

## After Millbrook

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The Commonwealth backed with concrete steps its commitment to promoting its fundamental values when the Millbrook Commonwealth Action Programme on the Harare Declaration was endorsed at the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM) in New Zealand in November 1995 (full text at Appendix I).

The Millbrook Action Programme, named for the resort where the leaders met on Retreat and agreed on the Programme in 1995, gave practical expression to the promotion of these commitments. The Programme is in three parts – advancing fundamental political values, promoting sustainable development, and facilitating consensus-building on international issues – and it outlined steps which the Commonwealth could collectively take in cases of serious or persistent violations by members of fundamental values enshrined in the Harare principles.

The association's resolve to uphold these values was proven at the 1995 CHOGM when Nigeria, having been deemed by Heads of Government to be in serious violation of the Harare principles, was suspended from the association.



### The Commonwealth Ministerial Action Group

The Millbrook Action Programme outlined specific measures to support processes and institutions which uphold the Harare principles and to enhance the Secretariat's capacity to provide advice, training and other forms of technical assistance to governments in this regard. In addition, the Programme set out a series of measures which would be taken in

*Welcome for South Africa ... President Nelson Mandela (left) at the first CHOGM South Africa attended since it left the Commonwealth. Here being greeted by CHOGM 1995 host Prime Minister Jim Bolger of New Zealand*

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## FUNDAMENTAL VALUES

The Commonwealth's fundamental values, which first found expression in the Declaration of Commonwealth Principles in Singapore in 1971, were elaborated and strengthened in the landmark Harare Commonwealth Declaration of 1991.

Since 1991, the Harare principles, as they have become known, have been the basis from which all Commonwealth activities flow. Respect for democracy, democratic processes and institutions which respect national circumstances, fundamental human rights, the rule of law, just and honest government, and a commitment to socio-economic development and equality for women are among the many values that all Commonwealth governments have pledged to uphold.

*The CMAG Ministerial Mission to The Gambia, June 1996, consisted of the Hon Sir Robin Gray (New Zealand), the Hon Dr Obed Asamoah (Ghana) and the Hon Christine Stewart (Canada), seen here with Head of State HE Colonel Yahya Jammeh (second from left)*



response to serious or persistent violations of the Harare principles, and also created a mechanism, the Commonwealth Ministerial Action Group on the Harare Declaration (CMAG), to deal with such violations and to recommend collective Commonwealth action aimed at the earliest possible return to compliance with the Harare principles.

CMAG, which was established as a group of Foreign Ministers from Britain, Canada, Ghana, Jamaica, Malaysia, New Zealand, South Africa and Zimbabwe, is chaired by Dr Stan Mudenge, Foreign Minister of Zimbabwe. It was convened for the first time by the Commonwealth Secretary-General in December 1995. During that meeting, the Group decided that while its mandate could be broadly defined, its initial focus would be on the three remaining Commonwealth countries which had military regimes: The Gambia, Nigeria and Sierra Leone. In the 18 months until the end of July 1997, CMAG met seven times and, as a Group – with the exception of Canada – visited Nigeria in November 1996. It is expected to meet again before making its report to CHOGM in October 1997.

*Nigeria* – CMAG decided at its first meeting to pursue Commonwealth concerns with respect to Nigeria, through dialogue with the Nigerian Government at the highest level. Two rounds of talks were held between CMAG and the Nigerian government delegation: at Marlborough House in June 1996, and in Abuja in November 1996.

During its visit to Nigeria in November 1996, CMAG was able to call on the Head of State, hold useful exchanges with representatives of the five registered political parties, the heads of various transitional bodies and the National Human Rights Commission, and meet with a delegation of traditional rulers and community leaders. Regrettably, the Group was not given access to Chief Moshood Abiola, General Olusegun Obasanjo, or other detainees or prisoners.

In order to have access to the widest possible cross-section of views before making its assessment and report to Heads of Government in October 1997, CMAG also called for written submissions from all interested parties on the Nigerian issue and heard oral presentations from a number of such organisations in July 1997.

*The Gambia* – A three-member CMAG Ministerial Mission led by the Foreign Minister of Ghana, and including ministerial representatives

from Canada and New Zealand, visited The Gambia in June 1996, providing encouragement to the return from a military regime to a civilian democracy and exploring ways in which the Commonwealth could lend further assistance to this process. At the recommendation of CMAG, the Secretary-General declined to send an Observer Group to either the September 1996 presidential or the January 1997 parliamentary elections. However, a Secretariat team present at the latter suggested that the Commonwealth could assist the authorities in The Gambia in pursuit of democratic practices and institutions. While reiterating its concern about aspects of the political environment in The Gambia, CMAG endorsed the recommendation and commended the Secretary-General's actions towards its implementation.

**Sierra Leone** – With concerted assistance from the Commonwealth on a multilateral and bilateral basis, Sierra Leone returned to civilian rule with elections in February/March 1996, observed by a Commonwealth Observer Group. But Sierra Leone's democratic transition was abruptly reversed by a military coup barely a year later, on 25 May 1997. CMAG condemned the coup, called for the immediate and unconditional reinstatement of the elected government of President Ahmad Tejan Kabbah and, in accordance with the Millbrook Programme, pending the restoration of the legitimate government, suspended the military junta from participation at Commonwealth meetings.

### Good Offices

The Secretary-General's good offices role continues to be invaluable to the promotion of the Commonwealth's fundamental political values. This was recognised in the 1995 Millbrook Action Programme which explicitly supported his role and provided for him to appoint an envoy or group of eminent representatives, where warranted, to assist him in this task.

This role was invoked by the Government of Papua New Guinea in December 1995 in the context of the situation in Bougainville when the Commonwealth Deputy Secretary-General for Political Affairs co-chaired with the United Nations (UN) all-party talks on Bougainville in Cairns, Australia. In March 1997, the Secretary-General interrupted an official visit to Australia to visit Papua New Guinea to help resolve a constitutional crisis arising from a confrontation between the Prime Minister and the commander of the defence forces.

The Secretary-General was also requested to use his good offices in Zanzibar in an effort to resolve the impasse between the Government of Zanzibar and the opposition. In this context, the Secretary-General visited Zanzibar in August 1996. In the run-up to Zambia's presidential and parliamentary elections, the Secretary-General sought to help ease political tensions and visited the country in September 1996.

For a full two-and-a-half years preceding the May 1997 military coup in Sierra Leone, representatives of the Secretary-General collaborated with the UN and Organisation of African Unity (OAU) to promote a peaceful settlement between the Government and the Revolutionary United Front of Sierra Leone culminating in the Abidjan Peace Accord of 30 November 1996. The Accord was formally witnessed and morally guaranteed by the UN, the Commonwealth and the OAU.

In January 1996, the Secretary-General personally assisted in ensuring a smooth transition of the Crown constitutional monarchy in Lesotho to King Letsie III following the tragic death of King Moshoeshoe II.

### CRITERIA FOR MEMBERSHIP

Cameroon and Mozambique became the Commonwealth's 52nd and 53rd member states in 1995 – the former being accepted before the 1995 CHOGM and the latter at the Auckland summit. In accepting Mozambique as a member, in recognition of its unique historical relationship with the Commonwealth in the struggle against the minority racist regime in Rhodesia and the apartheid regime of South Africa and its contiguity to several Commonwealth countries, the Heads stressed that this was an exceptional case and would not constitute a precedent.

At the 1991 CHOGM, Heads of Government endorsed general criteria following receipt of the Report of the High-Level Appraisal Group of ten Heads on the future of the Commonwealth. At the 1993 CHOGM, they indicated that Commonwealth values and principles, as set out in the Harare Commonwealth Declaration, should be taken into consideration when considering an application. At the 1995 CHOGM, they asked that an intergovernmental group be set up to advise them in 1997 on criteria for assessing future applications. This group consists of representatives from all the Commonwealth countries which have hosted CHOGMs excluding Nigeria. It met three times.

Since 1995, Yemen and Rwanda have formally applied for membership of the Commonwealth. Fiji, whose membership lapsed in 1987, has applied for readmission. The Palestinian National Authority has also expressed an interest in membership of the Commonwealth.

A list of Commonwealth members is at Appendix II.



*Palestine's Yasser Arafat called on Secretary-General Emeka Anyaoku to discuss the possibility of membership*



*At the 1995 CHOGM ... Presidents Nelson Mandela (centre) of South Africa, Robert Mugabe (left) of Zimbabwe and Sam Nujoma (right) of Namibia*

### **Promoting Sustainable Development and Facilitating Consensus-building**

The Millbrook Action Programme outlined steps needed to promote sustainable development and literacy, and to eradicate poverty, especially as these bear on women and children. It also asserted that the Commonwealth, with its global reach and experience in consensus-building, could assist the international community in building bridges across traditional international divides. The Secretariat's activities in these areas are discussed in the appropriate sections elsewhere in this Report.