

## Reshaping the Secretariat Administration

Progress towards reshaping the administration of the Secretariat to provide efficient and cost-effective support in personnel management, financial control, office accommodation, conference servicing, printing and information technology continued.

Two consultants offered by the UK Government undertook a Review of the Administration Function and their 1998 report was discussed with representatives of member governments on the Finance Committee. Their recommendations included a reduction in establishment, especially among support staff, measures to achieve efficiency in work processes and procedures, and changes in management practice.

In July 1998, the Secretary-General appointed Mr Gordon Draper, a former Foreign Minister of Trinidad and Tobago with wide experience in public administration, as Change Management Officer to carry forward the consultants' recommendations. Many of the changes taking place in the first half of 1999 have focused on strengthening and deepening strategic planning, enhancing staff skills and knowledge, training and corporate cultural change.

sional staff and 115 (women: 87, men: 28) were support staff. Efforts continued to achieve gender balance in staff composition. (See Appendix IV for list of senior staff.)

Staff development remained a priority. All staff members were trained in-house or, where necessary, externally, to give them additional skills in, for example, handling the media, gender awareness planning or various software packages (see Appendix II).

The new staff performance appraisal system, introduced in 1997, required supervisors to discuss with staff and agree their work plans, and identify programme objectives and individual training needs. Following the Job Evaluation study in 1997, appeal hearings from staff were held and settled. The Commonwealth Arbitral Tribunal, which had also been set up in 1997 to hear grievances which could not be settled in-house, heard one case in 1998.



Marlborough House, headquarters in London of the Commonwealth Secretariat

### Staff

By 30 June 1999, there were 320 staff posts in the Secretariat, 28 fewer than in 1997. Of these posts, 287 were filled – 147 by women and 140 by men from 37 countries. Of these, 172 (women: 60, men: 112) were diplomatic and profes-



Hundreds of visitors are received at the Secretariat every year. Here, a group of students from Brunei Darussalam call on the Secretary-General

A human resource strategy was drawn up for the Secretariat, more authority was delegated to middle managers, staff were consulted more widely, and more focused training for specific job requirements was introduced.

### **Finance**

By 1 July 1999, the Secretariat will have replaced its six-year-old Financial Management and Information System with a new system which is Year 2000-compliant. The system will continue to help the Secretariat keep expenditures under constant review and enable divisions to monitor progress in their technical assistance projects. The Secretariat's Assessed Budget and Budgets for other Funds are at Appendix V, with programme budget allocations for 1997/98 and 1998/99.

### **General Services**

The Secretariat continues to be housed in three buildings in London – in Marlborough House and Quadrant House in Pall Mall, and in Heron House in Victoria, where the Economic and Legal Advisory Services Division is located. A number of proposals were initiated for improving facilities and delivery

of general services during the review period. These included introduction of a voice mail system and refurbishment of the ground floor of Quadrant House to an open-plan system as suggested by the 1997 Review of the Commonwealth Information Programme.

Assistance was given to member governments in organising CHOGM in 1997, seven ministerial, three Senior Officials and several other meetings. Steps were also taken to reduce travel and accommodation costs for conferences by using discounted air-fares and competitive hotel tariffs. The volume of printing work contracted out was reduced.

### **Information Technology**

In 1998, an Information Technology Strategy for the Secretariat was developed following the report of an external consultant. This advocated a comprehensive approach to meeting information technology needs. Initiatives which have commenced include development of Project Information Management databases at divisional level, upgrading the network infrastructure, and developing an Extranet for document sharing with governments.