secretariat was well placed to support the efforts of its developing member states. They included the following issues:

- A Commonwealth role in facilitating a dialogue on, and member states' engagement with, partnerships announced at WSSD. Ministers highlighted the need for information and analysis on: the number and range of partnerships that had been formed; what the parameters of these partnerships were; and how member states might effectively engage in partnerships to support implementation of sustainable development. A delegate suggested that the CCGE might wish to return to this matter, especially the criteria for partnerships, following discussions on the issue by the UN Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD). One Minister suggested that the Commonwealth could help member states to mobilise and access funds that were being released for implementing elements of the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation. Another Minister emphasised the need for on-going efforts to promote awareness and understanding of the outcomes from WSSD and sensitise a wide range of actors to promote their engagement in partnerships.
- The preparation of time-bound action plans to operationalise the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation. In this context, a number of delegates emphasised the role that the Commonwealth Secretariat could play in strengthening institutions and building capacities in developing countries to undertake this work.
- In the areas of climate change and biodiversity, work on these concerns should be concentrated on areas of comparative advantage, where the Commonwealth could add value through strategic gap filling. This would help to ensure that the Secretariat's programmes were complementary in nature, and that resources were not over-stretched or diverted from other areas of core Commonwealth competency.
- Ministers also emphasised the importance of strengthening collaboration with regional institutions, continuing to integrate all three pillars of sustainable development, and working with economic, trade and development colleagues in implementing sustainable

development. Ministers recognised the critical importance of addressing the link between poverty and environment. Among the approaches, stronger linkages needed to be built between environment and poverty in a range of processes such as Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers.

- A number of delegates outlined specific areas where Commonwealth support through technical assistance and capacity building would be appreciated.

The Commonwealth Secretariat warmly welcomed Ministers' comments on priority areas of work: these would be studied closely and used to build a balanced work programme in response to WSSD.

Hon Mohammed Valli Moosa, South Africa's Minister of Environmental Affairs and Tourism, addressed the CCGE in his capacity as Chair of the eleventh session of the UN Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD-11). Minister Moosa outlined the achievements of the Johannesburg Summit, including the highest-level global commitment to act on sustainable development to be expressed in the past decade. He outlined the challenges ahead as follows: keeping the focus on implementation; ensuring that the linkages are maintained between poverty and sustainable development, and between the three pillars of sustainable development; consolidating the regional focus; increasing the momentum on the WEHAB agenda (on water and sanitation, energy, health, agriculture and biodiversity); and following-up partnerships at the domestic, regional and international levels. As the first major inter-governmental gathering since WSSD, Minister Moosa saw the UNEP Governing Council Meeting/Global Environment Ministers Forum as an important starting point on these issues. CSD-11 had the responsibility of setting the CSD's multi-year programme for the next decade, and he urged Commonwealth Ministers to be personally present in New York (28 April – 9 May 2003) for this critical session.

Ministers welcomed Commonwealth support for the review and international meeting on implementation of the 1994 Barbados Programme of Action on the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States (Barbados+10). The Representative of Belize, on behalf of CARICOM, outlined the current status of preparations for the review and urged the Commonwealth to deliver its assistance within the framework that was being developed through the Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS). This assistance might include support for the preparation of national and regional reports, and analysis on key substantive issues. Ministers commended the Commonwealth Secretariat for its collaboration with regional organisations on preparations for the review. Samoa's Minister of Lands, Surveys and Environment, Hon Tagaloa Tuala Sale Tagaloa, thanked the Secretariat for its support to Pacific Island Countries in their preparations for WSSD, and urged that this support to continue for Barbados+10. The Representative of Mauritius called on the Commonwealth to start considering its approach to implementation of the Barbados+10 outcomes.

Ministers agreed to meet again immediately before the Eighth Special Session of the Governing Council of UNEP/Global Environment Ministers Forum in 2004. They asked the Secretariat to continue on-going consultations to identify a Chair for the next session, giving due consideration to rotation between geographical regions, size, and type of economy.

Nairobi, Kenya – 5 February 2003

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