

# The Commonwealth

## *In Pursuit of the Millbrook Action Plan*

BY COMMONWEALTH SECRETARY-GENERAL EMEKA ANYAOKU

Commonwealth Heads of Government meet this year in Edinburgh, at a time when there is a great resurgence of interest in the association within and outside the Commonwealth. This reawakening of interest in the Commonwealth is no accident. It reflects the enlarging role of the association in meeting the new challenges of a rapidly changing world. The Harare Declaration of 1991 was a turning point for the Commonwealth. It was nothing short of a bold programme to convert the Commonwealth in a post-Cold War world into a force for democracy and good governance, and a more effective instrument for the promotion of sustainable development.

At the Millbrook Retreat during the Auckland Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM) of 1995, Commonwealth leaders sought to carry that commitment from the realm of declaration into that of action. For not only did the Action Programme adopted there set out measures which the Commonwealth would take to reinforce democratic processes and institutions, it also went further to lay down the steps that would be taken in cases of serious or persistent violations of the Harare principles. It also identified specific steps the Commonwealth would adopt in pursuance of sustainable development and consensus-building in the international community. Harare and Millbrook have demonstrated that the Commonwealth not only stands for its principles, but has placed respect for them high on its agenda.

As the role of the Commonwealth is expanding, so too is its membership. At Auckland we celebrated the return of South Africa with President Nelson Mandela among us, and also welcomed Cameroon and Mozambique into this unique family of nations. Others are now knocking on the door with expressions of interest to join.

The Commonwealth today encompasses 53 sovereign nations and some 1.7 billion people, making up almost one-third of the world's population. It embraces virtually every race and every major religious group. A cohesive Commonwealth is thus an example of unity in diversity, marked by the quality of tolerance among its many peoples and nations.

Tolerance is a quality which is increasingly in demand in our growing pluralistic world in which social diversity is an increasing phenomenon, as developments in communications and technology shrink the globe, human mobility increases and national borders become more porous. But when pluralism becomes divisive, it transforms into a sinister and retrogressive force which spawns conflicts, and undermines the cohesion and stability of states. The Commonwealth by virtue of its nature and experience seeks to make the world safe for diversity.

The sense of trust rooted in shared history and values enables the Commonwealth to intervene to help defuse conflicts as few other international organisations can do. The Secretary-General's good offices role is often invoked by the member governments concerned to help resolve potential or actual conflicts, as my Report chronicles.



Chief Emeka Anyaoku

*It has been widely acknowledged that the presence of Commonwealth observers can contribute to a credible electoral process.*



*Commonwealth Observer Brian Alleyne (right) discusses preparations for the Tanzanian elections with a polling station official*

But, for the majority of members in the Commonwealth, the elimination of poverty and improvement in living standards are their principal concerns. Some have had remarkable success in exploiting the new opportunities for trade and investment. For many, however, development remains a daunting task. The Commonwealth, in a number of ways described in my Report, has been assisting the efforts of its member countries in improving living standards.

The Commonwealth is an association not just of governments; it is also an association of peoples. All around the world, space is being created for civil society as a growing basis for sustaining democracy and promoting economic progress. Within the Commonwealth, people-to-people contacts, including through a vast network of professional and other non-governmental organisations, uniquely complement the official Commonwealth.

The chapters in my Report outline the range of activities undertaken by the Commonwealth in pursuance of its commitments since I last reported to Heads of Government in Auckland in 1995. It is a picture which should reinforce our pride in this unique organisation and buttress our belief that the Commonwealth has a growing role to play in the future.

### **Promoting Commonwealth Fundamental Political Values**

Millbrook will continue to be remembered for its adoption of an action programme designed to fulfil more effectively commitments contained in the Harare Commonwealth Declaration. The decision to establish the Commonwealth Ministerial Action Group (CMAG) of Foreign Ministers to deal with serious or persistent violations of the Harare principles was an important landmark. While CMAG's remit is broadly defined, it chose to focus initially on the three countries – The Gambia, Nigeria and Sierra Leone – whose military regimes represented the most serious negation of the association's fundamental principles of democracy and respect for human rights. The Group held its first meeting in December 1995, met subsequently on seven occasions and despatched five country missions. The Gambia held a presidential election in September 1996 and parliamentary elections in January 1997, and there is now a widespread recognition that the process of transition, while still giving cause for some concern, is nevertheless continuing on a desirable path. The Government of Nigeria has been stressing that its transition programme to democratically elected government, which is to be completed on 1 October 1998, is still on course, but concerns persist regarding its human rights record. Sierra Leone, which had successfully completed the transition to democracy, was tragically plunged back into another military takeover of its government on 25 May 1997.

CMAG will be reporting separately with its recommendations on these countries to Heads of Government at Edinburgh. I want to take this opportunity to express my appreciation to its members from Britain, Canada, Ghana, Jamaica, Malaysia, New Zealand and South Africa and to its Chairperson, Dr Stan Mudenge, Foreign Minister of Zimbabwe. They have, through the work of the Group, contributed towards enhancing the capacity of the Commonwealth to pursue more effectively its members' commitment to the association's fundamental political principles.

An important aspect of the democratic process is the conduct of free and fair elections. It has been widely acknowledged that the presence

of Commonwealth observers can contribute to a credible electoral process. Since Auckland, the Commonwealth has had groups of observers at six national elections. But the observation of elections should not be a permanent or overriding feature of the efforts to promote the democratic principle. The Commonwealth Secretariat is progressively concentrating on strengthening institutions that promote and sustain democracy, human rights, the rule of law and the independence of the judiciary in Commonwealth member countries. In the past two years, the Secretariat has assisted several countries in developing their electoral laws, codes of conduct for political parties and candidates, training programmes for electoral officials, voter education programmes and election logistics.

In February 1997, I convened a Roundtable of Heads of Government of Commonwealth Africa on 'Democracy and Good Governance in Africa' in Botswana. The purpose of the Roundtable was to provide the participating Heads of Government with an opportunity collectively to review the progress of democracy in their respective countries and exchange views on how they might meet present and future challenges. A preparatory meeting preceded the Roundtable. Forty-one representatives of government and opposition parties from 18 Commonwealth African countries and a small number of resource persons participated in the preparatory meeting on 23-25 February. For a number of the countries, it was the first time that opposition and government party leaders had the opportunity to meet and share experiences on the application of democratic values. The opposition and government party leaders presented their joint proposals for strengthening democracy to the leaders of 16 Commonwealth African countries who met a day later. As was subsequently confirmed to me by many of those, including Heads of Government, who participated in the exercise, the exchanges at the Roundtable will reinforce the pursuit of democracy while taking full account of particular national circumstances.

There has been increased recognition of the Commonwealth's capacity for conflict prevention and resolution, especially through the deployment of the Secretary-General's good offices at the request of member governments concerned. To give a few examples, following the tragic death of King Moshoeshoe II of Lesotho in January 1996, I held discussions with both the Prime Minister and the Palace in Maseru to help ensure a smooth transition of the Crown to King Letsie III. In 1996, the Commonwealth Secretariat collaborated with the United Nations and the Organisation of African Unity (OAU) in facilitating agreement between the rebel Revolutionary United Front and the elected government to end the civil conflict that continued to threaten the successful transition to democracy in Sierra Leone. In March 1997, at the invitation of all the principal parties concerned, I visited Papua New Guinea to help find a solution to the serious constitutional crisis that had arisen from the challenge to the elected government by the military over the Government's engagement of mercenaries in the context of the ongoing rebellion in the province of Bougainville.

### South Africa

While rejoicing at the return of South Africa to the Commonwealth family in 1994, Heads of Government at Auckland recognised the magnitude of the task facing the new South Africa. Since then, there has been notable progress. The new constitution has been signed into law,



*Botswana President Sir Ketumile Masire (left) welcomes President Bakili Muluzi of Malawi for the Roundtable*

*The exchanges at the Roundtable of Heads of Government of Commonwealth Africa will reinforce the pursuit of democracy.*

*Men and women from 27 Commonwealth countries have made their expertise and experience available to South Africa.*



*Commonwealth countries have assisted in the planning and management of local government elections in South Africa in 1995 and 1996*

local government elections have been successfully concluded and the system of provincial government has been restructured. Considerable progress has also been made in the task of reorganising the judicial system, the public service, the foreign service and the police, and the development of gender policy and human rights capacity.

As the special Commonwealth technical assistance programme to South Africa through the Commonwealth Fund for Technical Co-operation (CFTC) enters its fifth and final year, I should like to express my appreciation to the men and women from 27 Commonwealth countries who have made their expertise and experience available. I also wish to thank the Commonwealth governments which have considerably augmented the resources of the CFTC through additional contributions and greatly increased the impact of the South Africa programme. Nowhere has Commonwealth collaboration been more marked than in the electoral area where a programme jointly sponsored by the Secretariat with Britain and Australia provided electoral officers from 13 Commonwealth countries to assist in the planning and management of local government elections in November 1995 and June 1996. I believe that the experience gained in these and the earlier 1994 elections will help South Africa to build a permanent election machinery, develop electoral management capacity and improve electoral procedures.

### **Promoting Sustainable Development**

The change in our understanding of what drives economic growth, and the increased opportunities for trade and investment, have opened up prospects for the improvement of living standards in many countries. But we know that for several, development remains a serious challenge. Many start from the disadvantageous position of a heavy burden of debt, lack of institutional and human capacities to implement change, inadequate physical infrastructure and shortages of key skills that are essential for an expanding economy. Such countries are at risk of further marginalisation. This has placed an even higher premium on the Commonwealth's capacity to provide practical help through the CFTC – its developmental arm – at the national and regional levels, and its consensus-building role on international economic and social issues.

A major example of the latter has been the initiative on multi-lateral debt relief, first discussed at the Commonwealth Finance Ministers Meeting in 1994. This has now borne fruit with agreement being reached at the World Bank and International Monetary Fund on relief for the Highly Indebted Poor Countries. It is gratifying to see Uganda as the first beneficiary of this initiative. However, I hope that a number of other deserving Commonwealth countries will also benefit from the initiative at the earliest opportunity.

While action on debt relief at an international level is important, the management of debt at the national level – including its proper monitoring and control – is also vital. The Secretariat, therefore, has been developing training modules and workshops to help enhance the capacity of member countries in this area. Additionally, the highly successful Commonwealth Secretariat Debt Recording and Management System (CS-DRMS) is being further developed to handle new areas such as short-term credit and domestic debt.

An enabling environment for the private sector, and an ability to

attract capital flows from abroad, are now widely recognised to be important elements of a successful development strategy. In its assistance to member countries, the Secretariat, therefore, has expanded its work on the development of the private sector and the domestic capital markets, and in promoting access to world capital markets. One significant development in regard to the latter was the establishment of the Commonwealth Private Investment Initiative (CPII). CPII is a collaborative commercial venture managed by the Commonwealth Development Corporation (CDC), with the help of the Commonwealth Secretariat. It envisages the launching of investment funds in all the developing regions of the Commonwealth. The first of such funds, the Africa Fund (COMAFIN), was launched in July 1996, and it has begun to channel commercial investments to the developing countries of Commonwealth Africa. The CDC and the Commonwealth governments inside and outside Africa, whose agencies and parastatals have contributed to the investment capital, are to be commended. Following COMAFIN, other regional funds, including a Pacific Capital Investment Fund and a South Asia Fund, are in the process of being launched. These funds not only establish partnerships between small businesses and the foreign investor, but their success is also likely to encourage the larger and more cautious investors to follow.

Another area where the Secretariat has been active is in the follow-up to the Uruguay Round trade agreements. Several member countries find they are inadequately prepared for the adjustment required by the post-Uruguay Round trade environment and for taking full advantage of the opportunities opened up by it. The Secretariat has been assessing these issues, paying particular attention to the concerns of small states and the trading interests of the African-Caribbean-Pacific (ACP) countries. In co-operation with the ACP Secretariat, it has also been undertaking work on options for a successor agreement to the Lomé IV Convention. At a national level, technical assistance is being given to member countries to enhance the competitiveness of their economies and their capacity for export growth and diversification. The Secretariat has also been providing assistance in the training of small scale entrepreneurs, the establishment of appropriate legal, economic and fiscal frameworks for the exploitation of key natural resources, and the delimitation of maritime boundaries of member countries.

The Secretariat has been engaged in practical steps towards alleviation of poverty in some of its member countries. Heads of Government in Auckland agreed that the Secretariat should facilitate the adoption by more Commonwealth countries of successful self-help schemes, with non-governmental agencies and others acting as catalytic agents for mobilising the energies of the poor in alleviating poverty. In the past year, the Secretariat has carried out a major study to identify successful approaches to poverty alleviation, and initiated a series of regional workshops to promote the sharing of experience. Building on the conclusions of these workshops, the Secretariat plans to provide technical assistance and to play a brokerage and catalytic role in mobilising expertise and seed capital to countries interested in establishing self-help schemes. This task is also being advanced by the launching of the Commonwealth Youth Credit Initiative, and by the Secretariat's work on engendering national budgets which is designed *inter alia* to address the needs of women who constitute the largest segment of the poor.



*President Nelson Mandela launches the Commonwealth Africa Investment Fund at Marlborough House, London, in 1996*

*The Africa Fund ... has begun to channel commercial investments to the developing countries of Commonwealth Africa.*



*Commonwealth co-operation in education has advanced ... here, a schoolgirl in India is hard at work at the blackboard*

*The Secretariat has been able to promote basic education, science and mathematics and technology...*

## Human Resources

The development of human capacity is critical to the promotion of sustainable development. Since Auckland, the Secretariat has been providing integrated management and training support to individual countries as well as at the regional level. The Commonwealth Youth Programme (CYP), which focuses on youth empowerment, national youth policy and human resource development for young women and men, has made considerable progress. The number of Commonwealth countries that have officially recognised national youth policies has increased.

I am disappointed that progress remains slow in achieving the target of 2,000 awards by the year 2000 under the Commonwealth Scholarship and Fellowship Plan. But in other areas, Commonwealth co-operation in education has advanced. The Secretariat has been able to promote basic education, science and mathematics and technology, with special emphasis on the role of women and teacher training. Work is under way on a development and funding plan for the Commonwealth Universities Study Abroad Consortium (CUSAC), designed to promote student mobility. Training has been provided to women in higher education management, and assistance was given to tertiary institutions to enable them to meet an acute shortage of qualified and experienced staff in their teaching and management facilities.

The 13th Commonwealth Conference of Education Ministers in Botswana in July 1997 had 'Education and Technology: The Challenges for the 21st Century' as its special theme. The Secretariat is now engaged in developing ways of helping governments to exploit the new technologies and training materials for regional and pan-Commonwealth use. Under the Commonwealth Higher Education Support Scheme (CHESS), the Secretariat is focusing on training and capacity-building for senior university managers.

Health remains a vital component of human development and a strategic investment in strengthening human capital. Areas of concern for which mandates have been given by Heads of Government and Health Ministers include child survival, women and health, substance abuse, HIV/AIDS and human resource development for health. The health programme is now focused towards an advocacy, brokerage and catalytic role while at the same time responding to requests for technical assistance in filling gaps in key skills.

## Public Service Reform and Capacity-building

An efficient, accountable, and responsive public service helps to guarantee good governance and strengthen democratic culture. This lies behind CHOGM's endorsement of the Commonwealth initiative for public service reform in the Auckland Communiqué. The programme has been providing an integrated package of advisory and training services including short- and long-term experts, specialised training programmes, policy roundtables and workshops, and publications which share good and innovative management practices between member countries. There is an organic link between this programme, the promotion of fundamental political values and private sector development.

A major bottleneck in many developing countries which are restructuring their economies and undertaking developmental tasks is the gap in key skills and expertise. A particular strength of the Secretariat working through the CFTC is its ability to respond to member countries' needs in this area through a free-standing capacity to offer training and

provide experts at the request of member countries. In the past two years, some 9,000 middle- and top-level managers and officials in the public and private sectors have been given training to upgrade their skills, with the assistance of more than 350 training institutions, many in developing countries. The Secretariat has also met requests from some 46 member countries, six dependent territories and several regional organisations serving Commonwealth countries by placing about 650 short- and long-term experts and advisers in essential positions, where qualified nationals were not available. A significant number of these resource persons and experts are from Commonwealth developing countries themselves, with all the resulting advantages of South-South co-operation. Commonwealth links and commonalities greatly enhance the effect of co-operation between member countries for institution-building and capacity creation.

### **Science, Technology and Environment**

The application of science and technology is essential in today's global market place for sustainable economic and social development, and for conserving the environment. The Commonwealth is fortunate in having strong historical links among its scientific community, which are currently nurtured under the aegis of the Commonwealth Science Council (CSC). The science and technology programme of the Secretariat, which is supported by the CSC and other sources, facilitates the networking of science and technology institutions and personnel among Commonwealth countries, contributes to the development of a science and technology culture and addresses special issues of interest to small states. The biennial meeting of the CSC in May 1997 in Malawi confirmed its current programme of work, which is centred around three flagship programmes: biodiversity, water management and renewable sources of energy; and, in addition, approved a new flagship programme, namely, capability-building. The Secretariat is grateful to the British Department for International Development for its assistance in the establishment of an information network for water management in small island states and to the Canadian Centre for Remote Sensing for its support for the Commonwealth programme in that area. Secretariat training and other assistance continues to enhance institutional capabilities in critical areas of new and emerging technologies by facilitating training attachments for staff and information exchange through a network of relevant Commonwealth science and technology institutions. The Secretariat has also responded to requests for assistance with training in information technology, particularly of women.

Although international co-operation on environmental matters has increased since the 1992 UN Conference on Environment and Development in Rio de Janeiro, there is a need for further consensus-building and dialogue on key issues. Since it was established in 1993, the Commonwealth Consultative Group on Environment, which enables Environment Ministers to meet annually, has served as a valuable high level forum to promote consensus and co-operation on such issues. At the same time, the Secretariat has also been assisting member governments with policy development and training to deal with environmental problems. The Iwokrama International Rainforest Programme continues to be the flagship of our effort to promote conservation and environmentally sustainable exploitation of forests. Important developments since Auckland include the enactment into law by the Parliament of Guyana of the establishment of the Iwokrama International Centre for

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*The Secretariat responds to requests for assistance, especially for women*

Rainforest Conservation and the constitution of a Donor Support Group, co-chaired by the Secretariat, the European Union and the World Bank, to mobilise core funding. I am grateful to the Government of Guyana, member countries and the donor support group for the attention they are giving to this project.

## Gender and Development

From the time of the UN Fourth World Conference on Women held two years ago in Beijing, it has been evident that the Commonwealth's own Plan of Action on Gender and Development is living up to its objective of charting a course of practical first steps for member countries implementing commitments entered into at that Conference. In particular, by introducing the concept of Gender Management Systems (GMS), the Commonwealth has taken the lead in developing flexible methods and systems that will enable member governments to translate these commitments into practical actions relevant to their own country circumstances. The GMS approach to gender mainstreaming in government includes responsive packages of training and technical expertise for ministries including finance, education, health, planning, public service and women. By carrying this approach through to all of the Commonwealth's own programmes, gender is also being mainstreamed to promote equality of opportunity and outcome. The needs of member countries in implementing their Beijing commitments have been assessed on a regional basis to help co-ordinate responses to technical assistance requests.

In parallel with initiatives for gender mainstreaming, activities targeted directly at the needs of women have continued. Equality for women is a core value of the Commonwealth. In pursuance of this ideal, in collaboration with the Commonwealth Magistrates' and Judges' Association, regional judicial colloquia have been held to support networks of judges committed to the domestic application of international human rights standards relevant to women's rights. Similarly, in the area of political participation, regional symposia (e.g., for Southern African Development Community countries) have been held to promote the increased participation of women in decision-making at the national and local government levels.

Following from the recent meeting of Commonwealth Ministers Responsible for Women's Affairs, I now foresee future activity coalescing around a number of specific themes including the 30 per cent target for women's political participation by the year 2005, combating violence against women, GMS, and engendering macroeconomic policy.

## Small States

More than half of our members are small states, and the Commonwealth perhaps is the only global organisation in which small states can genuinely claim special consideration. The increasing numbers of small states in the post-Cold War period is one of the most significant features of global geopolitics. The Commonwealth believes that, given its nature and activities, it can understand better than most other international organisations the particular needs and anxieties of small states in matters that affect their security and development. It enables them to find a voice in the world. And by addressing the concerns of small states – sustain-



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*Gender is also being mainstreamed to promote equality of opportunity and outcome.*

able development, environment, hazardous waste, security – the wider Commonwealth is helping itself and the world.

Increased co-operation with regional organisations has enabled us to further extend our reach in assisting small member states. In the Secretariat, a Task Force on Small States has been implementing the conclusions of the second meeting of the Ministerial Group on Small States held in Auckland in 1995. More than 60 per cent of CFTC assistance goes to small states. The Secretariat continues to assist small states in the transition to the new post-Uruguay Round situation, particularly in regard to the erosion of trade preferences and the discussions on new trade related issues under the auspices of the World Trade Organisation. The 1985 Commonwealth report, *Vulnerability: Small States in the Global Society*, has been updated, and this will be presented to the Commonwealth Ministerial Meeting on Small States in the margins of CHOGM in Edinburgh in October.

One of the practical ways by which the Commonwealth provides special assistance to small states is through the Joint Office for Commonwealth Small States at the UN in New York. Cyprus, New Zealand and Singapore have now joined Australia, Britain and Canada as donors for the Office. I hope others will follow suit.

### **Facilitating Consensus-building**

In highlighting consensus-building as one of the three legs of the Millbrook Commonwealth Action Programme, Heads of Government cited the Commonwealth's global reach, its membership of various regional organisations and its use of special missions, and formal and informal consultations in the wings of meetings of international institutions as the principal means through which the organisation could assist the wider international community in building bridges. This has been consciously pursued since Auckland. The Secretariat has enhanced its co-operation with and support for the United Nations as the principal global forum for the promotion of consensus on international political, economic and social issues. In February 1996, I took part in the second meeting of the UN Secretary-General with the executive heads of selected regional and international organisations. The discussions were directed towards the maintenance of international peace and security and ensuring complementarity of regional efforts with those of the United Nations General Assembly. More generally, we have continued to use the Secretariat's observer status at the UN to monitor important political developments and also for wide-ranging discussions on policy and other issues of interest to member states.

Attendance at the UN General Assembly continues to be combined with consultations with Permanent Representatives of Commonwealth countries and their staff. Such meetings take place periodically and provide a useful occasion to brief Permanent Representatives on Commonwealth developments particularly on issues that would be of concern to their work at the UN. I am pleased to say that Commonwealth Permanent Representatives at the UN now meet regularly among themselves in order to exchange views on matters of common interest.

The Commonwealth membership embraces virtually every major global and regional grouping – e.g., the G7, G77, EU, ASEAN, SAARC, OAU, OAS, CARICOM and the South Pacific Forum. This gives the Commonwealth a wide reach, while at the same time providing a

*The Secretariat has enhanced its co-operation with and support for the UN as the principal forum for the promotion of consensus.*



*At the Heads of Government Meeting in Auckland in 1995*

mechanism to transcend regional interests in tackling problems of global concern. The Commonwealth believes that co-operation with such bodies makes a positive contribution to resource sharing and partnership. Since Auckland, the Commonwealth itself has strengthened its links with the UN and regional organisations by signing and implementing memoranda of understanding.

### **Tools for the Task**

Harare and Millbrook have considerably expanded the Commonwealth agenda, and the Secretariat work programme has been continuously refined and reshaped to meet the changing demands placed upon it. The reviews of programmes of sustainable development and economic and social work conducted by Professor Mike Faber and Professor John Toye were followed after Auckland by reviews of the information and political programmes. These reviews are helping the Secretariat to focus its work in those areas in which it can make a distinctive contribution in the most cost-effective manner. A culture of evaluation has now taken root. The total establishment, which was reduced from 431 to 360 positions at the time of restructuring the Secretariat in 1993, has been further reduced to 348, enabling the Secretariat to realise savings on staff and accommodation costs. A review of the cost and methods of administration is now being undertaken. A job evaluation exercise, which reviewed the relative gradings of all staff positions and recommended a new simplified grading structure and a more competitive remuneration scale, has been completed.

The Secretariat is now streamlined and better equipped to serve its member countries. In November 1995 at Millbrook, Heads of Government agreed to strengthen its capacity for undertaking developmental work through support for its various Funds and especially by restoring the resources of the CFTC to their 1991/92 level in real terms. Since then a number of countries have increased contributions to the CFTC, enabling it to propose larger plans of expenditure in the past two years. However, the demands on resources continue to exceed what is available and we have not yet reached the real resource level of five years ago. If the Commonwealth is to fulfil the expectations of its member countries adequately, it would need to be provided with additional resources, as envisaged at Millbrook.



*At the Secretariat's headquarters, Marlborough House, work programmes are constantly refined and reshaped to meet changing needs*

*The Secretariat is now streamlined and better equipped to serve its member countries.*

### **Looking to Edinburgh**

Commonwealth Heads of Government will be meeting in Britain after a gap of 20 years, at a time of Britain's increased interest in Commonwealth links. It is the Year of the Commonwealth in Britain. The British Parliament held extensive debates on the role of the Commonwealth following a recent report of the Select Committee on Foreign Affairs which concluded that 'the Commonwealth is acquiring a new significance in a rapidly transforming world.' And by the end of October Britain will have achieved the distinction of hosting the Senior Officials Meeting and Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting in succession.

The Edinburgh meeting of Heads of Government also coincides with the year of celebration of the golden jubilee anniversary of the wedding of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II, Head of the Commonwealth. Her Majesty has given care and inspiration to the Commonwealth for more

than 40 years during which it has become, after the United Nations, the largest truly global multilateral organisation. There could not be a more fitting time for the Commonwealth to come back to Britain and celebrate with Her Majesty.

Commonwealth links are being increasingly recognised by member countries for their significant economic and commercial advantages. The total trade of Commonwealth countries now constitutes 20 per cent of global trade and the trend is rising. So is the trend in Commonwealth investment flows. Some of the world's fastest growing economies – no less than 13 – are now in the Commonwealth. All this is making member countries reassess the value of their Commonwealth links in a more positive way. The affinities created by shared culture, language and institutions can greatly facilitate increased economic interflows, and it is worth exploring how these links might be activated and built upon to the mutual benefit of all members. At the same time, there is need to consider the special measures required to assist those countries who need help in adjusting to the new global environment and in addressing particular problems of development. That is why the choice of 'Trade, Investment and Development: The Road to Commonwealth Prosperity' as the special theme for the Edinburgh CHOGM is so very timely.

I am pleased that the *Financial Times* of London, with support from the British Government and the Secretariat, will be organising a Commonwealth Business Forum at the time of the Edinburgh CHOGM. This will bring together Commonwealth business leaders and senior government representatives to discuss the mutually reinforcing roles of government and the private sector and the scope for improved co-operation among Commonwealth businesses. I am confident that the discussions at CHOGM and elsewhere will result in identification of practical measures for boosting intra-Commonwealth trade and investment and for enhancing Commonwealth co-operation in development, and also contribute to the development of Commonwealth positions in the wider international fora.

At Edinburgh, Heads of Government will be meeting against the backdrop of a reinvigorated Commonwealth. They will have before them the report of the CMAG on the situation in Nigeria and Sierra Leone, but also referring to The Gambia. In considering the CMAG report, Heads of Government would no doubt wish to consider the further steps they may want to take in promoting adherence to the Commonwealth values reflected in the Harare principles. They will also wish to decide on the application for membership of countries which have since Auckland sought to join the Commonwealth. In this they will be assisted by the report of the Intergovernmental Group on Criteria for Commonwealth Membership.

Edinburgh will thus provide an opportunity for Heads of Government to reinforce the continuing emergence of the Commonwealth as an instrument for promoting and sustaining democracy and good governance within its diverse membership. At a time when one of the challenges facing our global community is how to build a global environment in which the nations and peoples of the world can pursue genuine co-operation and understanding across the divides of race, religion, geography and different stages of socio-economic development, the Commonwealth by its nature and activities will increasingly serve as a worthy template for the international community.

I wish to take this opportunity to express my deep sorrow at the passing away of HE Dr Cheddi Jagan, President of Guyana, and the

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Rt Hon Michael Manley, former Prime Minister of Jamaica, both of whom have attended Commonwealth summits in the past.

Since the last CHOGM, a number of Heads have left office. At the time of writing, they include the Hon Paul Keating (Australia), the Hon Begum Khaleda Zia (Bangladesh), the Rt Hon John Major (Britain), the Hon Shri P V Narasimha Rao (India), the Hon Dr Edward Fenech-Adami (Malta), the Rt Hon Sir Anerood Jugnauth (Mauritius), HE Mr Bernard Dowiyogo (Nauru), the Hon Mohtarma Benazir Bhutto (Pakistan), the Rt Hon Sir Julius Chan (Papua New Guinea), the Rt Hon John Compton (St Lucia), HE Capt Valentine Strasser (Sierra Leone), the Hon Solomon Mamaloni (Solomon Islands), the Hon Prince Mbilini Dlamini (Swaziland), HE Mr Ali Hassan Mwinyi (Tanzania), the Hon Patrick Manning (Trinidad and Tobago), the Hon Kamuta Latasi (Tuvalu) and the Hon Maxime Carlot Korman (Vanuatu). On behalf of the Commonwealth I thank these former Heads of Government for their contribution to the Commonwealth and wish them good luck in their future endeavours. I will also be extending a special welcome to a number of Heads who will be attending CHOGM for the first time. They include the Hon John Howard (Australia), the Hon Sheikh Hasina (Bangladesh), the Rt Hon Tony Blair (Britain), HE Mr Sam Hinds (Guyana), the Hon Inder Kumar Gujral (India), the Hon Dr Alfred Sant (Malta), the Hon Dr Navinchandra Ramgoolam (Mauritius), HE Mr Joaquim A Chissano (Mozambique), the Hon Bill Skate (Papua New Guinea), the Hon Dr Kenny Anthony (St Lucia), the Hon Bartholomew Ulufa'alu (Solomon Islands), the Hon Dr Barnabas Dlamini (Swaziland), HE Mr Benjamin William Mkapa (Tanzania), the Hon Basdeo Panday (Trinidad and Tobago) and the Hon Serge Vohor (Vanuatu).



31 August 1997