

**Seventh Meeting of the Commonwealth Consultative Group on Environment
7 February 2001, United Nations, Nairobi**

SUMMARY RECORD

The seventh meeting of the Commonwealth Consultative Group on Environment was held at the United Nations in Nairobi on 7 February 2001 from 2-5pm. It was attended by Ministers and Senior Officials from 30 countries¹, and co-chaired by the Hon Seymour Mullings, Deputy Prime Minister of Jamaica, and the Rt Hon Michael Meacher, Minister for the Environment of the United Kingdom (a list of participants is at Annex I).

Agenda Item 1: Welcome and Opening Remarks

The meeting was opened by Mr Rumman Faruqi, Director of the Economic Affairs Division of the Commonwealth Secretariat. Speaking on behalf of the Commonwealth Secretary-General, Mr Faruqi acknowledged the great shock and sadness that has been felt around the Commonwealth following the earthquake in India, and the hopes of member governments that the country would soon recover from this tragic disaster. Mr Faruqi then continued with his introductory remarks (Annex II) before giving the floor to the co-Chairs.

Mr Meacher expressed his thanks to the Commonwealth Secretariat for the effective arrangements that had been made for the meeting. He suggested that Ministers might wish to consider a proposal put forward by the United Kingdom, to transmit a message on environment and sustainable development to the High Level Review Group addressing the future role of the Commonwealth. Mr Mullings welcomed delegates to the CCGE, and stressed the role that the Commonwealth could play in supporting small states and least developed countries in their efforts towards sustainable development.

Agenda Item 2: Adoption of the Agenda

The Meeting adopted the provisional agenda set out in the Secretariat's note, CCGE(01)2(Admin), without revision.

Agenda Item 3: Rio+10: Key issues and concerns on implementation, and the Commonwealth's contribution to the Rio+10 process

The co-Chairs drew the Group's attention to the Secretariat's paper CCGE(01)1, which identified key issues and concerns related to implementation of the Rio agreements, and paper CCGE(01)2, which examined ways in which the Commonwealth might contribute to the Rio+10 process. They then invited the Honourable Mohammed Valli Moosa, South Africa's Minister for Environmental Affairs and Tourism to open the discussion by outlining South Africa's vision for the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD), which will be held in Johannesburg in 2002.

¹ Australia, Bahamas, Bangladesh, Barbados, Belize, Cameroon, Canada, Cyprus, Gambia, India, Jamaica, Kenya, Kiribati, Malawi, Malta, Mauritius, Mozambique, Namibia, New Zealand, Nigeria, Saint Lucia, Seychelles, Singapore, South Africa, Sri Lanka, United Republic of Tanzania, Uganda, United Kingdom, Zambia, Zimbabwe.

Mr Moosa thanked Commonwealth countries for their support to South Africa in hosting the WSSD. He said that while the Summit should provide a 'report-back' and review of progress in implementing the commitments made at the 1992 UN Conference on Environment and Development in Rio, it must also be forward-looking. Rio+10 should be an inclusive process that produces practical and action-oriented outcomes. He emphasised that contentious outstanding issues from the Rio agenda should not be allowed to dominate the Summit, and as far as possible they should be resolved before the event, so that the agenda can focus on a selected number of key issues. These included: poverty alleviation; health (especially issues related to water-borne diseases); the position of children in under-developed and degraded environments; ensuring that sustainable development is pursued in a way that relieves the burdens on women; the impact of biodiversity-loss on the poor, particularly the invasion of alien species; issues related to environmental governance and institutions for environmental governance; and financing for sustainable development including the operation of the institutions involved.

Participants strongly supported the approach outlined by South Africa for the WSSD. They called for the Summit to promote the cause of sustainable development in a truly integrated way through a clear commitment to poverty alleviation and by ensuring that development objectives were attained in conjunction with environmental goals. They underlined that the focus of the WSSD should be 'sustainable development', emphasising the development and poverty alleviation elements of this agenda. A number of speakers stressed that Rio+10 should be an inclusive process involving civil society and the private sector. Participants identified a number of other issues that needed to be addressed by the Summit, including energy, water, youth, the role of the private sector in delivering and financing sustainable development, issues related to debt and HIV/AIDS, disaster preparedness, and addressing the vulnerability of small states. Opinions differed on whether agenda items could be packaged together to address a wide range of issues in a limited number of sessions.

A number of participants expressed the view that implementation of the Rio agreements had been hampered by unfulfilled commitments on technology transfer, finance, and capacity-building, and by critical capacity constraints in efforts to implement international environmental agreements.

On international environmental governance, participants agreed that this was an important issue, including for the Johannesburg Summit, and that present structures for international environmental governance disempower small states and developing countries. With the proliferation of environmental conventions, small states found it increasingly difficult to take part effectively in the decision-making processes of these conventions. Participants called for a more streamlined and coherent system, with simplified and more transparent and comprehensible processes, that were accessible to wider publics. In this context, a number of Ministers emphasised the need to make international environmental processes more readily understood by ordinary citizens and policy makers. International environmental governance arrangements should be within the United Nations and inclusive, to enable broad-based participation in the process of decision-making. A number of speakers suggested that further analysis was required of the various proposals that had been put forward, and their implications for different groups. For example, Least Developed Countries might prepare a paper on these issues.

Ministers were strongly supportive of strengthening UNEP and continuing to base the organisation's headquarters in Nairobi.

Participants supported regular meetings of Commonwealth Environment Ministers and Officials to provide a forum for the exchange of views in a candid and informal way, and explore whether there were issues on which the Commonwealth could put forward a common position. Ministers also urged Commonwealth discussions on environment and sustainable development at the highest political level. Different views were expressed on the value of stand-alone substantive meetings of Commonwealth Environment Ministers. Some felt that longer meetings would provide an opportunity to explore in greater depth how the Commonwealth could pool resources and tackle international environmental issues; others supported the present system of holding meetings of Commonwealth Environment Ministers and Officials in conjunction with other fora, which ensured an effective use of time and resources, and did not add to Ministers' travel schedules. On the Commonwealth's role, there was agreement that the Commonwealth should develop its advocacy role, especially with respect to the views of least developed and small member states, and act as an active bridge between developed and developing countries. Other areas highlighted by delegates included support to member states through research, studies, promoting an increased awareness on key issues, and support for the preparation of reviews and position papers in advance of the WSSD.

A number of representatives from small states and developing countries outlined their critical need for capacity building, technical assistance, and technology transfer, to support the implementation of multilateral environmental agreements and preparations for the WSSD. The Commonwealth Secretariat, donor governments and agencies, and multilateral institutions were asked to assist in these areas. One Minister noted that globalisation, information technology, and biotechnology were major drivers of change, and underscored the need for governments to make effective preparations before receiving technology. He stressed the importance to governments of constructing future scenarios in order to guide a country's development and underpin planning for the future.

Participants warmly welcomed a proposed draft text for transmission to the High Level Review Group, which had been circulated by the UK delegation. Several speakers emphasised the importance of ensuring that environment and sustainable development issues were included in discussions at the highest levels, including meetings of Commonwealth Heads of Government, noting that these issues needed to be promoted. Following a debate on proposed changes to the draft text, the message was amended and adopted by the CCGE (Annex III).

Agenda Item 4: Report of the Commonwealth Workshop on Trade and Sustainable Development

The co-Chairs drew the Group's attention to the Secretariat's paper CCGE(01)3 on the outcomes and recommendations of a Commonwealth Workshop on Trade and Sustainable Development (Sundridge Park, UK, 20-22 January 2001) that had been organised and supported by the Commonwealth Secretariat and the UK Department of Environment, Transport and the Regions, and asked Ms Janet Strachan of the Commonwealth Secretariat to brief Ministers on the key findings.

Ms Strachan noted that the event brought together senior Commonwealth officials in an informal way, which promoted an open exchange of views on some highly controversial issues. Discussions had been grounded in concrete examples of national experiences, which

led to a constructive and practical look at approaches to understanding the relationship between trade and sustainable development, and addressing conflicts that might arise. There had been strong interest in the workshop from governments, but it was found that limiting the event to a smaller representative group of about 20 countries had helped to promote an open dialogue. An important element of the workshop's approach was that it had brought senior-level trade and environment officials together in a cross-disciplinary dialogue.

Key conclusions from the workshop, as detailed in CCGE(01)3, were outlined. They included the need to: improve understanding of the relationship between trade and sustainable development; build capacity (legal, technical and administrative capacity) at national and regional levels to support policy co-ordination and integration; define the role of government in assisting the private sector in its initiatives towards sustainable development; ensure predictable and workable standards for certification; improve approaches to the imposition of environmental, sanitary and phytosanitary measures for agricultural products; and promote greater adherence to the rules of the multilateral trading system and dispute settlement rulings. In the area of negotiations, workshop participants proposed more regular interface between negotiators to forge alliances and improve understanding of positions, and better access to timely and relevant information and briefing. It was recognised that environmental concerns should not be brought to the WTO simply because it had a dispute settlement mechanism, and that improved mediation and arbitration procedures were required.

Ms Strachan concluded by saying that the workshop showed how the Commonwealth could promote a constructive dialogue on global concerns related to environment and sustainable development.

Participants welcomed the report. They endorsed the approach taken in the workshop, and the continuation of interdisciplinary dialogues in this and other sectors. They also warmly welcomed a proposal by the United Kingdom to fund another workshop, possibly on an issue related to the Johannesburg Summit.

Agenda Item 5: Any Other Business

The co-Chairs thanked delegates for a very productive discussion. They proposed to prepare a Summary Statement, outlining the key elements of the Group's deliberations, which would be circulated the next day. They further suggested that this document be transmitted to the Brisbane CHOGM, together with the CCGE's message to the High Level Review Group. The Group agreed this proposal.

Ministers decided to meet next immediately before the 22nd UNEP Governing Council meeting/Global Environment Ministers Forum in 2002, and that Senior Commonwealth Officials might meet before that, perhaps in the wings of other meetings.

A vote of thanks was given to the co-Chairs.

**Seventh Meeting of the Commonwealth Consultative Group On Environment
Nairobi, 7 February 2001**

LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

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**Introductory Remarks by Mr Rumman Faruqi, Director, Economic Affairs Division,
Commonwealth Secretariat, to the Commonwealth Consultative Group on
Environment, 7 February 2001, United Nations, Nairobi**

Ministers, Ambassadors, Ladies and Gentlemen.

Welcome to the seventh meeting of the Commonwealth Consultative Group on Environment. I would like to extend especially warm greetings to those participating in the work of the CCGE for the first time. At their informal meeting in Malmö on 30 May 2000, Commonwealth Environment Ministers agreed to meet again, today, a day before the Global Environment Ministers Forum in Nairobi.

I would like to express particular appreciation to the Hon Seymour Mullings, Deputy Prime Minister of Jamaica, and the Rt Hon Michael Meacher, Minister for the Environment of the United Kingdom, for agreeing to co-chair this meeting. I am grateful to them for undertaking the task, and look forward to a constructive dialogue.

We have two substantive items on the Provisional Agenda:

Provisional Agenda Item 3 is the main theme of the meeting: an exchange of views on key issues for the World Summit on Sustainable Development; and the role of the Commonwealth in supporting the Rio+10 process. The World Summit on Sustainable Development, which will take place in South Africa in 2002, will mark the culmination of an assessment of progress made in implementing the outcomes of UN Conference on Environment and Development. Tensions between North and South dominated Rio. The implementation of Agenda 21 and other Rio agreements has been hampered by a constraint on resources, technology transfer, and capacity. We could use this meeting to address constructively those tensions that still exist through a positive analysis of problems and identification of responses. As you will recall, the Malmö Global Environment Ministers Forum reaffirmed the importance of the speedy implementation of the political and legal commitments entered into by the international community (especially at Rio) and underscored the need for renewed efforts undertaken by all countries in a spirit of international solidarity, and recognising the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities. The Malmö Declaration identified a number of key environmental threats and noted that the trends of globalisation in the world economy, with the attendant environmental risks and opportunities, require international institutions to adopt new approaches and to engage the major actors in new ways. They noted the roles and responsibilities of governments, international institutions, the private sector, and civil society. The Malmö Declaration emphasised that the objective of Rio+10 should be to inject a new spirit of co-operation and urgency into the quest for sustainable development, including through the ratification of all environmental conventions and protocols, in particular those related to climate, desertification, biosafety and chemicals. These objectives remain a real challenge. I look forward to a fruitful exchange of views between Ministers on some of these issues, in this informal setting. The Commonwealth Consultative Group on Environment may also wish to consider sending a message to the Commonwealth High Level Review

Group, which is now deliberating the future role of the Commonwealth in addressing major environment and sustainable development concerns.

Under Item 4 of the Provisional Agenda, it is proposed to present the key outcomes of an important Commonwealth Workshop on Trade and Sustainable Development. The event had its origins in informal consultations with Commonwealth Ministers and Officials in New York on 22 February 2000, which examined the Commonwealth's strategic role on international sustainable development concerns. A report on the event will be presented later by my colleague.

After this meeting, and following practice in past years, the co-Chairmen will issue a statement that summarises the key points of the CCGE's discussion.

It is with pleasure that I now give the floor to our co-Chairs, Prime Minister Mullings, and Minister Meacher.

A Message from the Commonwealth Consultative Group on Environment to the High Level Review Group

The Commonwealth Consultative Group on the Environment met on 7 February in Nairobi in the margins of the 21st meeting of the UNEP Governing Council. The Group exchanged views on matters relating to the World Summit on Sustainable Development, and the contribution that Commonwealth Member States could make to preparations for that event. This was a valuable discussion. It enabled participants to share perspectives in greater depth than is often possible in other fora.

The Ministers who participated believe that Commonwealth Member States would all benefit from a continuous dialogue on questions relating to the environment and sustainable development, including trade. In addition to regular meetings of Environment Ministers, they hope that this can take place at the highest political level, and between other sectoral groups of Ministers, given the cross-cutting nature of the issues concerned. The Commonwealth encompasses all the major challenges of sustainable development, as well as many examples of effective responses.

The Ministers therefore recommend to the High Level Group currently reviewing the future role of the Commonwealth that it identify the environment and sustainable development as an important element in that role. The Commonwealth Secretariat has made an important contribution in the field of sustainable development: in building shared perspectives through constructive dialogue and co-operation on relevant issues of common concern; in building capacity to negotiate and implement international agreements; and in building capacity to formulate and implement effective national policies. These activities should remain a key part of the future role of the Commonwealth for the benefit of all its member states, particularly least developed members, including small island developing states.

The Ministers also suggest that the CHOGM in Brisbane in October explicitly acknowledge the importance of the Commonwealth role in these areas by placing environment and sustainable development high on the agenda for discussion by Heads of Government. The continued exchange of perspectives among Commonwealth Member States in this area would provide a valuable source of additional experience for national policymaking, and help Member States to contribute more effectively to the relevant international discussions, including the World Summit on Sustainable Development.

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

Summary Statement of the Co-Chairs

Commonwealth Environment Ministers met on 7 February 2001 for the seventh meeting of the Commonwealth Consultative Group on Environment (CCGE). The meeting was convened to coincide with the 2001 session of the Global Environment Ministers Forum/United Nations Environment Programme Governing Council in Nairobi. The CCGE was co-chaired by Hon Seymour Mullings, Jamaica's Deputy Prime Minister, and the Rt Hon Michael Meacher, MP, United Kingdom Minister for the Environment².

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

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

Other issues that Ministers identified for Rio+10 were energy, water, youth, the role of the private sector in delivering and financing sustainable development, issues related to debt and HIV/AIDS, disaster preparedness, and addressing the vulnerability of small states.

²Commonwealth Environment Ministers, when they met informally in Malmö on 30 May 2000, agreed that they would meet next a day before the meetings of the Global Environment Ministers Forum/UNEP Governing Council in February 2001. It was agreed in consultation with governments that this would be a meeting of the Commonwealth Consultative Group on Environment.

The view was expressed that implementation of the Rio agreements had been hampered by unfulfilled commitments on technology transfer, finance, and capacity-building, and by critical capacity constraints in efforts to implement international environmental agreements.

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

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

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

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

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

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