



Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting

**Abuja, Nigeria
5-8 December 2003**

The Abuja Communiqué

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The Aso Rock Commonwealth Declaration ***Development and Democracy: Partnership*** ***for Peace and Prosperity***

1. We, the Heads of Government of the Commonwealth of Nations, meeting at Abuja, Nigeria, from 5 to 8 December 2003, commit ourselves to strengthen development and democracy, through partnership for peace and prosperity. Building on the landmark Declarations in Singapore, Harare and Fancourt, we are committed to democracy, good governance, human rights, gender equality and a more equitable sharing of the benefits of globalisation.
2. We recognise that the Governments of the Commonwealth are partners sharing a fundamental responsibility for the development, security and well-being of their people. We acknowledge their central role in guaranteeing stability, good economic management and governance, and in promoting sustainable growth and development.
3. We welcome the Report of the Commonwealth Expert Group on Development and Democracy which was constituted following the 2002 Coolum Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM). We have noted its key recommendations for Commonwealth actions, focusing on how democracies can best be supported in combating poverty.
4. We believe that efforts aimed at eradicating poverty and improving governance are essential for greater international equity and global peace and security. We recognise that the Millennium Development Goals have mobilised governments, international institutions and civil society to reduce poverty with renewed vigour and commitment.
5. We recognise that globalisation has significant potential benefits for all. However, the world is characterised by uneven development, and we therefore stress that globalisation must provide real opportunities for developing countries to transform their economies and societies through diversification for the benefit of their people. It is the strategic goal of the Commonwealth to help their pre-industrial members to transition into skilled working- and middle-class societies, recognising that their domestic policies must be conducive to such transitions.
6. We further recognise that while development and democracy are goals each in its own right, they must be mutually reinforcing, with a clear

'democratic dividend', in terms of delivering tangible benefits to people. We are convinced that broad-based prosperity creates the stability conducive to the promotion of democracy; and that strong democratic institutions better promote development.

7. Accordingly, we commit ourselves to make democracy work better for pro-poor development by implementing sustainable development programmes and enhancing democratic institutions and processes in all human endeavours. We recognise that building democracy is a constantly evolving process. It must also be uncomplicated and take into account national circumstances. Among the objectives we seek to promote are the following:

- i. a participatory democracy characterised by free and fair elections and representative legislatures;
- ii. an independent judiciary;
- iii. a well-trained public service;
- iv. a transparent and accountable public accounts system;
- v. machinery to protect human rights;
- vi. the right to information;
- vii. active participation of civil society, including women and youth;
- viii. substantially increased and more effective financial resources;
- ix. adherence to the internationally agreed targets of 0.7 per cent of Gross National Product for development assistance;
- x. financing and realisation of the Millennium Development Goals; and
- xi. increased democracy at the global level, including enhanced participation and transparency in international institutions.

Promoting Free and Fair Trade

8. We fully commit ourselves to an effective, equitable, rules-based multilateral trading system, developed under the auspices of the World Trade Organisation, to support pro-poor development and democracy. To this end, we have issued a separate Statement on Multilateral Trade, which is annexed to this Declaration.

Poverty Eradication and the Millennium Development Goals

9. We reiterate our collective commitment and determination to attain the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), especially in regard to health and

education. We welcome the efforts of the Commonwealth to attain the MDGs, in particular for poverty eradication, through technical assistance programmes in developing member countries. We affirm our enthusiasm and resolve to increase aid levels to support the MDGs. We welcome the initiative of the United Kingdom for an International Finance Facility, and call upon other developed countries to consider this and similar options to alleviate poverty in developing countries. We commit ourselves to support appropriate private sector initiatives to promote foreign direct investment and capital flows to developing member countries.

Role of Women

10. We recognise the critical role which women play in development and resolve to ensure that development processes empower women to play that full role.

Action Against Corruption and Recovery of Assets

11. We recognise that corruption erodes economic development and corporate governance. We welcome the successful conclusion of the United Nations Convention Against Corruption and urge the early signature, ratification and implementation of the Convention by member states. We pledge maximum co-operation and assistance amongst our governments to recover assets of illicit origin and repatriate them to their countries of origin. This will make more resources available for development purposes. To this end, we request the Secretary-General to establish a Commonwealth Working Group to help advance effective action in this area.

Debt Management

12. We recognise that the debt burden constitutes a major obstacle to allocating resources to key socio-economic sectors in developing member countries. We also acknowledge the need for a deeper, broader and more flexible approach to debt relief and debt cancellation for developing member countries, to achieve long-term debt sustainability and release resources, particularly for health and education. We welcome the advisory and consensus-building work of the Commonwealth Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) Ministerial Forum and encourage its efforts to achieve HIPCs' sustainable exit from debt. We support the provision of additional resources through topping-up at the completion point under HIPC and a more comprehensive approach to address unsustainable debt.

Financing for Development

13. We believe the Commonwealth should lead the international community in ensuring that the official development assistance target is achieved. Recognising that poor member countries urgently need increased resources for pro-poor development, we call on the international community to respond positively through the following measures:

- i. improve aid effectiveness through reductions in tied aid, increased direct budgetary support and implementation of the Rome Declaration on Harmonisation;
- ii. support social safety nets to reduce the impact of poverty on the most vulnerable groups and to mitigate the transition costs of reforms designed to enhance the efficiency and competitiveness of economies;
- iii. strengthen the capacity of the international financial architecture to assist poor countries to address the impact of exogenous shocks such as a sharp deterioration in their terms of trade and natural disasters;
- iv. encourage the private sector to play a major role in the promotion of trade and investment; and
- v. encourage greater participation of poor and vulnerable groups in the preparation of poverty reduction strategy papers for the International Monetary Fund, World Bank and wider donor community.

Commonwealth Fund for Technical Co-operation (CFTC)

14. We note the commendable assistance provided by the CFTC to the development efforts of our member countries and commit ourselves to continued support for the Fund. We agree that the resources available to the Fund should be enhanced and on no account be permitted to decline below their current levels in real terms.

Health

15. We are committed to combating HIV/AIDS, malaria, tuberculosis and other infectious diseases which remain a threat to sustainable development. We recognise that diseases such as HIV/AIDS, malaria and tuberculosis are not only health problems but are also development issues. The high incidence of such diseases can also reverse the development process. We continue to believe that strong political leadership and education remain crucial components of the multi-sectoral response to combating HIV/AIDS. The threat from HIV/

AIDS is especially great in Sub-Saharan Africa, which has two-thirds of the world's 40 million persons living with HIV/AIDS, and in the Caribbean. We call for reforms at the national level to create effective health delivery systems, as well as adequate external support to achieve this. We welcome the recent World Trade Organisation agreement on affordable drugs and call for its interpretation and implementation in a manner that makes appropriate drugs available at low cost to poor countries.

Education

16. We affirm that education, whether formal or informal, is central to development in any society and is of the highest priority to the Commonwealth. In an increasingly divided and insecure world, education must play a crucial role for people, both young and old, for them to optimise their opportunities and to bridge divides.

17. We commend all efforts by Commonwealth organisations and agencies to develop greater education resources and to create an enabling environment to foster an enterprise culture. We encourage all governments, noting the value of distance education and the benefits of technology, to draw upon best practices throughout the Commonwealth and welcome the increased support for education in the Commonwealth through the new Centre for Commonwealth Education at Cambridge University.

Youth

18. We recognise that more than 50 per cent of the population of the Commonwealth is below 30 years of age. All Commonwealth efforts to achieve the MDGs must reflect this demographic reality by including young people in development and democracy.

Combating Illicit Trafficking in Human Beings

19. We recognise the growing problem of human trafficking, especially in women and children. We are committed to combating this scourge through international co-operation and we call on member countries which have not yet done so to ratify the UN Convention Against Transnational Organised Crime and Protocols.

Partnership for Peace and Prosperity

20. We strongly reaffirm our commitment to multilateralism, international co-operation, partnership, and productive working relationships between

government and civil society organisations. We also reaffirm our commitment to enhance global democracy, by ensuring that international institutions reflect the voice of their developing country members and are themselves models of good practice in democratic accountability, participation and transparency. We recognise that the Commonwealth as an association has distinctive strengths and comparative advantages that could be effectively utilised for the mutual benefit of member states. We therefore urge greater partnership within our community.

21. Furthermore we urge all countries to implement their commitments under the Monterrey Consensus and the Plan of Implementation of the World Summit on Sustainable Development.

22. We commend the African Union for taking the bold step to address development and good governance through the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD). In this regard, we support the Commonwealth Secretariat's activities in developing a comprehensive programme of assistance to support the efforts of Commonwealth countries in Africa.

23. We recognise that conflict and instability erode the prospects of development. We are therefore committed to help mobilise international support and resources for conflict prevention, resolution and management. We also commit ourselves to efforts to curb illicit trade in small arms and light weapons and to support prompt response in providing international assistance to conflict areas.

Conclusion

24. We urge the Commonwealth Secretary-General to direct resources to support the priorities identified in this Declaration. We also urge relevant Commonwealth Ministerial Meetings to give additional momentum to these priorities, and request the Secretary-General to provide a report on progress made to the next Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting.

*Aso Rock
Abuja*

8 December 2003

The Aso Rock Statement on Multilateral Trade

1. We, the Heads of Government of the Commonwealth, representing countries at all levels of development, reaffirm our commitment to a transparent, rules-based multilateral trading system. We recognise that such a system is in the interests of all countries, especially poor and vulnerable ones. We firmly believe that all countries have a right to full development. We are convinced that increasing trading opportunities is the most potent weapon to combat poverty. A multilateral trading system that is more responsive to the needs of developing countries is particularly important for the Commonwealth, a third of whose nearly 2 billion people live on less than a dollar a day and nearly two-thirds on less than 2 dollars a day. We, in the Commonwealth, therefore, attach the highest priority to delivering the Doha Development Agenda.

2. We regret the breakdown of negotiations in Cancún. We support immediate re-engagement by all concerned and urge that all show the flexibility and political courage necessary to deliver a balanced Round.

3. Positive outcomes are essential in the areas of agriculture, non-agricultural market access, services, implementation issues and special and differential treatment. On agriculture, we call for the early phasing out of all forms of export subsidies, substantial reductions in trade-distorting domestic support and significant improvements in market access. In the area of industrial products, tariff escalation and tariff peaks must be addressed, as they are a major impediment to development. Finally special and differential treatment must be made precise, effective and operational in all World Trade Organisation (WTO) agreements.

4. The time that remains for a successful conclusion of the Round is now very short. We are, therefore, dispatching a Ministerial mission to key capitals to call on major players and to urge them to negotiate positively and flexibly to re-invigorate the Doha Round and to move expeditiously to a final agreement.

5. We stress that multilateral trade liberalisation can offer significant benefits for all. We also recognise that poor and vulnerable countries should undertake trade liberalisation in ways that minimise transition costs and any negative impact on the poor. We recognise the special difficulties of developing economies, particularly of vulnerable small states that have lost trade preferences, and call for concerted action to assist them diversify their economies.

6. We call upon the Commonwealth Secretariat to strengthen its technical capacity-building programmes for developing Commonwealth countries to negotiate and implement their obligations within the WTO system, and of Commonwealth ACP countries in their negotiations with the European Union on Economic Partnership Agreements, in ways consistent with their development interests. Where there is significant Commonwealth consensus on particular trade issues, we pledge to bring the full weight of the association to bear on them.

*Aso Rock
Abuja*

8 December 2003

The Abuja Communiqué

Commonwealth Heads of Government met in Abuja, from 5 to 8 December 2003 at the invitation of President Olusegun Obasanjo of Nigeria, the host Head of Government and Chairman of the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM). Of the 51 countries that attended the Meeting, 38 were represented by their Heads of State or Government.

2. The Opening Ceremony of the Meeting included an address by Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II, Head of the Commonwealth.
3. Heads of Government conveyed their deep appreciation to the Government and people of Nigeria for the warm hospitality extended to them and for the excellent arrangements made for the Meeting. They also congratulated President Obasanjo for his leadership in chairing their Meeting.
4. Heads of Government welcomed the new Heads of Government who attended CHOGM for the first time.
5. Heads of Government received the Report of the Expert Group on Development and Democracy and the Report of the Secretary-General, which complemented the CHOGM Theme: 'Development and Democracy: Partnership for Peace and Prosperity'.
6. Heads of Government adopted the Aso Rock Declaration on the CHOGM Theme and also issued the Aso Rock Statement on Multilateral Trade, which is attached to the Declaration.

Fundamental Political Values

7. Heads of Government reaffirmed their commitment to the fundamental political values of the Commonwealth as set out in the Singapore and Harare Declarations and subsequent CHOGM Communiqués, and reinforced by the Millbrook Action Programme. They reiterated their commitment to non-racism, international peace and security, democracy, good governance, human rights, rule of law, the independence of the judiciary, freedom of expression, and a political culture that promotes transparency, accountability and economic development.
8. Heads of Government endorsed the recommendations of their Law Ministers on Commonwealth Principles on the accountability of and relationship between the three branches of government. They acknowledged that judicial independence and delivery of efficient justice services were important for

maintaining the balance of power between the Executive, Legislature and Judiciary.

9. Heads of Government expressed their full support for the good offices role of the Secretary-General in conflict prevention and resolution, and post-conflict reconstruction and development. They also expressed their continuing support for the Commonwealth Secretariat's work on strengthening democratic institutions, processes and culture. They acknowledged the value of election observation, provision of technical assistance and training and other activities. They welcomed the Secretariat's collaboration with the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association, the Commonwealth Local Government Forum and other relevant organisations to promote best democratic practice.

Commonwealth Ministerial Action Group on the Harare Declaration

10. Heads of Government received the Report of the Commonwealth Ministerial Action Group on the Harare Declaration (CMAG) covering its deliberations in the period since the Coolum CHOGM in 2002 and approved its recommendations in regard to Fiji Islands, Pakistan, Solomon Islands and Zimbabwe.

11. Heads of Government welcomed the commitment of the Government of Fiji Islands to abide by the decision of the Fiji Supreme Court on the constitutionality of the formation of Government and in this context looked forward to the Court's Session scheduled for May 2004. They requested the Secretary-General to continue to monitor the situation in Fiji Islands and provide appropriate technical assistance, as required, in pursuance of his good offices role.

12. Heads of Government welcomed the continuing progress in the development and growth of democratic institutions in Pakistan, as evident by the election of the National Assembly, the Senate and Provincial Assemblies, and the formation of democratic governments at the national and provincial levels. They also welcomed the positive measures taken for women's representation in Parliament, the representation of minorities and the determination to enhance public accountability and to end corruption. They noted that the outstanding issues in the Legal Framework Orders (LFOs) were an obstacle to Pakistan's full return to democracy.

13. Heads of Government hoped that the negotiations between the Government and the political parties on the outstanding issues in the LFOs would be concluded successfully in the spirit of Commonwealth parliamentary practice and process and a comprehensive package would be passed in Parliament

in accordance with the Constitution, thus leading to the full restoration of democracy and enabling the lifting of Pakistan's suspension from the Councils of the Commonwealth. They requested the Secretary-General to continue to monitor developments and provide technical assistance, as might be required, to strengthen democratic institutions.

14. Heads of Government endorsed CMAG's decision to remove Solomon Islands from its agenda but continue to receive reports from the Secretary-General on developments in that country.

15. Heads of Government reconstituted the membership of CMAG for the next biennium as follows: The Bahamas, Canada, India, Lesotho, Malta, Samoa, Sri Lanka and United Republic of Tanzania. They further agreed that Nigeria would continue to be a member of CMAG in its capacity as the representative of the Chairperson in Office, as its ninth member.

Zimbabwe

16. Heads of Government adopted a CHOGM Statement on Zimbabwe on 7 December 2003, which is attached.

Belize

17. Heads of Government welcomed the Agreement to establish a Transition Process and Confidence-Building Measures of February 2003, signed by Belize, Guatemala and the Organisation of American States (OAS). They called on all parties involved to honour their commitments under the Agreement, in particular taking the proposals for a just and definitive resolution of the territorial dispute to popular referenda in both countries.

18. Heads of Government reiterated their full support for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Belize. They commended the Group of Friends of the Process and expressed appreciation for the constructive role played by the OAS in facilitating a peaceful settlement of the dispute. They noted that the proposals for a final settlement contain a provision for the establishment of a development fund to be used for the benefit of both countries and urged member states to contribute to it generously.

19. They mandated the Secretary-General to convene the Ministerial Committee on Belize whenever necessary.

Cyprus

20. Heads of Government welcomed the signing by the Republic of Cyprus of the Accession Treaty to the European Union on 16 April 2003 and expressed

the wish that a solution of the Cyprus problem would be found before 1 May 2004 that would allow a reunited Cyprus to become a member of the European Union.

21. Heads of Government reaffirmed their support for the independence, sovereignty, unity and territorial integrity of Cyprus.

22. They regretted that the latest effort of the United Nations Secretary-General, under his mission of good offices in Cyprus, had collapsed at The Hague meeting on 10 March 2003 due to the negative approach taken by the Turkish Cypriot leader.

23. They further regretted that the Turkish Cypriot leader continued to maintain the same negative approach, thus hindering the resumption of negotiations based on the Annan Plan.

24. Recalling and reaffirming previous UN Security Council Resolutions and reaffirming their previous Communiqués on Cyprus, Heads of Government called upon all parties concerned and in particular Turkey and the Turkish Cypriot leadership to co-operate fully with the UN Secretary-General so as to enable the early resumption of substantive negotiations based on the UN Secretary-General's proposals, aimed at the conclusion of a just, lasting and functional settlement consistent with relevant UN Security Council Resolutions.

Guyana

25. Heads of Government reaffirmed their support for the maintenance by Guyana of its territorial integrity and sovereignty and the unimpeded development by Guyana of the natural resources of its entire territory. They noted that the Commonwealth Ministerial Group on Guyana had met in September 2003 and recognised the important role of this Group in support of Guyana.

26. Heads of Government expressed satisfaction at the recent meeting between the Foreign Ministers of Guyana and Venezuela and the UN Secretary-General, noting that it was a positive indication of the continued commitment by both Guyana and Venezuela to discussions under the aegis of the UN Secretary-General aimed at the peaceful solution of the controversy.

Small Arms and Light Weapons

27. Heads of Government expressed concern at the continued destabilising accumulation and proliferation of small arms, ammunition and light weapons, which had contributed to the intensity and duration of armed conflicts as well

as to international terrorism. They noted that many Commonwealth governments were adversely affected by the uncontrolled flow and misuse of these lethal weapons. They expressed concern that the spread of small arms threatens national, regional and global security and impedes basic social and economic development. They also noted that the challenge posed by the proliferation of small arms involves security, humanitarian, health and development dimensions.

28. Heads of Government supported the adoption of the United Nations Programme of Action on the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in all its Aspects that emerged from the 2001 UN Conference on Small Arms. They urged member states to support further implementation of the programme at the international, state and regional levels to curb and prevent their illicit production, trafficking and misuse.

Landmines

29. Heads of Government recalled the progress made in addressing the global landmines problem through the Comprehensive Framework for Mine Action provided by the Ottawa Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on their Destruction. They urged all countries that are in a position to do so to accede to the Convention.

International Criminal Court

30. Heads of Government of those member countries that have ratified the Rome Statute establishing the International Criminal Court urged other states, which have not yet done so, to accede to the Rome Statute in a timely manner.

Terrorism

31. Heads of Government received the Report of the Commonwealth Committee on Terrorism (CCT) and endorsed its recommendations. They recalled their Statement on Terrorism of 25 October 2001 and reiterated their strong condemnation of all acts of terrorism, with the consequent tragic loss of human life and damage to political, economic and social stability. They emphasised that terrorism can never be justified and continues to constitute a threat to all countries and peoples, irrespective of religion, nationality, tradition or ideology. They agreed that the war against terrorism cannot be won by military force and that comprehensive measures against terrorism require building bridges within and across communities of diverse faiths and cultures

as well as addressing economic and social disparities and injustice. They agreed that the Commonwealth is ideally positioned to encourage activities to address these issues.

32. Heads of Government decided to work together as a diverse community of nations to individually and collectively take concerted and resolute action to eradicate terrorism.

33. They called upon member states to increase co-operation and assistance through consultation, information sharing, training and capacity-building in counter-terrorism activities and to implement measures to prevent the financing of terrorist acts. They also called upon member states to support the early conclusion of the Comprehensive Convention Against International Terrorism.

34. Heads of Government encouraged all member governments to continue to follow steps outlined in the Commonwealth Plan of Action and to implement UN Security Council Resolution 1373. In this context they also commended the work of the Commonwealth Secretariat in assisting member countries. They agreed that the CCT be maintained as a Standing Committee, which could be convened by the Secretary-General or at the request of member governments, as and when required.

35. Heads of Government recognised that travel advisories associated with the threat of terrorism have a negative impact on the economies of a number of member states, including the loss of tourism revenue and the burden of increased costs of implementing new security measures. Noting that national travel advisories are issued by certain countries for the protection of their citizens, they urged that the information about the perceived threat should be conveyed in advance to the countries concerned and in co-operation with them, measures should be taken to counteract the threat of terrorism. They noted that those countries which issue such advisories indicate that it is not always possible to consult in advance.

World Economic Situation

36. Heads of Government noted that the global economic recovery continues to be fragile and subject to many risks. In view of the fact that one-third of the Commonwealth's nearly 2 billion people live on less than US\$1 per day and nearly two-thirds on under US\$2 per day, they stressed that a concerted effort is required for sustainable broad-based growth in all areas to enable countries to achieve the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and cope with the challenges of poverty reduction and investment in human development. They underlined the importance of nationally owned poverty reduction strategies

and urged that policy action in developing countries be matched by developed countries providing more effective development assistance.

37. In order to support the necessary monitoring of progress and removing impediments to the achievement of the MDGs, Heads of Government stressed the need for action to implement all the elements of the Monterrey Consensus and the related Commonwealth Action Plan, as well as the need to examine constructively all proposals for securing a further increase in aid commitments. In particular, Heads of Government welcomed further elaboration of the initiative for an International Finance Facility and looked forward to the consideration of this or other similar options.

38. Heads of Government called for the timely implementation of the Brussels Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries (LDCs) for the Decade 2001-2010, adopted at the Third UN Conference on LDCs in May 2001.

Multilateral Trade Issues

39. Heads of Government reaffirmed their commitment to a transparent, rules-based multilateral trading system and called for an immediate resumption of the WTO multilateral trade negotiations. They urged all parties to show the flexibility and political will necessary to achieve positive results in the areas of agriculture, non-agricultural market access, special and differential treatment and all other areas mandated in the Doha Development Agenda. They reiterated the need to build up the capacity of developing countries, and particularly the least developed, small and vulnerable WTO members, to negotiate more effectively and to implement their obligations within the WTO system.

Debt Relief

40. Heads of Government called on international financial institutions to adopt a broader and more flexible approach to debt relief, designed to achieve long-term debt sustainability and release resources particularly for health and education.

41. Heads of Government reaffirmed their commitment to a successful HIPC Initiative, and recognised that some HIPCs, particularly conflict-affected countries, face a continued challenge in reaching decision point and require a flexible approach to address their special problems. They called on all non-Paris Club creditors that are not yet participating in this initiative to do so. Heads of Government also called for topping up to be applied so that HIPCs achieve a sustainable exit from their debt burden at their completion points.

42. Heads of Government stressed that long-term debt sustainability for poor countries requires sound debt management, improved market access, more financing in the form of grants and consideration of new arrangements for concessionary contingency finance.

Investment

43. Heads of Government stressed the importance of developing the capacity to produce internationally competitive goods and services to take advantage of the opportunities generated by globalisation. They recognised the importance of private capital flows in promoting the development of such capacity and expressed disappointment at the difficulties that poor and vulnerable economies were experiencing in attracting such flows, even when they had implemented wide ranging reform programmes. They called for innovative and cost-effective ways of utilising official resources to promote private capital flows to pre-emerging markets.

44. In this connection, Heads of Government noted the progress made by the Commonwealth Secretariat in examining the feasibility of proposals to address the special difficulties faced by small, vulnerable economies and LDCs in attracting investment and welcomed the interest expressed by commercial banks, international financial institutions, regional development banks and other development partners in exploring more effective ways to promote domestic and foreign investment in such economies, and in developing a new 'Small and Vulnerable Economies Facility', to be launched initially in the Pacific region. They called upon the Secretariat to continue to work towards developing similar cost-effective facilities for other regions of the Commonwealth.

Strengthening Financial Systems

45. Heads of Government welcomed the fact that the recent meeting of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) Global Forum focused on the issue of a level playing field and stressed that the way forward required a satisfactory resolution of this issue. They emphasised the importance of tax and fiscal sovereignty, transparency and inclusiveness in the dialogue between OECD and international financial centres in non-OECD jurisdictions. They urged the Commonwealth to remain engaged on this issue and requested the Secretariat to support the affected jurisdictions to mobilise assistance to meet international standards, strengthen and deepen their financial sectors and diversify their economies.

Combating Corruption

46. Heads of Government welcomed the recent adoption of the United Nations Convention Against Corruption and requested member states to sign and ratify it. They noted that systemic corruption, extortion and bribery undermine good governance. They called for enhanced mutual co-operation in the repatriation of illegally acquired public funds and assets to the countries of their origin in accordance with the provisions of the Convention.

International Economic Co-operation

47. Heads of Government appreciated the need for constructive dialogue and co-operation to achieve sustainable development. They welcomed the outcomes of the International Conference on Financing for Development and urged implementation and follow up to the outcomes of this conference.

New Partnership for Africa's Development

48. Heads of Government reaffirmed their strong support for the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD), which was internationally accepted as a socio-economic and political framework to support the development efforts of countries in Africa. They requested the Secretariat to bring its various programmes in Africa within the NEPAD framework and strengthen its partnership with NEPAD, both in the delivery and implementation of its Action Plan for the benefit of African member countries and specifically to promote the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals.

Sustainable Development

49. Heads of Government welcomed the outcomes of the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) and pledged to work towards the full and effective implementation of Agenda 21, and the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation.

50. Heads of Government stressed that climate change is one of the greatest challenges facing Commonwealth member states and the wider international community. They undertook to continue efforts towards the conclusion of effective international approaches to climate change mitigation and reaffirmed Commonwealth support through technical assistance to address the adaptation concerns of small island and other states that are particularly vulnerable to global warming and sea level rise. They also supported the efforts under the Convention to Combat Desertification and the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation to address climate and drought concerns, particularly in Africa.

HIV/AIDS

51. Heads of Government highlighted the devastating impact of HIV/AIDS and the fundamental importance of confronting it in order to meet the Millennium Development Goals. They noted there were promising signs of a reduction in new cases in some countries and welcomed the political commitment and called for increased financial resources, including for the Global Fund to combat HIV/AIDS and other funds to combat malaria, tuberculosis and other communicable diseases.

52. Heads of Government acknowledged that many developing countries and particularly LDCs, small and vulnerable economies could not provide universal treatment to victims of HIV/AIDS without further access to concessionary financing. They also acknowledged that this goal will only be achieved if a broad range of partners accelerate and co-ordinate their efforts, and pledge to play their role in these efforts. They welcomed the recent agreement in the WTO on the manufacturing of life saving generic drugs in the developing countries under certain conditions and circumstances to help ensure the provision and availability of affordable drugs at low cost to poor developing countries.

53. Heads of Government re-emphasised the importance of a broad-based and balanced response to HIV/AIDS integrating prevention, care and treatment, and impact mitigation. They agreed that progress in fighting the global HIV/AIDS pandemic requires enhanced international effort and co-ordination.

Small States

54. Heads of Government received the Report of the Ministerial Group on Small States (MGSS) and endorsed its recommendations.

55. Heads of Government reaffirmed the Doha Mandate to integrate special and differential treatment into the international trading system. They emphasised the need for access to international development finance on concessionary terms to assist the sustainable development programmes of vulnerable and small states. They noted in this regard that there were also other countries that were not small states but whose proportion of world trade was similarly small and with whom small states could seek to find common cause and build partnership.

56. Heads of Government noted further that terrorism and its consequences had placed additional burdens on small states in the form of high costs of security and possible loss of tourism revenue, including the impact on their

national budgets in the form of diversion of funds away from the critical areas of development. They cautioned that the current efforts in dealing with terrorism and the significant level of resources, which are being allocated to fight it should not derail their development agenda. Heads of Government therefore called on the international community to assist with appropriate additional resources in the context of supporting the global development agenda.

57. Heads of Government noted that small states were increasingly vulnerable to the spread of HIV/AIDS and other communicable diseases. They called on the international community to provide assistance in these areas.

58. Heads of Government stressed the importance of capacity-building and its retention in critical areas such as trade-related technical assistance in small states.

59. Heads of Government noted that global warming and climate change were life threatening to small island states and other low lying areas. They confirmed their full support for the Barbados Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States and looked forward to the contribution of the Commonwealth, the World Bank and other members of the UN system and other regional organisations to the preparations for the Review of Implementation of the Plan of Action to take place at the International Meeting in Mauritius in August 2004. They urged Commonwealth members and other states to prepare for and participate in this conference.

60. Heads of Government commended the Commonwealth Secretariat for the work done on small states, particularly in implementing the recommendations of the 2000 Commonwealth Secretariat/World Bank Joint Task Force on Small States and the New Agenda for Commonwealth Work on Small States, which was endorsed by them at their last meeting in Coolum in 2002. They called on the Secretariat to continue to strengthen small states' representation in the WTO and continue its work on the OECD initiative. They also called on the Secretariat to strengthen the Commonwealth's partnerships and collaboration with individual organisations and institutions to advance the small states agenda.

61. Heads of Government stressed the importance of market access for the traditional products of small and vulnerable states to enhance their export earnings. In this context they noted the concern of South Pacific states on the economic implications of a ban on Kava imports by some developed countries and urged that this issue be resolved expeditiously.

Role of Business

62. Heads of Government received the Report of the Commonwealth Business Council (CBC) and the Commonwealth Business Forum and noted the recommendations, particularly for establishing Business-Government Partnerships for Removing Practical Obstacles to Wealth and Job Creation – ‘The Abuja Manifesto’ – and for the CBC’s Joint Action Plan for Business and Government: Enabling Corporate Citizenship for Sustainable Development.

63. Heads of Government commended the work of the CBC in mobilising investment, removing barriers to trade, promoting good corporate governance, creating a good environment for business and investment, and bridging the digital divide. They particularly welcomed the CBC initiatives for developing an investment index to contribute to significant investment flows to developing countries on a fully commercial and sustainable basis; supporting multilateral trade negotiations on the progressive liberalisation of trade in goods and services in both developed and developing countries; and establishing and developing common standards and codes of ethics for governance and accountability in government, the private sector and civil society.

Commonwealth Functional Co-operation

64. Heads of Government considered the various aspects of Commonwealth functional co-operation and endorsed the attached Report of the Committee of the Whole (COW). They also acknowledged the valuable work of other Commonwealth organisations, which report to them through the COW.

65. They requested the Secretary-General to submit a Report to the 2005 CHOGM on the respective roles of the Commonwealth Partnership for Technology Management (CPTM) and the Commonwealth Business Council, reaffirming the linkages between CPTM, CBC and the Commonwealth.

66. Heads of Government noted that the role of the Commonwealth Fund for Technical Co-operation (CFTC) in providing technical assistance to member countries was crucial in the delivery of the Secretariat’s programmes. They stressed that any diminution in the CFTC below £20 million could seriously undermine the Fund.

Commonwealth of Learning

67. Heads of Government received with appreciation the Report of the Commonwealth of Learning (COL) and accepted its recommendations, in

particular, the proposal of the Conference of Commonwealth Education Ministers for a Commonwealth Virtual University for Small States. They noted COL's request for resources to finance its three-year Strategic Plan.

Commonwealth Foundation

68. Heads of Government received the Report of the Commonwealth Foundation and commended its work in developing civil society's engagement and partnerships with governments in the Commonwealth. They expressed appreciation for the positive contribution of civil society in advocacy and capacity-building for democracy and sustainable development in member countries. They noted the Foundation's request to review the level of assessed contributions to finance the increasing programme of activities undertaken by the Foundation.

High Level Review Group Recommendations

69. Heads of Government endorsed the Report of the Commonwealth Intergovernmental Committee to Review the Mandates of Commonwealth Organisations and urged member countries to implement its various recommendations. With regard to the Commonwealth Partnership for Technology Management, Heads of Government noted CPTM's successful activities in fulfilment of its mandate and its preferred mode of delivery through advisory country-tasks and smart partnership national and international dialogues in enhancing development, democracy, and prosperity. They recognised CPTM's initiatives in establishing the Endowment Fund and contributions to this Fund from Commonwealth governments and the private sector to enable it to undertake enhanced activities that benefit the Commonwealth.

Meeting of Commonwealth Tourism Ministers

70. Heads of Government encouraged member countries to attend the Meeting of Commonwealth Tourism Ministers in Malaysia from 18 to 21 March 2004.

Election of the Secretary-General

71. Heads of Government re-elected the Rt Hon Don McKinnon as the Commonwealth Secretary-General for a second term, 2004-2008.

Next Meeting

72. Heads of Government accepted the offer of Malta to host the next CHOGM in 2005. They also agreed that the 2007 CHOGM would be hosted by Uganda.

Abuja

8 December 2003

CHOGM Statement on Zimbabwe

Commonwealth Heads of Government discussed the situation in Zimbabwe. They agreed to establish a Committee consisting of the Heads of Government of Australia, Canada, India, Jamaica, Mozambique and South Africa to examine the issue of Zimbabwe and make recommendations to leaders at their Retreat on the way forward. It was agreed that the Prime Minister of Jamaica would be the Chairman of the Committee.

In discussing the issue the Committee was guided by the following considerations:

- The commitment of all Commonwealth countries to adhere to the Principles embodied in the Harare Declaration and the need to address the issues raised in the Marlborough House Statement of 19 March 2002.
- The earnest desire to facilitate the early return of Zimbabwe to the Councils of the Commonwealth.
- The determination to promote national reconciliation in Zimbabwe.
- Deep concern for the people of Zimbabwe and the desire to assist towards a return to normalcy and economic prosperity.

The Committee also welcomed the tireless efforts of President Obasanjo, President Mbeki, President Chissano and others to encourage and assist the process of national reconciliation and urged them not to relent.

It reaffirmed the importance of supporting and consolidating democracy, ensuring peace and harmony, and promoting development and growth in Zimbabwe.

Heads of Government endorsed the Committee's recommendations and decided as follows:

- Heads of Government affirmed the Commonwealth's commitment to encourage and assist the process of national reconciliation.
- Heads of Government mandated the Chairperson-in-Office, assisted by the Commonwealth Secretary-General, to engage with the parties concerned to encourage and facilitate continued progress and the return of Zimbabwe to the Councils of the Commonwealth and, in this regard, express support for the intention of the Chairperson-in-Office to visit Zimbabwe at an early opportunity.

- At an appropriate time when the Chairperson-in-Office believed sufficient progress had been made, he would consult the Committee.
- Provided there were consensus in the Committee that sufficient progress had been made on the issues of concern, the Chairperson-in-Office would consult with Commonwealth leaders on the return of Zimbabwe to the Councils of the Commonwealth.

Abuja

7 December 2003

Commonwealth Functional Co-operation: Report of the Committee of the Whole

The Committee of the Whole met on 12 November 2003 in Marlborough House, London, to consider Commonwealth functional co-operation.

Implementation of the High Level Review Group Recommendations

2. The Committee noted the progress made in the implementation of the High Level Review Group recommendations and urged that work in this area is continued and reflected in the Commonwealth Secretariat's Strategic Plan 2004-2008.

3. The Committee recalled that at the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM) in Coolumb, Australia, in March 2002, Heads of Government endorsed the recommendation of the High Level Review Group to create the Commonwealth Intergovernmental Committee to Review the Mandates of Commonwealth Organisations (CIC). The Committee commended the work of the CIC; acknowledged that the CIC Report reflects a consensus amongst member governments and invited Heads of Government to consider endorsing the CIC Report. The Committee called on all Commonwealth organisations concerned to fully implement the resulting recommendations.

Role of Board of Governors for Preparation of CHOGMs

4. The Committee recommended that in years in which a CHOGM takes place, the Board of Governors of the Commonwealth Secretariat meet as the Committee of the Whole to undertake oversight of preparations for CHOGM. It would meet in London about a month before CHOGM for this purpose. It would meet again at CHOGM to draft the Communiqué. These meetings would be chaired by the Senior Official of the host government, assisted by the Chairman of the Board of Governors.

Commonwealth Fund for Technical Co-operation (CFTC)

5. The Committee welcomed the progress made in the implementation of the High Level Review Group recommendations on the development work of the Commonwealth, especially those activities funded by the CFTC. It invited Heads of Government to note that the resources available to the CFTC remain still considerably short of the commitment made at Millbrook in 1995 to restore

them to their 1991/92 levels in real terms. The Committee welcomed the increased pledges to the CFTC from donor countries as well as a number of developing member states. It noted the view of the Secretary-General that any diminution of the CFTC below £20 million would seriously undermine the Fund.

6. Consequently, the Committee invited Heads of Government to reaffirm their commitment to their 1995 Millbrook decision, and to ensure that while urging their augmentation, the current level of resources within CFTC is maintained in real terms to enable adequate provision of technical assistance to member countries for capacity-building, good governance, deepening democracy, assistance with the development and drafting of new laws, gender equality and strengthening economic management in niche areas.

7. The Committee endorsed the Secretariat's regional consultative meetings with member governments to determine the future focus of the CFTC-funded programmes of assistance and how best it could contribute to the existing development architecture and the delivery of Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) over the Secretariat's next four-year strategic plan. The Committee also welcomed efforts by the Secretariat to strengthen the quality, sustainability and development impact of its work by employing a results-based management approach. As part of efforts aimed at improving the management, impact and co-ordination of Commonwealth assistance, the Committee requested governments to locate their CFTC's Primary Contact Point in a Ministry with responsibility for determining national development priorities.

8. The Committee noted that considerable attention has been paid to developing public sector institutions in member countries to better cope with the demands of globalisation and prevailing development challenges. Equally, the Commonwealth Service Abroad Programme (CSAP) has continued to attract extensive interest, and enabled the Secretariat to further expand the appeal and people-centred nature of its package of development assistance.

9. The Committee invited Heads of Government to note further the Secretariat's initiatives to continue to expand partnerships with international and regional organisations and other groupings to carry forward its ongoing programmes. It also requested them to call on the Secretariat to continue to support the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) framework for promoting sustainable development in Africa.

Poverty Eradication and Millennium Development Goals (MDGs)

10. The Committee invited Heads of Government to note their appreciation for the Commonwealth's contribution to the achievement of the MDGs, in

particular, poverty eradication through its technical assistance programmes in developing member countries. It recalled that Commonwealth Finance Ministers had welcomed further elaboration of the initiative of the United Kingdom's Chancellor of the Exchequer for an International Finance Facility and looked forward to the further consideration of this or other similar options. The Committee also called for ongoing monitoring of progress, identification of impediments to the achievement of the MDGs and the development of recommendations for action at national, regional and international levels. The Committee further invited Heads of Government to engage in the United Nations Secretary-General's review of progress against the MDGs in 2005, and to renew the commitment to achieving the MDGs through sustainable economic growth, particularly in least developed countries.

Sustainable Development

11. The Committee invited Heads of Government to call for an effective and adequately financed follow-up on the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) Plan of Implementation. It also invited them to reaffirm the Commonwealth's commitment to this process through the thematic cluster approach adopted at CSD-11 (UN Commission on Sustainable Development, 11th Session) to support continued high-level dialogue and exchange of experience to accelerate the attainment of sustainable development and the deeper integration of the three pillars of sustainable development; to encourage the Secretariat to support the efforts of its developing member states in engaging with the partnerships announced at WSSD; and to strengthen collaboration with regional and sub-regional institutions.

12. The Committee noted the progress that the Iwokrama International Rain Forest Centre in Guyana has made in developing a programme for conserving and sustainably utilising tropical rainforest resources, and ensuring its future financial viability. Heads of Government are requested to encourage member states to continue to build on the commitments made at the WSSD to promote sustainable forest management and to address issues of forest law enforcement, governance and trade. The Committee noted the importance of the Secretariat continuing to build consensus and strengthen co-operation in this area of work according to its comparative advantage.

13. The Committee encouraged the Commonwealth Secretariat's efforts to assist member governments to address the pressing issues covered by the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. Member states which have ratified the Kyoto Protocol urged those that have not yet done so to ratify the Protocol in a timely manner. It also reaffirmed the need for the

Commonwealth Secretariat to continue to provide technical assistance to address the adaptation concerns of Small Island and other states that are vulnerable to global warming and sea level rise.

14. The Committee noted the entry into force of the Biosafety Protocol.

15. The Committee called on member states who have not yet done so, to consider joining the Johannesburg Coalition of countries which had adopted the way forward on renewable energy and on the implementation of sustainable development.

Debt Management and Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC)

16. The Committee invited Heads of Government to call for the speeding up of the process for HIPC reaching completion point and for broadening the approach to ensure debt sustainability. The Committee noted with satisfaction the continued assistance provided by the Secretariat in the area of debt recording and management in collaboration with other international agencies. The Committee further welcomed the advocacy and consensus-building work undertaken by the Commonwealth HIPC Ministerial Forum and encouraged its efforts towards achieving HIPC's sustainable exit from debt and attainment of the MDGs. It advocated the widening and deepening of the HIPC process in consultation with other parties. The Committee also called on Heads of Government to support the provision of additional resources through topping-up at the completion point under HIPC and more generally, to address the issue of unsustainable debt.

Multilateral Trade Issues/Trade-related Capacity-Building

17. The Committee attached high priority to the Secretariat's work in the area of trade-related technical assistance in the aftermath of the disappointing outcome of Cancún and the need for progress in the negotiations to achieve a successful outcome to the Doha Development Round. It also noted with particular satisfaction the Secretariat's efforts to build the negotiating capacities of member states, especially the Least Developed Countries (LDCs) and Small Economies, to address the challenges of globalisation and liberalisation; to provide technical support to devise effective trade policies; to strengthen their trade policy institutions; to provide adequate services to LDCs and small economies on accession to the World Trade Organisation (WTO); and to strengthen their capacity to overcome new trade restrictions.

18. The Committee invited Heads of Government to note the valuable role played by the Trade and Investment Access Facility in funding the Secretariat's

programmes for building capacity in member countries; and called for the continuation of technical support during the period of the Doha Round and the Cotonou process. The Committee also requested Heads of Government to welcome European Union support (17 million Euros) to Commonwealth efforts for capacity-building in trade policy formulation and trade negotiating skills in ACP (African-Caribbean-Pacific) countries.

Strengthening Financial Systems

19. The Committee invited Heads of Government to support an inclusive multilateral process aimed at improving and strengthening financial and banking standards in financial centres. The Committee took note of the current work by the Secretariat to facilitate multilateral consultations between all interested parties and called for efforts to strengthen capacity in this area, and in particular in the supervision and regulation of financial centres.

20. The Committee noted that Commonwealth developing countries have benefited from technical assistance programmes in the areas of overall financial system management and governance, specific problems in the banking system, and dealing with development of emerging securities and insurance markets.

Combating Money Laundering

21. The Committee reaffirmed its support for the assistance the Secretariat is providing to implement the Financial Action Task Force recommendations on combating money laundering and terrorist financing. It requested Heads of Government to urge the Secretariat to continue supporting national, regional and sub-regional anti-money laundering initiatives.

Private Sector Development and New Opportunities for Investment

22. The Committee requested Heads of Government to note the Secretariat's activities to enhance capital flows and new opportunities for private direct investment in developing Commonwealth countries. The Committee particularly welcomed the work of the Secretariat in strengthening the capacity of member countries for private sector development and good corporate governance. The Committee also noted that the ability of a number of member countries to benefit from globalisation is constrained by low foreign direct investment. It called for innovative and cost-effective ways of promoting private flows into economies with 'endowed handicaps'.

23. The Committee also expressed its support for the Secretariat's activities which contribute to the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD)

framework in supporting the development efforts of Commonwealth countries in Africa by encouraging participatory processes and developing a programme of assistance.

Commonwealth Private Investment Initiative

24. The Committee invited Heads of Government to note the progress made since their Meeting in Coolumb, Australia, in March 2002, in launching the pan-Commonwealth Africa Partners and to support its ongoing capital mobilisation efforts. The Committee also expressed its support for the early establishment of second generation funds for South Asia and the Pacific.

Human Settlements

25. The Committee requested Heads of Government to note the establishment of ComHABITAT, the support structure for the Commonwealth Consultative Group on Human Settlements, as a collaborative partnership involving the Commonwealth Secretariat, the Commonwealth Foundation, the Commonwealth Human Ecology Council, the Commonwealth Local Government Forum and other governmental and non-governmental agencies.

Education

26. The Committee recalled that Heads of Government were requested by the Commonwealth Ministers of Education at their Conference in Edinburgh, UK, in October 2003, to reaffirm their commitment to and support for upholding the right of their citizens to education as a foundation for human development and the achievement of the MDGs. The Committee therefore requested Heads of Government to consider the message from this Conference and invited them to endorse the Edinburgh Action Plan which outlines ways of closing the gap in access, inclusion and achievement in education in the Commonwealth.

27. The Committee also invited Heads of Government to welcome the decision of the Commonwealth Institute to establish a Centre for Commonwealth Education in partnership with Cambridge University as a new resource supporting the development of primary and secondary education across the Commonwealth. The Committee urged Heads of Government to endorse the establishment of this Centre.

Health

28. The Committee drew the attention of Heads of Government to the message from Commonwealth Ministers of Health from their meeting in Geneva, Switzerland, on 18 May 2003. The Committee invited Heads of

Government to support building responsive health systems to deliver essential health care and using new strategies to increase the health workforce, including implementation of the Commonwealth Code of Practice for the International Recruitment of Health Workers. The Committee also invited Heads of Government to facilitate the multi-sectoral response to the many elements of HIV/AIDS, which remains a threat to sustainable development, and to recognise that the empowerment of the vulnerable members of society, especially youth and women, is critical to mitigating the effects of HIV/AIDS.

29. In this context, the Committee noted with satisfaction the ongoing co-operation between the Commonwealth Secretariat and the UN, and offered its support to the outcome of the 2003 UN General Assembly High Level Meeting on HIV/AIDS held in New York in September 2003. The Committee also welcomed the recent agreement in the WTO on the manufacturing of life saving generic drugs in the developing countries under certain conditions and circumstances. It recommended that the Commonwealth support the integration of traditional and complementary medicines into the health care systems.

Gender

30. The Committee invited Heads of Government to reaffirm their commitment to mainstreaming gender equality in all sectors and at all levels of Commonwealth policy-making, planning and implementation. The Committee also invited Heads of Government to reaffirm their commitment to gender equality and the implementation of the 1995 Commonwealth Plan of Action on Gender and Development (PoA), and note the Secretary-General's Report on the Implementation of the PoA and its Update (2000-2005). The Committee invited Heads of Government to support the efforts that contribute to poverty eradication amongst women. It also drew the attention of Heads of Government to the development of a new Commonwealth Gender Plan of Action (2005-2015), to be finalised by Women's Affairs Ministers at their Seventh Meeting in 2004 and subsequently presented to the UN Fifth World Conference on Women in 2005.

31. The Committee requested Heads of Government to note the progress made by certain Commonwealth member countries and the Secretariat in advancing gender equality in the areas of globalisation and macroeconomic policies, poverty eradication, the multilateral trading system and the informal economy, and the MDGs; as well as increasing women's participation in: conflict prevention, mediation, resolution and post-conflict reconstruction activities; promoting women's human rights; and working towards the Commonwealth target of at least 30 per cent representation of women in political and public decision-making.

Accountability and the Relationship between the Three Branches of Government

32. The Committee requested Heads of Government to note the work of Law Ministers in the development of principles to provide, in accordance with the laws and customs of each Commonwealth country, an effective framework for the implementation, by governments, parliaments and judiciaries, of the Commonwealth's fundamental values. The Committee invited Heads of Government to welcome the contribution made by the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association, the Commonwealth Magistrates' and Judges' Association, the Commonwealth Lawyers' Association, the Commonwealth Legal Education Association and other Commonwealth organisations to further the Commonwealth Harare Principles, through the development of the Latimer House Guidelines.

Law and Development

33. The Committee drew the attention of Heads of Government to the message from Law Ministers from their meeting in 2002.

34. The Committee reaffirmed the importance of a strong legal framework and environment to support and foster development. The Committee endorsed the work of the Secretariat on the enhancement of democracy by the elimination of legal barriers to development and supported continued work which concentrates on a range of fundamental legal issues concerning land and succession, competition and company law and access to justice.

35. The Committee invited Heads of Government to note the contribution made by Law Ministers to the advancement of core Commonwealth values, and that regular meetings were essential to maintain progress in carrying forward the priorities identified by Heads of Government. The Committee invited Heads of Government to endorse the recommendation that Law Ministers' Meetings continue to be a regular feature of Commonwealth activity. The Committee also requested Heads of Government to note that Law Ministers and Attorneys-General of Small Commonwealth Jurisdictions have expressed a wish to meet as a separate group outside the plenary meeting of Law Ministers.

Combating Corruption

36. The Committee invited Heads of Government to reaffirm their commitment to a comprehensive national and international strategy against

corruption. The Committee invited Heads of Government to welcome the successful conclusion of the negotiations for a comprehensive UN Convention against Corruption which contains a wide range of provisions to strengthen international efforts to fight corruption. The Committee also invited Heads of Government to encourage signature, ratification and implementation of the Convention by the member countries.

37. The Committee welcomed the ongoing work of the Secretariat on implementation of the Framework for Commonwealth Principles on Promoting Good Governance and Combating Corruption. The Committee requested Heads of Government to commend the efforts being made at national, regional and sub-regional levels to fight corruption. It supported Commonwealth action on corruption, in particular the co-operation of member states in securing the repatriation of illegally acquired funds and assets to their countries of origin in accordance with the UN Convention against Corruption.

International Criminal Court

38. The Committee noted the work of the Secretariat in helping interested member states who requested assistance with regard to adherence to the Rome Statute for the International Criminal Court. The Committee invited Heads of Government to acknowledge the strong Commonwealth representation among the elected judges of the International Criminal Court.

39. Member states which have ratified the Rome Statute urged those that have not yet done so to consider ratifying the Statute in a timely manner.

Human Rights

40. The Committee invited Heads of Government to note the enhanced profile of the Secretariat's human rights work and endorsed its programme in promoting human rights in the Commonwealth, emphasising that all human rights, social and economic as well as civil and political rights are universal, indivisible, interdependent and interrelated. The Committee welcomed the work done by the Secretariat, which includes building the capacity of national and regional human rights institutions; promoting 'best practice' standards based on Commonwealth values; and building awareness of and respect for international human rights instruments. The Committee invited Heads of Government to endorse and support projects which assist national human rights institutions with their mandates.

Youth Development

41. The Committee drew to the attention of Heads of Government the message from the Commonwealth Youth Ministers Meeting of May 2003, under the theme 'Young People: Development Partners against Poverty and HIV/AIDS'. The Committee invited Heads of Government to endorse the vision of the Commonwealth Youth Programme (CYP) for young people to maximise their participation in development and democracy, shaping the present and the future of their communities and societies. The Committee further invited Heads of Government to give greater priority to incorporating the CYP strategic programme areas into their national development plans, and to consider strategies for increased resource allocation, political commitment and democratic structures to facilitate youth development and alleviate poverty and combat the spread of HIV/AIDS among youth. The Committee noted the recommendations of the CIC related to the CYP.

Reducing the Digital Divide

42. The Committee invited Heads of Government to recognise the contribution of the Commonwealth Telecommunications Organisation (CTO), COMNET-IT, Commonwealth Business Council (CBC) and Commonwealth of Learning (COL), among others, in promoting capacity-building in information and communications technologies (ICTs) and to propose these as the lead agencies in the implementation of the Commonwealth Action Programme for the Digital Divide under the leadership of the Commonwealth Secretariat. It also urged them to support strategies to ensure that ICTs help the developmental priorities of Commonwealth countries and to renew their commitment to reducing the digital divide.

43. The Committee requested Heads of Government to encourage the Secretary-General to promote synergies and joint programme collaboration with the information society programmes of the European Union and other global and regional development networks.

44. The Committee further invited Heads of Government to endorse the recommendations of the Commonwealth Network Society Summit organised by the CBC in association with COMNET-IT and with the support of the Commonwealth Secretariat and to agree that the Commonwealth High-Level Forum on the Digital Divide be held in the run-up to CHOGM 2005. The Committee noted the recommendations of the CIC related to the Commonwealth Science Council.

Commonwealth Secretariat Budgets

45. The Committee requested Heads of Government to endorse the recommendations contained in the Commonwealth Secretariat paper on 'Strengthening the 1999 Durban Guidelines on Arrears to the Secretariat's Funds', paying particular attention to the situation of its smaller member countries who may be required to enter into negotiations with the Secretary-General to clear their outstanding arrears in order to benefit from technical assistance from the CFTC and continue to attend CHOGMs.

Civil Society and the Commonwealth Foundation

46. The Committee invited Heads of Government to commend the work done by the Commonwealth Foundation through its *Citizens and Governance Programme* to advance understanding and good practice in the field of inclusive governance and to promote partnership between governments, the private sector and civil society. In this respect, the Committee requested Heads of Government to note the highly successful civil society consultative processes organised by the Commonwealth Foundation for ministerial meetings and other priority Commonwealth activities. In this respect, the Committee noted with appreciation the dialogue which had taken place between officials and civil society representatives on 11 November 2003. The Committee recommended that such dialogues become part of all future processes.

47. The Committee invited Heads of Government to underline the importance of government-civil society organisation partnership in contributing to the Commonwealth-wide processes of both development and democracy.

48. The Committee invited Heads of Government to note with satisfaction the work of the Commonwealth Foundation in implementing the High Level Review Group mandate for increased co-operation between the Foundation and the Commonwealth Secretariat and closer alignment of the Foundation's governance structures and administrative planning and budgetary processes with those of the Secretariat.

49. In light of the Foundation's increasing activities and challenges, the Committee requested Heads of Government to acknowledge the need to review the level of assessed contributions made by member governments and to explore the possibility of other sources of funding with effect from the financial year 2004/2005. At the same time, the Committee also urged members who are in arrears to take every possible action to clear them. The Committee noted the recommendations of the CIC related to the Commonwealth Foundation.

Commonwealth of Learning (COL)

50. The Committee noted with appreciation the work of COL in contributing to new methodologies and practices for open, distance and technology-assisted learning and its impact on education, training and poverty eradication across the Commonwealth. The Committee also noted COL's proposal, requested by Education Ministers, to establish a Commonwealth Virtual University for Small States that can also serve the needs of other Commonwealth member countries. The Committee noted that COL had been directed to take leadership of this capacity-building initiative, collaborate with existing resource institutions in member countries, and work with the Commonwealth Secretariat to identify sources of funding to take this concept forward.

51. The Committee further noted COL's Three Year Strategic Plan for 2003-2006 which has been endorsed by Commonwealth Ministers of Education. The Committee noted the recommendations of the CIC on COL.

Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA)

52. The Committee invited Heads of Government to endorse the contribution of the CPA towards improving the quality and effectiveness of Commonwealth good governance through its various programmes. The Committee also invited Heads of Government to recognise the continuing need for the Commonwealth to achieve better outcomes by using the CPA's network of members, Parliaments and Legislatures to strengthen parliamentary performance and enhance public respect for democratic institutions in partnerships with governments, intergovernmental organisations and civil society.

Commonwealth Local Government Forum (CLGF)

53. The Committee invited Heads of Government to reaffirm the value they attach to elected local government as an important foundation for democracy and give constitutional and legal recognition to the sphere of local government and commend its role in the implementation of the Harare Commonwealth Declaration. The Committee further invited Heads of Government to welcome the report and recommendations of the 2003 Commonwealth Local Government Conference, *Local Government Service Partnerships*, and look forward to the development and dissemination by CLGF of good practice guidelines. The Committee invited Heads of Government to emphasise the need for resources from member governments, particularly from those that are not already contributing, to support CLGF programmes to consolidate local democracy, provide technical assistance and undertake, where requested, specified local elections monitoring, in partnership with the Commonwealth Secretariat.

Commonwealth Partnership for Technology Management (CPTM)

54. Heads of Government are invited to consider the content of CPTM's Report and take note of its successful activities in fulfilment of its mandate and its preferred mode of delivery through advisory country-task and smart partnership national and international dialogue in enhancing democracy, prosperity and development. They are also invited to recognise CPTM's initiatives in establishing the Endowment Fund and the contribution to this Fund from Commonwealth governments and the private sector to provide stability to CPTM's financial resources and enable it to undertake enhanced activities that benefit the Commonwealth. The Committee noted the recommendations of the CIC related to CPTM.

CHOGM Committee on Co-operation through Sport (CCCS)

55. The Committee requested Heads of Government to endorse the importance of sport as an effective instrument for development in Official Development Assistance and to promote increased sport participation, recognising the benefits of sport particularly as it relates to youth and youth at risk. The Committee invited Heads of Government to formally endorse the establishment of regular meetings of Commonwealth Ministers of Sport on the margins of the Commonwealth Games and the summer Olympic Games, as a collaborative means to address important issues in sport in the Commonwealth. The Committee endorsed the recommendation of the Executive Committee of the Commonwealth Secretariat's Board of Governors that the CCCS should be dissolved and reconfigured as an Advisory Body, reporting to Commonwealth Sports Ministers through the Secretary-General and promoting sport as a positive part of nation-building and human development, particularly youth development.

56. The Committee noted the recommendations of the CIC related to the CCCS, and encouraged donor support for the new sports body, which will be assisted by the Commonwealth Secretariat.

*Commonwealth Secretariat
Marlborough House, London*

12 November 2003

Commonwealth Ministerial Group on Small States

Chairperson's Report to CHOGM

Introduction

The Commonwealth Ministerial Group on Small States (MGSS) held its sixth meeting on Thursday, 4 December 2003. The meeting was chaired by the Hon Olu Adeniji, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Nigeria. Representatives from 38 member governments and observers from the World Bank, European Union and CARICOM attended the meeting.

2. Opening the meeting, the Secretary-General stated that the Commonwealth was the first organisation to recognise the unique challenges faced by small states and raise awareness about these problems on the international stage. He pointed out that small states had an important role to play in the Commonwealth and contributed to the internal balance of the organisation and to its global reach. The Secretary-General stressed that the work of the Commonwealth was aimed at assisting small states to stand their ground and benefit from globalisation. He also emphasised the special efforts that need to be made to assist small states to attract investment and create the capacity to produce internationally competitive goods and services. In addition he also stressed the importance of increased trading opportunities for these countries through strengthening the development dimension of the multilateral trading system.

3. The Secretary-General said that a country was more likely to achieve sustainable development if it inspired confidence and it would only inspire confidence if it was founded on a strong democratic culture. He recognised that democratic institutions were often more costly to establish and maintain for small states. He pointed out that this was why the Commonwealth provided support in promoting good governance and assisting in the process of civil service reform. He emphasised that small states enriched the Commonwealth and were an integral part of its diversity.

4. Following his election, the Chairperson welcomed delegates to Abuja and stressed the importance of the Commonwealth's agenda on small states, given that the majority of its membership fell into that category. He said that Nigeria had a direct interest in the development and prosperity of these

countries, in view of the fact that some of its neighbours and trading partners were small states.

Implementation of the Recommendations of the Joint Task Force and the New Agenda for Commonwealth Work on Small States

5. Ministers reviewed progress in implementing the recommendations of the April 2000 report of the Commonwealth Secretariat/World Bank Joint Task Force on Small States and the New Agenda for Commonwealth Work on Small States approved at their last meeting and endorsed by CHOGM 2002, in Coolum, Australia.

6. They welcomed the progress that has been made, and the continuing support of partner organisations in taking forward actions in the four key areas of challenge and opportunity for small states identified by the Task Force.

- Tackling volatility, vulnerability and natural disasters.
- Strengthening capacity.
- Addressing issues of transition to the changing global trade regime.
- Managing new opportunities and challenges from globalisation.

7. Ministers stressed that recent global developments had increased the vulnerability of small states. The events of 11 September 2001 and its aftermath had placed new demands on these countries and had created a new dimension to their vulnerability. The need to combat terrorism and address increased security risks has diverted resources away from development and falling tourism has resulted in increased indebtedness. Ministers recognised the need for small states to be supported in addressing the challenges related to this new more uncertain international environment. They urged the Secretariat to revisit the New Agenda for Commonwealth Work on Small States, agreed upon in Coolum, to ensure that it addresses these new issues.

8. Ministers stressed that new security-related risks had impacted particularly adversely on the tourism sector which was crucially important to many small states. In this connection, they welcomed the first meeting of Commonwealth Ministers responsible for tourism to be held, in Malaysia, in March 2004.

9. Ministers also reiterated that capacity-building and retention of expertise was a critical determinant of the sustainable development prospects of small states. They welcomed the assistance being provided by Commonwealth countries in this area. They also urged the Secretariat and its partner organisations to continue to place the highest priority on capacity-building activities in small states. Ministers emphasised that trade-related technical

assistance was particularly important in enabling these countries to manage the opportunities and challenges arising from globalisation. They also pointed out that handicaps such as size, remoteness, being land-locked and environmental vulnerability increased the costs of doing business in small economies. They called for innovative and cost-effective mechanisms to promote investment into such locations.

10. Ministers reaffirmed their commitment to a rules-based international trading system. They recognised that such a system was in the particular interest of small vulnerable economies. They, therefore, expressed concern at the breakdown of the negotiations in Cancún and called for immediate re-engagement by all concerned. Ministers stressed that all parties should demonstrate the flexibility and political will necessary to deliver a successful outcome to the Doha Round, emphasising the development dimension at its core.

The Review of the Barbados Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States

11. Ministers reviewed preparations for the International Meeting on the 1994 Barbados Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States (SIDS), which will take place in Mauritius, in August 2004, and the contributions the Commonwealth is making to this review. They confirmed their support for the Barbados Programme of Action. Great efforts have been made at the national level towards implementation, with notable progress achieved in the areas of legislative frameworks and in the ratification of relevant international instruments, including multilateral environmental agreements.

12. Ministers noted that a number of new challenges have emerged that are of concern to sustainable development in Commonwealth SIDS. They include security concerns in all their aspects – including food and water security and the difficulties that small states with large coastal areas face in meeting their obligations under UN Security Council Resolution 1373 – and the emergence of highly communicable and vector-borne diseases, such as SARS and HIV/AIDS. Recognising that the characteristics of SIDS make them a special case for sustainable development, the International Meeting will also be an opportunity to review implementation of approaches to reduce the inherent vulnerabilities of SIDS, and modalities of special treatment based on their structural disadvantages in terms of approaches to graduation and market access.

13. Ministers endorsed the support the Commonwealth Secretariat is providing to small states and regional organisations in their preparations for

the Review and International Meeting. They called on the Secretariat to work closely with member states and partner organisations in taking forward the outcomes of the International Meeting and in supporting initiatives of SIDS to achieve sustainable development.

The Kava Issue

14. Ministers noted the trade implications of a ban on Kava exports from four Pacific Island countries (Fiji Islands, Samoa, Tonga and Vanuatu) by many developed economies. They noted the negative impact that this has had on the economies of those countries and the concerns raised by the Pacific countries that the medical/scientific grounds on which the ban was based required further independent scientific research and consultation with the exporting countries. They called on Heads of Government to urge the EU and the other countries that have imposed the ban to work with the Kava exporting countries in finding expeditious solutions to the problems.

A New Framework for Strengthening Commonwealth Collaboration with Partner Organisations

15. Ministers reviewed the proposals set out in the Secretariat's paper on 'Working with Partner Organisations on Challenges Facing Small States: A Framework for Action'. They emphasised that the Commonwealth will often be most effective in advancing the small states agenda when it works in partnership with other relevant international institutions. Such collaboration is one of the most powerful ways in which the Commonwealth can pursue its agenda of action on small states issues. They stressed the continuing need for co-ordination and co-operation among all agencies. They welcomed active participation in their own discussions by observers from the World Bank and European Commission.

16. They endorsed the general framework proposed in the paper, and asked the Secretariat to take forward the specific proposals for strengthening collaboration with individual organisations. In particular, the Ministerial Group noted the proposed work programme and urged prioritisation on the Secretariat in developing such partnerships in future.

17. *Proposals for strengthening individual partnerships on small states issues.* The Group proposes that the Secretariat should:

- continue and strengthen further its well established partnership with the World Bank Group;

- explore the scope for developing closer links with the major relevant regional development banks;
- systematise a partnership with the International Monetary Fund;
- continue to support small member states and collaborate with the World Trade Organisation on its work programme on small economies;
- explore the scope for stronger collaboration with the EU on trade related issues;
- work with the UN Committee for Development Policy as it considers graduation policies and with UN agencies and member states on the current Review of the Barbados Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States, and on implementation of the review's conclusions;
- continue to track developments on the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development's (OECD) work on harmful tax practices, providing assistance to affected Commonwealth jurisdictions in their discussions with OECD; and
- continue to work with regional and other representative inter-governmental organisations, including the Alliance of Small Island States, in developing and strengthening practical approaches to tackling specific issues and more generally in developing and providing stronger advocacy on small states issues.

18. *Regular review of key partnerships.* The Secretariat should explore ways to review progress regularly, for example, by developing arrangements for consulting with key partner organisations at least once a year to review co-operation on small states issues. Ministers suggest that the results of such reviews be reported to the annual meeting of Commonwealth Finance Ministers.

19. *Strengthening the annual small states forum.* This annual forum, organised by the World Bank, continues to provide an excellent opportunity to review progress on the overall small states agenda together with key partner organisations. The Secretariat should continue to co-operate closely with the World Bank to make this annual event more productive.

20. These proposals are commended to Commonwealth Heads of Government for their approval.

*International Conference Centre
Abuja*

4 December 2003

List of Heads of Delegation

(*Indicates a Head of State or Head of Government)

Australia

The Hon John Howard*
Prime Minister

The Bahamas

The Hon Perry Christie*
Prime Minister

Bangladesh

The Hon M Morshed Khan
Minister of Foreign Affairs

Barbados

The Rt Hon Owen S Arthur*
Prime Minister

Belize

The Hon Said Musa*
Prime Minister

Botswana

HE Mr Festus G Mogae*
President

Brunei Darussalam

HRH Prince Mohamed Bolkiah
*Special Envoy of
HM Sultan of Brunei Darussalam*

Cameroon

HE Mr Paul Biya*
President

Canada

The Rt Hon Jean Chrétien*
Prime Minister

Cyprus

HE Mr Tassos Papadopoulos*
President

Dominica

The Hon Charles Savarin
*Minister of Tourism, Industry and
Enterprise Development*

Fiji Islands

The Hon Kaliopate Tavola
*Minister for Foreign Affairs and
External Trade*

The Gambia

HE Dr Alhaji Yahya A J J Jammeh*
President

Ghana

HE Mr John Agyekum Kufuor*
President

Grenada

HE Ms Ruth Elizabeth Rouse
*High Commissioner to the United
Kingdom*

Guyana

HE Mr Bharrat Jagdeo*
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India

The Hon Atal Bihari Vajpayee*
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Jamaica

The Rt Hon P J Patterson*
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HE Mr Anote Tong*
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The Hon Pakalitha Bethuel
Mosisili*
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Malawi

HE Dr Bakili Muluzi*
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The Hon Fathulla Jameel
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Malta

The Hon Dr Edward Fenech-Adami*
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The Hon Derog Gioura
Minister

New Zealand

The Rt Hon Helen Clark*
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Nigeria

HE Chief Olusegun Obasanjo*
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Papua New Guinea

The Rt Hon Sir Michael Somare*
Prime Minister

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The Hon Dr Denzil L Douglas*
Prime Minister

St Lucia

The Hon Dr Kenny D Anthony*
Prime Minister

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The Hon Louis Straker
*Deputy Prime Minister and
Minister of Foreign Affairs*

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Seychelles

The Hon Jérémie E P Bonnelame
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Singapore

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The Hon Patrick Manning*
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The Hon Saufatu Sopoanga*
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HE Mr Yoweri K Museveni*
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The Rt Hon Tony Blair*
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President

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The Rt Hon Donald McKinnon
Secretary-General

