From Kuala Lumpur to Durban

INTRODUCTION TO THE SECRETARY-GENERAL'S REPORT 1999

Emeka Anyaoku

The Secretary-General's biennial report to Commonwealth Heads of Government has traditionally been limited in scope and time. In substance, it has usually covered the activities of the association in the two-year interval between summits; and my previous reports have been in that format. In this report, however, I intend to take a longer term perspective and to reflect on the work of the association in my time as its principal servant. There are a number of reasons for this approach.

In the first place 1999 marks the 50th anniversary of the London Declaration of April 1949, the decision which enabled India to continue in full membership of the Commonwealth after the adoption of its republican constitution, effectively making the modern Commonwealth possible. In the cold light of 1999, in which sovereign republics are commonplace within the Commonwealth, the decision may appear prosaic and uncontroversial. But in the world of 1949, when the assumption seemed to be that republicanism was incompatible with membership of the Commonwealth, the decision to allow republican India to remain within the association was nothing short of revolutionary. For some, who had serious misgivings about the wisdom of this revolutionary departure, it was considered a leap in the dark. On all sides, it called for vision, wisdom, imagination and courage of a special order to make that step possible.

The Commonwealth might easily have remained a small, closely knit kindred group making little or no impact on the wider world but for the wisdom and vision of the founding fathers of the modern Commonwealth who opened its doors and windows to the outside world without compromising its singularity. If the Commonwealth is today a distinctive and dynamic organisation making a difference in the world, that is largely the outcome of the decision taken in London in the spring of 1949. Today's Commonwealth is much indebted to its founding fathers, especially Jawaharlal Nehru, India's first Prime Minister; and the 50th anniversary is an appropriate opportunity for *pietas*. Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II, Head of the Commonwealth, has continued to care for the association in that special way which is all her own. The Commonwealth is much in her debt.

Successive generations of Commonwealth leaders have brought strength in various ways and through various measures to the association and have contributed to make it the flourishing institution it is today. If the decolonisation process had proceeded as smoothly as it did, with bonds of friendship replacing the old order, the credit for it goes to not only the generosity of the people on all sides, but also to the Commonwealth. But no less important, the 50th anniversary of the birth of the modern Commonwealth should be an opportunity to reflect on the future. It should be about how to make the association even more relevant in the uncertainties and challenges of the world which is

coming into view with a new century and millennium.

My second reason for taking a longer term view in this Report is a personal one. This is my last report to Heads of Government as Commonwealth Secretary-General. When I was elected to the position at Kuala Lumpur in October 1989, I pledged in my acceptance speech to work for the achievement of a number of key objectives which I believed to be of special importance as the Commonwealth and the world moved into the 1990s. In particular, I undertook to work for a Commonwealth which fostered its own values, promoted the economic and technological development of its member states, was unalterably committed to the equality of all human beings and, in Jawaharlal Nehru's memorable words, brought a "healing touch" to national and international relations. My valedictory report is accordingly the appropriate place to take stock of these past 10 years and to offer some reflections on the way forward.

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In 1949, Commonwealth Prime Ministers *(above, top)* made a historic decision that led to the birth of the modern Commonwealth – an association which Jawaharlal Nehru *(left)* spoke of as being able to bring a 'healing touch' to international relations. Since then, developing countries have proudly claimed their independence, as Dr Kwame Nkrumah did for Ghana in 1957 *(above)*, and worked together for the good of all

The Global Setting

The beginning of my Secretary-Generalship coincided with an historic conjuncture in world politics as a result of which nothing would again be the same. The first element of this conjuncture was the ending of the Cold War which, for more than 50 years, had done so much to inhibit constructive international co-operation. And with the ending of the Cold War another hopeful and expectant age seemed to be dawning.

Even during the Cold War period, the Commonwealth had always been an organisation apart. Because of the diversity of its membership, the Commonwealth

served as a unique facility for international understanding. It enabled those who were not members of committed alliances to interpret the attitudes of those who were aligned to their opponents. To a world irreducibly diverse, the multiracial and multicultural Commonwealth pointed the way to the possibility of real unity in diversity. It had been the considerable achievement of the Commonwealth to show that its diversity, far from being a source of division and disruption, could be a source of celebration and abiding co-operation. And I saw in the emerging post-Cold War world, unprecedented opportunities for the Commonwealth to become an even greater force for good.

The Commonwealth at work – at CHOGM 1989 in Malaysia *(above)*. The 'expression of pride in the Commonwealth' at this meeting developed into the 'distinctive and enlarging role' drawn up by a high-level group of Heads of Government *(right)* and reflected in the Harare Commonwealth Declaration of 1991

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That optimistic assessment of the potential and future role of the Commonwealth was to be confirmed by Heads of Government themselves. In their Kuala Lumpur Communiqué, they "expressed pride in the Commonwealth and appreciation for its contribution to peace, social justice and economic progress among its members and in the wider world". Looking ahead to the future, they recognised that the "Commonwealth would continue to have a distinctive and enlarging role to play". What that "distinctive and enlarging role" would be was spelt out by Heads of Government in the Harare Commonwealth Declaration of October 1991.

In the economic domain, the ending of the Cold War brought into the international market economy more than 400 million people in Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union and some 1.3 billion people from China and Vietnam. Globalisation, which had by then already emerged as a worldwide dynamic with all its opportunities and challenges, thus received a great boost. A number of developing countries, including some in the Commonwealth, were already making the most of those opportunities but the great majority were still to share in its benefits. The successful countries were becoming even more successful while the less success-

In the forefront of the struggle against apartheid ... the Commonwealth Eminent Persons' Group went to South Africa in 1986 to promote dialogue with the apartheid regime *(above)*. The Commonwealth's implacable opposition to apartheid helped lead to the freeing of Nelson Mandela *(below)* and the establishment of a multiracial democracy in 1994

ful were falling further behind. The challenge was to narrow the gap and to promote universal growth.

The other development which was to have a transforming impact on the Commonwealth and, morally, a cleansing effect on the world as a whole, was the ending of apartheid in South Africa. The apartheid regime's repudiation of the Eminent Persons Group (EPG) mission sent by Commonwealth Heads of Government at the beginning of 1986 to promote dialogue between the regime and the representatives of the black majority had given many cause to fear the worst. In the circumstances, Heads of Government

the following year in Vancouver and in 1989 at Kuala Lumpur had little choice but to consider a further package of sanctions, this time of a financial character, to bring the regime to the negotiating table. As matters came to a head, President F W de Klerk, who had succeeded P W Botha, announced on 2 February 1990 the unbanning of the political parties, the release of Nelson Mandela and the other political prisoners and, most important of all, a readiness to negotiate with the African National Congress (ANC) and the other parties to end apartheid.

Commonwealth energies had hitherto gone into the mobilisation of international pressure in the form of sanctions and diplomatic isolation of the apartheid regime. But the new situation clearly called for a new approach and one with the right mix of pressure and co-operation to ensure the success of the negotiations then about to begin. The first five years of my Secretary-Generalship were therefore in great part devoted to assisting the transition in South Africa.

Democracy and Good Governance

If one area of activity can be said to have been emblematic of the Commonwealth in the period since 1991, it has been the promotion of democracy and good governance. In successive reports to Heads of Government, I have detailed the progress in democratisation in various Commonwealth countries and the assistance which the Commonwealth Secretariat has provided towards that end. Promoting democracy and good governance continues to form an important strand of the Secretariat's work and the body of this Report sets out what has been achieved in this area since

the Edinburgh Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM), including the series of workshops to assist member countries consolidate their democratic institutions and processes. I shall therefore confine myself to making some observations on the Commonwealth's experience of democratisation since the turn of the 1990s.

A commitment to democracy and good governance was always implicit in membership of the Commonwealth. What was later expounded in the Singapore Declaration of 1971 as a belief "in the liberty of the individual, in equal rights for all citizens regardless of race, colour, creed or political belief and in their inalienable right to participate by means of free and democratic political processes in framing the society in which they live" had always been held to be an integral part of the Commonwealth vision. It could hardly be otherwise with the modern Commonwealth, made possible by the emergence of its new members to independence from colonial rule.

Commonwealth commitment to democracy and good governance ... in 1990, the Commonwealth sent Observers to elections in Malaysia. Twenty-eight such Observer missions have been mounted since

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Yet, for all that, the promotion of democracy remained patchy for many years. The Cold War had something to do with it, as did the internal domestic circumstances of some Commonwealth countries; but what really obstructed a sustained and purposeful promotion of democracy within the Commonwealth was the fact that as an objective it was forced into competition with the pursuit of a more urgent, if not higher, objective – the ending of the racist minority rule in the then Rhodesia and the elimination of South Africa's apartheid. Commonwealth unity was accordingly directed to combating the evil of apartheid. But the price of thus diverting the Commonwealth effort was to compel the association to live with a contradiction – professing a democratic vocation but containing within its ranks governments which could not be described by any definition as democratic. Accepting this contradiction, and therefore being vulnerable to the charge of hypocrisy, may not have markedly reduced the Commonwealth's effectiveness, but it did lessen the moral stature of the association.

The frankness of the discussion at the Harare CHOGM of 1991, which made possible the landmark declaration of that year, could have taken place only within the Commonwealth. The Declaration is hardly a decade old but in the time it has been in force, it has transformed the Commonwealth morally and politically. It has added immeasurably to the credibility of the association. Because of Harare, the Commonwealth stands higher in the eyes of its constituents and its external influence has never been greater. This is a record of which the Commonwealth can justly be proud.

But even more indicative of the strength of the commitment to entrench democracy within the Commonwealth was the adoption of the Millbrook Commonwealth Action Programme on the Harare Declaration in November 1995. The Harare Declaration had spelt out what were to be the priority areas of Commonwealth endeavour in the 1990s and beyond but had provided no mechanism for the achievement of those ends. Millbrook repaired that omission with, among other measures, the establishment of a Commonwealth Ministerial Action Group (CMAG) "to deal with serious or persistent violations" of the Harare

Declaration's fundamental political values. Only a self-confident and resilient Commonwealth could have taken this further step of establishing a mechanism to invigilate compliance with its fundamental principles. In a real sense, therefore, CMAG marks the coming of age of the Commonwealth, self-assured in its internal cohesion and its fundamental unity of purpose.

Of the three countries with which CMAG was initially concerned – The Gambia, Nigeria and Sierra Leone – Nigeria was undoubtedly the most testing. Until the advent of the Abacha regime in November 1993, Nigeria had played an inspiring front-line role in promoting all the causes to which the Commonwealth was committed. It had provided principled and consistent leadership in the campaign against apartheid, both within and beyond the Commonwealth. It had supported all the Commonwealth's initiatives to contribute to the achievement of a more just and equal world, and its attachment to the Commonwealth itself was beyond question. Nigeria's presence in the Commonwealth was good for the Commonwealth and good for Nigeria.

Dealing with 'serious and persistent violations' of the Harare Declaration ... CMAG has met since 1995 *(top)* and *(below)* at CHOGM 1995. Prime Minister Jim Bolger of New Zealand announces the suspension of Nigeria from membership

On the other hand, not only did the continuation of a military regime fly in the face of the Harare principles, its gross violations of human rights, including the holding of political prisoners, called for urgent action on the part of the Commonwealth. Then, on the eve of the Auckland Heads of Government Meeting in November 1995, the regime executed nine Ogoni leaders. Those executions provoked universal revulsion and led to the decision by Heads of Government to suspend Nigeria from membership of the Commonwealth "pending the return to compliance with the principles of the Harare Declaration", with provision for expulsion if no demonstrable progress had been made towards the fulfilment of these conditions within a timeframe to be stipulated. In the event, Nigeria's return to full Commonwealth membership was made possible by the death of General Sani Abacha in June 1998 and the assumption of office by General Abdulsalami Abubakar whose transition programme led to the ending of military rule and the accession to power of a democratically elected government led by President Olusegun Obasanjo on 29 May 1999.

The decision to suspend Nigeria was a painful step for the Commonwealth, and even more painful for me personally. But not to have taken that step would have been more damaging. It would have called into question the seriousness of the Commonwealth's commitment to democracy and human rights and would certainly have led to an erosion of confidence in the association in Nigeria itself and wider afield. The restoration of democracy in Nigeria after such a long break has been warmly welcomed by the Commonwealth which had maintained a principled opposition to military rule.

South Africa

In June this year, South Africa held its second democratic elections and Thabo Mbeki succeeded Nelson Mandela as the second democratically elected President of post-apartheid South Africa. Those elections marked the conclusion of one phase of the transition. The wider task of reconstruction remains to be accomplished; and in the context of South Africa, to reconstruct is to repair a century and more of deprivation.

For my first five years as Secretary-General, assisting the transition in South Africa was a central concern of the

Commonwealth. The decision by Heads of Government to send me to South Africa in November 1991 to explore opportunities for Commonwealth assistance to the negotiations; the sending of Commonwealth observers to the inauguration of the negotiations; the contribution to the joint international effort to stem the violence in the run-up to the elections; the provision of Commonwealth technical assistance to the Independent Electoral Commission (IEC); the observation of the elections by the largest-ever Commonwealth election observer group, and the technical assistance which the Commonwealth provided to the newly elected democratic government – all this and much else is a matter of record. The struggle against apartheid may have had South Africa for its battlefield but, in its true and deeper meaning, it was a campaign of the human race for a more complete humanity, and the Commonwealth is honoured to have contributed to that cause.

To speak of the end of apartheid in South Africa is to speak of Nelson Mandela who, along with Oliver Tambo, Joe Slovo and others, will forever be linked to the epic struggle against apartheid. Nelson Mandela already occupies a unique place in the gallery of international statesmen, and his place in history will be equally secure. Nelson Mandela is an authentic example of true greatness, an example of the heights to which the human spirit can rise when actuated by the most noble of ideals. For South Africa, for the Commonwealth and for the world, his life has been a blessing.

Conflict Resolution

There is a growing area of the Secretariat's work which is rightly kept away from the glare of publicity despite the risk of losing a publicity dividend. This is the area of conflict resolution. In a world where internal conflicts seem to have largely replaced inter-state conflict, the Commonwealth has not been immune; and increasingly Commonwealth governments are using help from the Secretariat to resolve domestic conflicts or defuse tensions. My response has usually been either to send an emissary or to go myself when the situation necessitates it and my other commitments allow. In the period since 1991, the Commonwealth has helped to resolve conflicts or defuse conflict situations in Bangladesh, Guyana, Kenya, Lesotho, Papua New Guinea, Sierra Leone, Solomon Islands and Tanzania, to name only some. The involvement of the Secretariat in what are essentially domestic affairs is a tribute to the Commonwealth connection. It needs to be ensured that nothing is done to diminish that confidence which governments are increasingly reposing in the Secretary-General and the Secretariat.

Active in conflict resolution in South Africa, 1994 *(top)*, the Commonwealth also contributed to the international effort to stem violence in the run-up to the elections *(below)*

... increasingly Commonwealth governments are using help from the Secretariat to resolve domestic conflicts or defuse tensions.

The Economic Agenda

The promotion of democratisation and the defence of human rights, the resolution of domestic conflicts or potential conflict situations and other achievments

In Solomon Islands, Commonwealth envoys helped defuse tensions in 1999

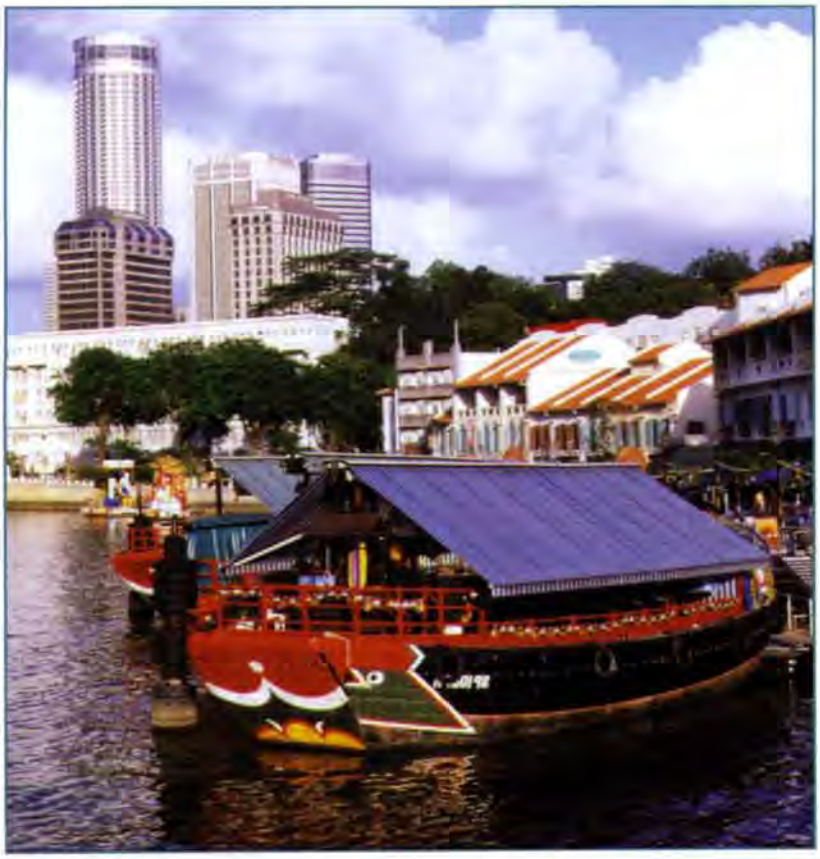
Busy stock markets of the Commonwealth ... globalisation has brought economic opportunities for some, worsening poverty for others

have inspired a new confidence in the Commonwealth among its member states; and with this new confidence has come the expectation that the Commonwealth will do more to promote the interests of its members especially in the area of economic development.

Globalisation is the dominant reality of our age. It has brought about a phenomenal expansion in world trade, finance and investment, produced new technologies which have shrunk time and space and in the process transformed the world almost out of recognition from what it was only a few decades ago. For some it has been a world of unparalleled opportunities, the best of all times; but for others, it has been a time of deepening poverty, the worst of all times. In Sub-Saharan Africa, in South Asia, in Latin America and in the Caribbean – to confine myself to only the developing world – the ranks of the poor have risen to unacceptable levels and the depth of their poverty has reached new levels. Increasing disparities threaten peace and stability. As the UNDP's *Human Development Report* for 1999 puts it, poverty is everywhere. That same report also makes it clear that the economic growth and other advances made possible by globalisaton offer "enormous potential to eradicate poverty in the 21st Century". Globalisation can easily be the crowning glory of our times; but unless its enormous potential is channelled into eradicating poverty, and creating a more humane world, it could easily degenerate into the moral shame of the international community. And therein lies probably the greatest of the challenges facing the world today.

The record of Commonwealth concern over global inequality is a long and honourable one. Throughout the 1960s, successive Commonwealth summits tried to draw the attention of the world to the problem of growing inequality in wealth and its implications for world peace and security. But the alarm was first raised in a more systematic and sustained way in 1971 when Commonwealth leaders in their Singapore Declaration said that the wide disparities in wealth then existing between different sections of mankind were too great to be tolerated. In 1975 the late Michael Manley, then Prime Minister of Jamaica, recalling what had been said at Singapore, went on to suggest that the call for a new economic order constituted a challenge to the Commonwealth to help find the techniques of political management that would lead to the progressive removal of those disparities and so tilt the probabilities in favour of dialogue as against confrontation. In one way or another, what the Commonwealth has been doing in these intervening years has been devising and implementing measures which would lead to the progressive removal of inequality.

In my previous reports I set out the practical arrangements which the Commonwealth had put in place to assist the development efforts of its member countries. The four regional investment funds set up under the aegis of the Commonwealth Private Investment Initiative (CPII); assistance in the area of debt management; analytical work and sustained advocacy to reduce the debt burden of the heavily indebted poor countries; the programmes in support of capacity-building and poverty alleviation; support under the Trade and Investment Access Facility (TIAF); the contributions of various Commonwealth Expert Groups, and the economic policy advice which the Secretariat offers to member countries are all instances of Commonwealth assistance to members to improve their



Economic success, as in Singapore *(above)*, points to what is achievable. Investment funds, such as the Commonwealth Africa Investment Fund launched in 1996 *(below)*, attract capital to developing countries

economic performance. But there is no pretence that these measures in themselves are sufficient or that they alone can bring about the removal of inequality between nations. On the contrary, their successes have only pointed to what is achievable given a more concerted global approach within the framework of a creative internationalism.

Commonwealth Fund for Technical Co-operation

In any consideration of the developmental role of the Commonwealth, the Commonwealth Fund for Technical Co-operation (CFTC) must be accorded a place of prominence. For nearly 30 years, it has proved an effective instrument for the delivery of technical assistance to member countries, most notably in the provision of advisory services and the training of local capacity. It has contributed in the process to the socio-economic development of many Commonwealth countries in a manner that has made a real difference in the lives of millions of people. Its cost-effectiveness is the envy of other development agencies. Beyond that, the Fund has proved to be an example of both effective South-South and North-South co-operation. It has been a source of considerable strength to the Commonwealth connection. And successive Commonwealth meetings – from meetings of officials to meetings of Heads of Government – have acknowledged with appreciation the contribution of the Fund to the development of member countries.

That recognition is reflected in the pledge made at Millbrook to restore the Fund's resources to their 1991/92 levels in real terms. Yet the reality remains one of continuing decline in the Fund's fortunes, from an actual expenditure of £28.0m in 1991/92 to £18.1m in 1998/99 – representing a decline of some 40 per cent in real terms – and with it, the Fund's ability to continue to contribute to the development of member countries.

The fall in the level of contributions in some cases, inordinate delay in redeeming pledges in others, and the resultant decline in resources have compelled a rethink of the Fund's priorities. I have directed that while the uncertainty over resources remains, the work of the Fund should concentrate on a number of priority areas. These include strategic gap-filling and capacity-building (through the provision of experts, training and advisory services on the basis of requests from governments); and special programmes of assistance on good governance, globalisation and support for negotiations with international organisations such as the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Trade Organisation (WTO). In the long

The Commonwealth Fund for Technical Co-operation brings technical assistance where needed ... to the emergency services in Bangladesh *(above)* and the electronics industry in Sri Lanka *(below)*

run, however, the objective has to be to restore the Fund's resources which are modest by any standards. For, if the Fund's resources are allowed to continue to fall in real terms, an important pillar of the Commonwealth edifice would have been grievously undermined. I do not believe that this is what Commonwealth governments intend.

Small States

It has been clear for a long time that the Commonwealth has had a very particular vocation in the area of responsibility for small states, especially as the number of countries in the Commonwealth continued to grow, so that of the 54 member states, 29 could be counted in the small states category with populations of less than 1.5 million people.

In the early 1980s when the Commonwealth was bringing the concerns of small states to international attention, their vulnerabilities had to do largely with issues of defence and security, environmental disasters, limited human resources aggravated by the brain drain and an even more severe lack of economic resources with economies usually dependent on one crop. It was then part of the challenge to get the international community to accept that small states had special needs which had to be differentiated from those of the generality of developing countries and accorded appropriate attention. To the old, unresolved vulnerabilities have now been added new vulnerabilities arising in the main from globalisation and threatening small states with further marginalistion. The uncertainty about the outcome of the current negotiations to agree a successor convention to the Lomé trade arrangements between the ACP countries and the European Union has put a question mark over the economic future of many Commonwealth small states. They lack the market size and resource endowment to attract significant investment flows; the wherewithal in human and material resources to participate effectively in the WTO negotiations; their scope for diversification is extremely limited; and, more than most developing economies, they have little protection against financial volatility and the accompanying disruption.

At Edinburgh, Commonwealth leaders agreed to "encourage international financial institutions to review their graduation policies, consider broader criteria covering the special vulnerabilities of their smaller members

Small states ... vulnerable to external forces

and establish a task force to address the concerns of small states". The meeting also approved my recommendation to set up a ministerial group to discuss the concerns of small states with major multilateral agencies.

The five-member ministerial mission which I subsequently appointed under the leadership of the Prime Minister of Barbados met with senior representatives of the World Bank, the IMF, the WTO, UNCTAD and the US State Department in July 1998; and one of the outcomes of that round of consultations was the establishment of the joint Commonwealth Secretariat/ World Bank Task Force on Small States. The Task Force was charged with devising arrangements to assist in financing the rehabilitation and reconstruction of infrastructure damaged by disaster and focus on such issues as the transitional costs of integrating the economies of small states into the global economy, the effectiveness of aid, and globalisation and the associated risks of marginalisation. The report of the Task Force, *Making Small States Less Vulnerable: Supporting Development During Globalisation*, will be one of the documents before Heads of Government at Durban.

In a world increasingly integrated through globalisation, it is in the interests of everyone to help ensure the viability of small states in our global society. The Commonwealth has given a lead; that lead deserves to be followed.

The Environment

At the time of the Langkawi Declaration of 1989 which marked a collective Commonwealth intervention in international efforts to protect the environment, the issue was to stem "the serious deterioration in the environment" and the threat which this posed to the well-being of present and future generations. The view within the Commonwealth was that any delay in halting this progressive deterioration would result in permanent and irreversible damage. In the intervening period, the crisis of the environment has become a continuing emergency, more urgent and

more threatening. In part, it is the result of a failure on the part of the international community at large to implement fully and effectively the existing conventions and to discharge the commitments entered into at Rio and Kyoto; but in a greater measure, it stems from unresolved and new economic problems which compel the poor of the developing world to exploit the environment in a non-sustainable manner. The link between economic development and environmental protection has long been recognised; yet little has been done to assist poor developing countries with the transfer of resources and appropriate technologies necessary to turn the tide in favour of measures which would assist sustainability.

As the appropriate sections of this Report show, the Commonwealth commitment to environmental protection remains high. There now exists a permanent Commonwealth machinery in the form of the Commonwealth Consultative Group on Environment to provide a forum through which the Commonwealth can contribute to the implementation of the 1992 Rio Agreements and other subsequent international agreements and conventions on environmental issues.

The Iwokrama International Rainforest Programme remains a unique Commonwealth contribution to environmental issues

The Iwokrama International Rainforest Programme in Guyana remains a unique Commonwealth contribution to addressing international concern for sustainable forest management and biodiversity conservation. It has now passed through several stages of development to become a show-piece project. Increasing international support, especially from a number of Commonwealth countries in the funding and provision of technical experts for the programme, is a measure of its success. Environmental protection should be like virtue – what is important is not the knowing of it but the doing of it.

Gender and Development

No national development process can be meaningful or even possible without the full participation of women; and advancing the interests of women and integrating them into the development process has long been a Commonwealth objective. The Harare Declaration identified equality for women as one of the priority areas on which Heads of Government agreed "to work with renewed vigour". In 1995, the Commonwealth took a major step in advancing the interests of women with the development of the Commonwealth Plan of Action on Gender and Development, which sought to accelerate the empowerment of women, strengthen machineries within member governments concerned with women's affairs and to integrate gender issues into the mainstream of all government and Secretariat activities.

The Plan of Action has made a difference internally within the Commonwealth. It has brought about greater awareness of gender issues. In particular, the target set by Ministers responsible for Women's Affairs at their Trinidad and Tobago meeting of 1996 – 30 per cent women in decision-making in the political, public and private sectors by 2005 – continues to be a high priority for the Secretariat. In that task, we work closely with the Commonwealth Foundation and the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association to assist member governments to develop strategies to achieve that target. Internationally, the Commonwealth Plan of Action proved to be a much appreciated contribution to the 1995 Beijing Conference on Women. But much more remains to be done both within and outside the

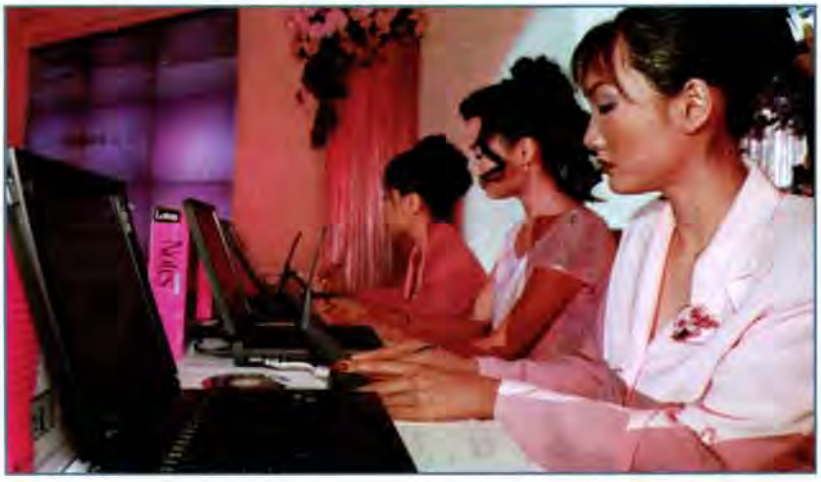
Celebrating Women's Day in South Africa

Commonwealth to ensure that social inequality is not gender inequality.

Human Resource Development

Promoting economic development in a globalised world requires the development of human skills. More specifically, it means mastering the new technologies – information and communication technologies as well as biotechnology – which are driving globalisation. It has rightly been said that knowledge is the new asset and "writing computer programs and revealing genetic codes have replaced the search for gold, the conquest of land and the command of machinery as the path to economic power". But the new system of wealth creation embodied in the mastery of the new technologies also threatens to exacerbate the world's existing divisions. According to the United Nations, "the global gap between haves and have-nots, between know and know-nots is widening". There is a new global race for knowledge and the task for the Commonwealth is to assist its member countries to be among the winners; and that in turn means helping member countries to meet their human resource development needs.

Working to enhance human skills, especially in mastering the new technologies



Human resource development has for long been a Commonwealth priority. The scholarship schemes run by the Association of Commonwealth Universities, the programmes of the Secretariat's own Education Department, the various training activities of the CFTC and the distance learning programmes of the Commonwealth of Learning (COL) are all instances of the Commonwealth helping to expand the skills base of its member countries. It remains a priority area.

Science and Technology: Mobilising Networks

In no realm is the race against time more important than in that of science and technology. The Commonwealth Science Council, established nearly 25 years ago to promote the development of science and technology by mobilising the wealth of scientific networks within the Commonwealth, has constantly broadened its activities, and enlarged and adapted its networks for the future. It is also developing ways of furthering new interest in science education, a key pillar of its programme. The Commonwealth Partnership for Technology Management (CPTM), established by Heads of Government in 1995 and bringing together governments,

the private sector and professionals, offers a creative new way of helping Commonwealth countries make the most of opportunities offered by the new global market.

The race for the new knowledge born of globalisation is also a race against time which can only be won in the context of continuing and heightened Commonwealth co-operation.

Health: Basis for the Future

The integral role of health care as a factor in development has increasingly been recognised in the international community, as some of the more negative effects of trimming health budgets have begun to be felt. The Commonwealth has long had health on its agenda, and the triennial Commonwealth health ministers meetings parallel the education ministers meetings, as two of the Commonwealth's oldest institutions. Both play an important role in facing the challenges of the next century. The Secretariat in its advocacy, brokerage and catalytic roles seeks every opportunity to work with international agencies and Commonwealth non-governmental organisations (NGOs), helping to identify areas where a project or a training programme may have a health dimension, never forgetting that health care is crucial for alleviating the scourge of poverty and safeguarding future generations.

Empowering Youth

One-third of the world's young people live in Commonwealth countries. The future of the Commonwealth therefore depends upon its youth. It was against the background of these considerations that Ministers responsible for Youth Affairs adopted a Five-year Strategic Plan in May 1995 focusing on three main areas: human resource development, youth empowerment and youth policy. The latest initiative in youth empowerment has been the Commonwealth Youth Credit Initiative (CYCI) which aims at setting up and managing micro-credit and developing business enterprises for young people at the national level.

But the challenges are a great deal wider and include the need to inculcate a culture of democracy, human rights and good governance in young people, placing youth concerns at the centre of economic policy, as well as facilitating their access to technology and the emerging global culture. A Commonwealth

Helping young people to develop business enterprises *(below)* but the wider challenge is to inculcate a culture of democracy, human rights and good governance in young people *(below, right)*

Looking for new international initiatives which will bring a better life *(above)* and will intervene in times of conflict where frequently even the United Nations *(below)* is now bypassed

Plan of Action on Youth Empowerment (PAYE) to the year 2005 has been developed and will be presented to Heads of Government at Durban for their consideration.

The Commonwealth and the Challenges of the 21st Century

The High-Level Appraisal Group appointed by Heads of Government at Kuala Lumpur to identify possible roles which the Commonwealth might play in the 1990s and beyond and out of which the Harare Declaration emerged, was a timely and imaginative initiative to keep the Commonwealth in step with the changing times and needs of its constituents. I believe that the Commonwealth is immeasurably the better for that exercise. I do not propose to suggest another high-level appraisal so soon after the last one. On the other hand, if the Commonwealth is not to rest on its laurels, every Heads of Government Meeting must serve as an opportunity for reaffirmation and reflection. Reaffirmation of those fundamental values which are at the heart of the association and which give it its distinctive identity; and reflection as the basis for action to ensure that at all times it is up to the challenges of the hour. Durban presents another such opportunity.

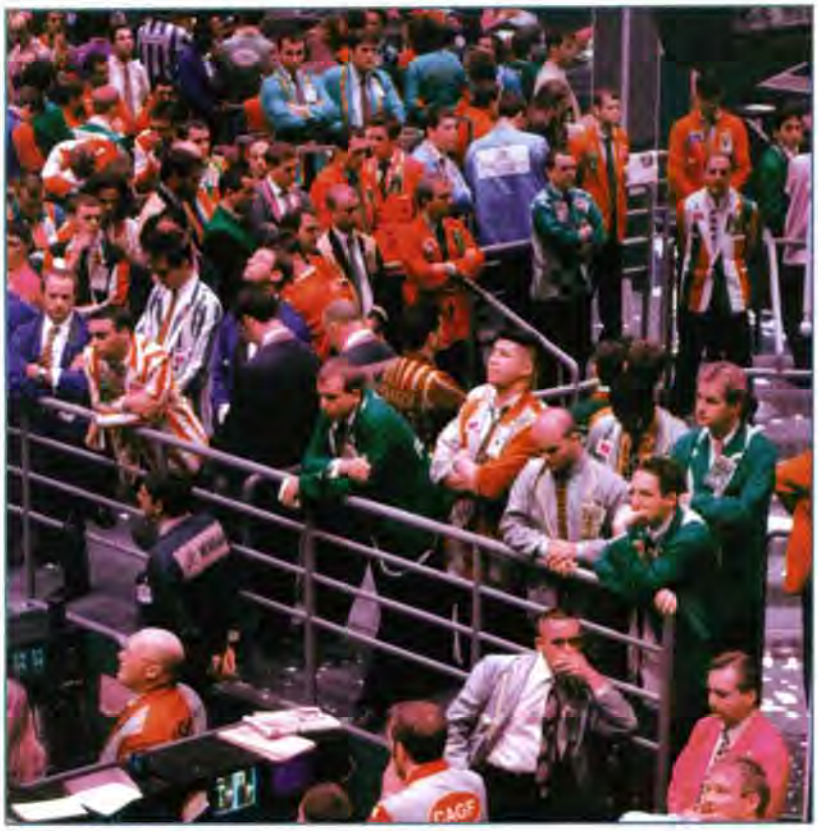
Some of the political issues which preoccupied the Commonwealth for the past three decades have now been resolved: decolonisation has been completed, minority rule in Southern Africa is ended and in South Africa apartheid has been dismantled. Throughout the Commonwealth, democracy and good governance have been accepted as the course of political wisdom. In the main, the member countries of the Commonwealth have got the democratic processes and institutions which reflect their respective national circumstances. What they now ask for, to borrow the language of Sir Winston Churchill's Romanes Lecture of 1930 at Oxford, is "more money, better times, regular employment, expanding comfort and material prosperity". Will they get it? For the 1.3 billion in the Third World who subsist on a dollar a day in the shadows, the issue is not even one of expanding prosperity but of mere survival. Will they be provided the opportunity to better their lives?

On the basis of present trends, the pessimism of the intellect must override the optimism of the heart. The world, and in a particularly profound way, the developing world, enters the new century and

millennium on a footing of uncertainty and insecurity. The widening disparities in wealth between different sections of mankind have now grown horrendously wider. The OECD countries which account for only 19 per cent of the world's population control 71 per cent of global trade in goods and services and account for 58 per cent of foreign direct investment. On any realistic view of the matter, one must seriously wonder whether the gap between rich and poor can ever be narrowed sufficiently to make the unity of humankind meaningful.

In the world of globalisation, poverty also tends to imply marginalisation. In 1995 a World Bank report described the prevailing trends in the following terms:

"By almost any measure the global economy is becoming more integrated. International trade as a share of world output has roughly doubled in the past two decades. Financial flows across borders are on the rise. Private capital directed to developing economies, whether foreign direct investment or financial assets, have reached record levels."



The global economy is becoming more integrated and private capital directed to developing countries has reached record levels

But the report went on to say that not every region was participating in this world of exciting opportunities. "Sub-Saharan Africa", it said, "... has not been part of this process. Rather than becoming more integrated into the global market, the region has been marginalised."

Sub-Saharan Africa no longer stands alone in being marginalised. The new poor in the former Soviet Union and Eastern Europe have joined the old poor in South Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean and all stand threatened with marginalisation. Indeed it is the greater part of mankind which faces such a dark prospect.

George Soros, in his defence of capitalism, has warned against the social consequences of "market fundamentalism" and said that "there comes a point when distress at the periphery cannot be good for the centre". I believe that we have gone beyond that point and are now not far from the brink. Hence the importance of success in constructing the new international financial architecture the need for which is now widely recognised.

Then there is the threat from rising intolerance and xenophobia, especially in many pluralistic states: I have described this phenomenon as divisive pluralism. Everything associated with globalisation, be it in the area of communications or trade or finance, is conspiring to shrink time and space and to erode borders. The migration of peoples within countries and across continents has produced in many parts of the world, developed and developing, multiracial and multicultural societies. Yet, in many communities there are people who reject this co-mingling of cultures and races and who are determined to sow dissension by exploiting the racial and other differences in their communities. In opposition to pluralism they preach xenophobia and intolerance. Divisive pluralism also has implications for international peace and security. The case of Kosovo is only the latest example of what divisive pluralism can do if the problem is not tackled early and at its roots.

These are some of the major challenges which face the world as it enters the 21st century. They are global in character and urgent in nature. The world cannot allow a continuation of the present drift if the unprecedented opportunities of globalisation are to be the common patrimony of all humankind. This implies a new structure and new forms of international co-operation; what is now called global governance. And there is an emerging consensus of what should constitute the main elements of this new global governance.

For all the changes of recent years, the major international economic institutions – the IMF, the World Bank and even the WTO – are still dominated by the powerful and rich countries. Poor countries, in particular the small and specially disadvantaged, cannot participate effectively in these bodies. Consequently, there is a justified feeling that these institutions are more concerned with the interests of the rich to the neglect of those of the poor.

The financial crisis which began in July 1997 in Thailand and eventually engulfed other South-East Asian economies has also put into sharp relief the need for early warning mechanisms and crisis management institutions as well as an enhanced international lender of last resort with more ample resources than the IMF currently commands. Some time ago, Peter Sutherland, the first Director-General of the WTO, called for "revised structures for co-ordination on international economic issues at the highest political level". That call must now be heeded as a matter of urgency. There is a massive democratic deficit in current arrangements for global economic governance and they are inherently unsustainable.

The reform of the United Nations to make it better reflect the realities of the 21st century will have to form part of this wider international restructuring to address the challenges of the new century. Ten years after the end of the Cold War, there is still no effective international order. We have no universally accepted criteria to determine the basis of intervention in conflict situations. Not infrequently, the United Nations is bypassed. In consequence, the world is more tense and unstable, and insecurity is on the increase. Ending the drift in the international political order is a challenge not only for governments but also for international civil society in all its ramifications.

A world environment agency has also been called for. Commonwealth support for such an agency should in the interest of all its members be a matter of course but especially for those of its small, island developing and other specially disadvantaged members. As for the proposed International Criminal Court with a broader mandate for human rights, such a proposal has already been endorsed by Heads of Government at Edinburgh.

Can the Commonwealth contribute to the achievement of these and other proposed reforms to address the challenges of the 21st century and "to turn the forces of globalisation to support human advance"? I believe it can. The expectation is that it will, possessing as it does endowments and experiences that well equip it for such a role.

The Commonwealth's strength derives from a number of sources, the foundation of which is the fact that it represents a transcendent principle. It is not a military alliance, or an economic union or even a cultural grouping. It is not held together by any binding parchment and its operations are not even rule-bound, except in the most general sense. At its best, the Commonwealth is a triumph of true human interests over the divisions of race, colour, culture and religion; and what promotes human advance is a legitimate Commonwealth objective. Its facility for communication and its representation in all the constituent continents of the world have reinforced its innate strengths, making it better placed to serve our wider human community. In this connection, it bears repeating that no other comparable international organisation has more experience of facilitating co-operation across the world's divides than the Commonwealth. The grave challenges confronting the world on the very eve of the 21st century cannot be effectively addressed unless the world begins by accepting our common humanity; and if there is a grouping of nations which can make a decisive contribution in this regard, that grouping is the Commonwealth.

The Unofficial Commonwealth

I have referred to the sources of Commonwealth strength. Part of that strength derives uniquely from the role which the non-governmental Commonwealth has played in the evolution and development of the association and continues to play in advancing its objectives. What has come to be called the "peoples' Commonwealth", is a reflection of a vibrant reality. The scope includes more than what we have come to understand as strictly NGOs, and covers professional associations, religious bodies and trade unions, some with emphasis on key sectors like health and education, others in sport and the arts. Some are more easily identifiable as charitable bodies concerned with development,

and all in one way or another have a contribution to make to development in its broadest sense.

Economic reforms in many Commonwealth countries have opened up for the private sector more opportunities for involvement in intra-Commonwealth trade and investment. The Commonwealth Business Council (CBC) has been established following the first meeting of the Commonwealth Business Forum in 1997. Its purpose is to boost and encourage private sector involvement in trade and investment among our member countries. The range of activities undertaken by the Business Council now includes trade policy and facilitation; investment promotion; promoting good business practice; corporate governance and corporate social responsibility; E-commerce; publications and information exchange; and the young executive exchange programme. As the Commonwealth gains increasing salience as a business network, the opportunities for the Business Council are bound to grow and so will its role in contributing to the economic well-being of our member states.

Part of the strength of the association is derived from the role which the non-governmental Commonwealth has played in its evolution and development

Civil society has emerged as a major actor in a wide range of areas – environmental protection, democratisation, good governance and human rights, including the protection of minorities, the promotion of peace and socio-economic development. I believe that on the whole, the global NGO movement has made for a saner and more sentient world and deserves to be fostered in the interests of better global governance. The Commonwealth is particularly well placed to appreciate the asset that is the NGO movement.

In the course of my time at Marlborough House as Secretary-General, I have endeavoured to promote the interests of Commonwealth NGOs. An NGO Desk now works within the Secretariat liaising closely with the Commonwealth Foundation, a sister intergovernmental institution whose work focuses on the non-governmental organisations. Clearly, much has been achieved but there is no room for complacency.

Projecting the Commonwealth

At the request of member governments, Derek Ingram, a senior Commonwealth journalist from the UK, undertook a review of the Commonwealth with the object of making recommendations on how "the Commonwealth's image could be sharpened". After visiting every region and interviewing some 600 people "at all levels from ministers to school students", he concluded as follows:

"The lack of knowledge of what the Commonwealth is and does is profound. In some places there is no knowledge full stop. Wrong perceptions are everywhere especially in the so-called old Commonwealth countries – Britain, Australia and Canada. The Commonwealth is much better known and understood in Africa and South-East Asia and to a lesser extent in the small countries of the Pacific and the Caribbean."

The Commonwealth cannot continue to serve the interests of its members, let alone those of the wider international community, unless it remains a vibrant institution; and it cannot be so unless the citizens of its member countries understand and support its objectives. That is why Mr Ingram's recommendations deserve serious attention by all concerned, most especially by Commonwealth governments.

The Opportunities of Durban

If Harare was about kitting out the Commonwealth for the challenges of the 1990s, Durban is about focusing it on the tasks for the 21st century, especially the challenge of globalisation.

For the first time in a generation and more, the Commonwealth will be meeting at the summit without the representatives of military regimes or one-party governments. This is a remarkable transformation and will enable the Commonwealth to speak on the pressing challenges of the new century with enhanced moral authority. I have already adverted to the role of CMAG in the promotion of democracy and in the defence of the fundamental political values of the Commonwealth. Durban will provide Commonwealth leaders with a timely opportunity to consider how best to safeguard and consolidate the advances made in democratisation in the past 10 years, including the future

role of CMAG. I hope that the discussion will lead to a reaffirmation of the importance of CMAG as an instrument for the Commonwealth's practical role in strengthening the adherence of member countries to the association's fundamental principles.

In all of this, South Africa as the venue of the 1999 CHOGM will contribute its own unique inspiration. No other country has in fact done more to shape the modern Commonwealth. It was the exclusion of the apartheid regime in 1961 which cleared the way for the Commonwealth to embark on its internationalist vocation in the service of a wider world. The debates over the issues of Southern Africa in the 1970s and 80s – issues which had their ultimate roots in the apartheid system in South Africa – enabled the Commonwealth to keep faith with the people of Southern Africa and to remain true to itself. The holding of the first democratic elections in the history of South Africa in April 1994 and the end of apartheid was in many ways the Commonwealth's finest hour.

Significantly also, the theme of the summit is about making globalisation people-centred – harnessing the great achievements wrought by globalisation to the advancement of the broadest cross-section of people. No government is more conscious of the imperative need to relate globalisation to human progress and nowhere is civil society more robust than in South Africa. The venue and the theme of the meeting could not have been better matched.

Tools for the Tasks

The tasks of the Durban Meeting then are clear; it remains to ensure that the necessary resources will be forthcoming. I have already dealt with the issue of the declining resources of the CFTC, but the Secretariat too has to grapple with the problem of resources. The two reviews by Professor Mike Faber and Professor John Toye respectively of the Secretariat's programmes on sustainable development and socio-economic work were followed by other reviews of the Secretariat's operations. As a result, the Secretariat had to reorder its priorities so as to concentrate on those areas where it had a proven comparative advantage. The reviews also resulted in a significant reduction in staff to make the Secretariat "leaner and fitter". But what continues to hinder the Secretariat from adding value in its programme deliveries is the fact that while membership has grown from 48 in 1991 to its present strength of 54, the total assessed budget has remained constant in real terms. The case for additional resources is more than justified and I hope Durban will accord the issue the urgent attention it deserves.

Passages

I wish to take the opportunity of expressing my sorrow at the passing away in the past two years of one incumbent Prime Minister, the Hon Tofilau Eti Alesana of Samoa, as well as three Commonwealth veterans, Dr Hastings Kamuzu Banda, former President of Malawi, the Rt Hon Vere C Bird, former Prime Minister of Antigua and Barbuda, and the Hon Ntsu Mokhehle, former Prime Minister of Lesotho.

Since the last CHOGM a number of Heads have left office: the Rt Hon Manuel Esquivel (Belize); HE Sir Ketumile Masire (Botswana); the Hon Maj-Gen Sitiveni Rabuka (Fiji Islands); the Hon Inder Kumar Gujral (India); the Hon Dr Alfred Sant (Malta); the Rt Hon James

The transformation of the Commonwealth and its peoples will continue into the next century

Commonwealth

Heads of Government Meeting
Durban '99

Heads of Government line up for the 'family' photograph at CHOGM 1997 in Edinburgh

Bolger (New Zealand); the Hon Bill Skate (Papua New Guinea); and HE Mr Nelson Mandela (South Africa).

There are also a number of Heads of Government who will be attending CHOGM for the first time in their present capacity: the Hon Said Musa (Belize); HE Mr Festus G Mogae (Botswana); the Hon Mahendra Chaudhry (Fiji Islands); HE Mr Bharrat Jagdeo (Guyana); the Hon Bethuel Pakalitha Mosisili (Lesotho); the Rt Hon Jenny Shipley (New Zealand); HE Mr René Harris (Nauru); HE General (Rtd) Olusegun Obasanjo (Nigeria); the Hon Sir Mekere Morauta (Papua New Guinea); the Hon Tuilaepa Sailele Malielegaoi (Samoa); HE Mr Thabo Mbeki (South Africa); and the Hon Atal Bihari Vajpayee (India).

Valediction

The Durban Heads of Government Meeting will be my last as Commonwealth Secretary-General. It has been an enormous honour and a great privilege to serve the Commonwealth for more than 33 years, including the past 10 as its chief executive. My first and greatest debt is to Heads of Government who elected me to my post at Kuala Lumpur in October 1989 and who have been generous and unswerving in their support for my efforts to promote the interests of the association. I have also had the ready co-operation of Commonwealth Ministers, Cabinet Secretaries, High Commissioners and other senior officials. But I would not have been able to discharge my duties without the loyalty and assistance of my colleagues at the Secretariat in Marlborough House. I will always be grateful for their support.

The Commonwealth may be too complex an organisation to yield to a tidy definition but there can be no doubt as to its importance both for its members and the larger international community. Because it represents a principle that transcends narrow interests and divisions; because it works to translate the concept of our common humanity into a living reality; and because it works for a more just and equal world in which the security of the vulnerable and the poor is assured, it represents hope in the world. That is why caring for the Commonwealth must remain a priority charge on all its member governments.

31 August 1999