

Abuja Communiqué

Commonwealth Heads of Government met in Abuja, from 5-8 December 2003 at the invitation of President Olusegun Obasanjo of Nigeria, the host Head of Government and Chairman of 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 for 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 organizations to promote best democratic practice.

Commonwealth Ministerial Action Group on the Harare Declaration (CMAG)

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 Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting 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 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 collapsed at The Hague meeting on 10 March 2003 due to the negative approach taken by the Turkish Cypriot leader.

* Issued as Press Release 03/82 on 7 December 2003.

23. They further regretted that the Turkish Cypriot leader continues 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 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 with 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 (ICC) 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 the UNSCR 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 recognized 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 (IFF) 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 re-affirmed 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, 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 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 (NEPAD)

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 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 coordinate 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 coordination.

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 Plan of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island 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 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 Report of the Committee of the Whole. 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 (CBC), 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 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 Commonwealth Conference of 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 the Commonwealth Organisations (CIC) and urged member countries to implement its various recommendations. With regard to the Commonwealth Partnership for Technology Management (CPTM), Heads of Governments 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 recognized 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 18-21 March 2004.

Election of the Secretary-General

71. Heads of Government re-elected Rt. Hon Don McKinnon as the Commonwealth Secretary-General for the 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