

Twenty-Sixth Meeting of the Commonwealth Ministerial Action Group on the Harare Declaration (CMAG)

Released: 17 Sep 2005

The Commonwealth Ministerial Action Group on the Harare Declaration (CMAG) held its twenty-sixth meeting in New York on 17 September 2005.

CONCLUDING STATEMENT

The Commonwealth Ministerial Action Group on the Harare Declaration (CMAG) held its twenty-sixth meeting in New York on 17 September 2005. The meeting was chaired by the Hon Olu Adeniji, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Nigeria, and was attended by Hon Tuila'epa Sa'ilele Malielegaoi, Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs and Trade of Samoa, Hon Frederick A Mitchell, Minister of Foreign Affairs and the Public Service of The Bahamas (Vice-Chairman), Hon Pierre Pettigrew, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Canada, Hon K Natwar Singh, Minister of External Affairs of India, Hon Michael Frendo, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Malta, Hon Anura Bandaranaike, Minister of Foreign Affairs and Tourism of Sri Lanka and Hon Dr Abdul-Kader Shareef, Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs and International Co-operation of the United Republic of Tanzania.

CMAG expressed condolences to the Government of Sri Lanka and observed a minute's silence in memory of the former Foreign Minister of Sri Lanka, the late Lakshman Kadirgamar, who previously represented Sri Lanka on the Group and was assassinated on 12 August 2005.

PAKISTAN

CMAG reviewed developments in Pakistan since its last meeting in London in February 2005. It received an update from the Secretary-General on the local bodies' elections which were observed by a Commonwealth Expert Team (CET) in August 2005.

The Group expressed concern on the slow progress in the democratisation process. It stressed that there were areas where improvements still needed to be made to the electoral process and the political environment in Pakistan. CMAG endorsed the recommendations of the CET for strengthening the independence of the Election Commission and empowering it to use its executive powers to enforce its decisions and the code of conduct for elections.

CMAG noted Pakistan's positive engagement with the Commonwealth in support of genuine democratic reform. The Group requested the Secretary-General to intensify ongoing high level contact with Pakistan and requested that the Secretariat continue to extend all possible technical assistance to Pakistan to support its transition to full democracy.

CMAG reiterated its statement of 11 February 2005. It reaffirmed that the holding by the same person of the offices of the Head of State and Chief

of Army Staff is incompatible with the basic principles of democracy and the spirit of the Harare Commonwealth principles, as well as CMAG's expectations. It also restated its strong view that until the two offices are no longer combined in the same person, the process of democratisation in Pakistan will not be irreversible. The Group again urged President Musharraf to relinquish one of his two offices, certainly no later than the end of the current Presidential term in 2007.

CMAG called on the Government of Pakistan to continue and intensify progress in fostering a sustainable and inclusive political culture, improving democratic governance, strengthening political and oversight institutions, supporting local governments, protecting human rights, respecting media freedoms and improving the position of women and minorities. It also called for the further widening of the democratic space so that all who wish can participate in the electoral process.

CMAG decided to keep Pakistan on its Agenda.

CMAG REPORT TO CHOGM

The Group took note of its report to 2005 CHOGM covering the period 2004-2005, as circulated. The Group requested the Secretary-General to include the outcomes of this twenty-sixth meeting of CMAG and to circulate the Report to Governments as a CHOGM document.

NEXT MEETING

The Group agreed to meet again in Malta on the eve of CHOGM, on 24 November 2005 to review further developments and to consider whether they justify any changes in the Report.

Commonwealth Secretariat
Helmsley Hotel
New York, USA
17 September 2005