

## CONSOLIDATING CHANGE

Since mid-1993, the Secretariat has reorganised its administrative structures and methods of planning and implementation to better meet the priorities for action set out by Heads of Government in the 1991 Harare Commonwealth Declaration. The new management structure came into effect on 1 July 1993, a new feature being that Secretariat activities were driven by 15 programme areas and led by 13 divisions (see Appendices IV and V for the Secretariat's structure, Governance Matrix and programme areas).

Since then, the Secretariat has engaged in a continuous process of refining its work programme to reflect these priorities. In this, it is helped by a Steering Committee of Senior Officials (SCOSO), which meets annually to provide broad operational and resource allocation guidance to the Secretariat in carrying out its work in different programme areas.

A key element in this structure has been the new emphasis on strategic planning, at divisional as well as Secretariat levels, and the introduction of monitoring and evaluation of various programme activities through a central unit.

The Secretariat now works to Three-Year Strategic Plans which are prepared and presented in a uniform planning format. The Second Three-Year Strategic Plan was presented to SCOSO in April 1994 and approved along with the Secretariat's Work Programme for the 1994/95-1996/97 period. Assistance was also provided to the various governing bodies (particularly the Finance Committee and Sub-Committee, and the CFTC's Committee of Management and Board of Representatives) to ensure that their annual operational plans were drawn up within the context of the priorities agreed by SCOSO.

On SCOSO's recommendations, a Working Group on the Rationalisation of the Governance of Commonwealth Funds was set up in June 1994 to

study an Australian Government proposal that the five separate structures and associated meetings of the Secretariat be rationalised by the creation of a single governing body. Its report, *Rationalisation of the Governance of Commonwealth Funds*, was considered at the Senior Officials' Meeting in Islamabad, Pakistan, in November 1994 and led to new governance arrangements being made and a single Resource Week being held.

### Strategic Guidance

Increasing emphasis is now being placed on the strategic planning of Commonwealth conferences, the development of planning skills in the area of gender-planning, and the development of a 'think tank' capacity for future Secretariat work. In order to ensure that the objectives of Commonwealth conferences meet Commonwealth priorities, pre-conference preparatory planning has been intensified.

In line with the 1995 Commonwealth Plan of Action on Gender and Development, one of whose objectives is to mainstream gender concerns and planning into all areas of work, a series of workshops were held to equip middle-managers in the Secretariat with the tools and techniques necessary for incorporating gender concerns into their programme planning and implementation.

### A Culture of Evaluation

In order to foster a culture of evaluation in the Secretariat, an intensive programme of activities, comprising seminars, lectures, training workshops and distribution of resource materials, has been undertaken with a view to helping staff acquire the necessary basic knowledge and skills in monitoring and evaluation. A panel of internal evaluators which will assist external evaluators in undertaking relevant studies has been established.

A system of Half-Yearly Performance Reports on the various programme activities has been intro-

duced to help in assessing progress and identifying constraints and the practice of producing project reports widened.

Two major reviews, one related to CFTC-funded programmes in the area of sustainable development (known as the 'C' programmes), and the other to the economic and social programmes, have been undertaken since 1993 at the request of governments.

Professor Mike Faber, who undertook the 'C' Programme Review, made some suggestions for change and refinement of the programmes but concluded that on the whole they provided technical co-operation of a high quality and were delivered more cost-effectively than by many other multilateral aid programmes.

Work on the Review of Economic and Social

Programmes, which began in December 1994 and was undertaken by Professor John Toye, has been concluded. The report will be considered by Heads of Government at Auckland.

Since 1993, three shorter evaluation studies have also been completed on assistance for legislative drafting in the Caribbean, the development of international air services in Tuvalu and the Commonwealth Roundtable on International Trade Strategies for Developing Countries for the 1990s.

Other evaluation studies being undertaken include those for short training programmes in Public Administration and Managerial Reform, training programmes in Environmental Impact Assessment, policy advice and assistance to Tonga in the financial sector, and a review of the Memorandum of Understanding on Basic Local Support.

## DEFINING THAT CHEMISTRY

Curiosity about the Commonwealth spreads far wider than the association's already considerable geographical reach. Every two years, where the Commonwealth Heads of Government meet, media representatives from all over the world gather to find out how an association of such diverse peoples, political and economic systems, and cultures could possibly find common ground on so many issues—and with such relative harmony.

For them, and for countless others, it is an exploration of the special chemistry that binds Commonwealth peoples, as much as their governments, in common endeavour.

Describing and explaining that chemistry is a challenging task. The Commonwealth 'audience' is varied and includes government officials, members of elected assemblies, students, academics, journalists, broadcasters and NGOs. They are the association's lifeblood, for if they do not know what



*Archbishop Desmond Tutu celebrates...  
South Africa's return to the Commonwealth  
renewed interest in the association*