

### **3. ADDRESS BY THE COMMONWEALTH SECRETARY-GENERAL**

**His Excellency Chief Emeka Anyaoku**

The platform:

- His Excellency Chief Emeka Anyaoku, Commonwealth Secretary-General
- Sir Kenneth Stowe, Chairperson, CAPAM Steering Committee

*The Secretary-General jointly addressed the founding members of the Inaugural Conference of the Commonwealth Association for Public Administration and Management, and the participants of the Annual Conference of the Institute of Public Administration of Canada.*

*The Secretary-General's address provided the international backcloth against which the establishment of CAPAM should be seen. In highlighting the shortfall between recent hopes of a new global order following the end of the Cold War and the distinctly patchy reality, and the somewhat uncertain international response to recent humanitarian crises, the Secretary-General exposed the weaknesses in current collective international strategies. He identified two key dimensions to these weaknesses: limitations in current international structures and funding arrangements; and a less than whole-hearted commitment to collective pluralist values.*

*The Secretary-General pointed out that the way forward must be to develop co-operation strategies which encourage a voluntary sharing of experience, and a receptivity to ideas gained from elsewhere. As a new entrant to the international scene, CAPAM will ultimately be judged by the extent to which it is able to develop practical approaches for fostering such co-operation between public sector managers.*

My first words must be to thank your Steering Committee for inviting me to this Conference which marks the birth of an important Commonwealth professional association. I remember with pleasure my conversation with Sir Kenneth Stowe many months ago when he called at the Commonwealth Secretariat to discuss plans for your meeting.

I am also very pleased to have this opportunity to visit Prince Edward Island – a delightful part of a member country which plays a full and generous part in Commonwealth affairs. My journey from London was via Victoria, British Columbia, for yet one more example of the commitment of Canada to the Commonwealth by hosting the 15th Commonwealth Games. The Games justified in every sense the description of the Commonwealth Games as the "friendly games". The involvement of the people of the city of Victoria even beyond the staggering figure of approximately 14,000 volunteers provided an exceptionally welcome environment for visitors.

As those of you who have attended these games will know, they generate a truly remarkable spirit of goodwill amongst all the participants and spectators. This spirit of friendship and co-operation is a particular hallmark of the Commonwealth, and I am confident that it has formed the backdrop to your discussions at this Conference.

The establishment of CAPAM will add another dimension to the complex matrix of professional relationships within the public service in Commonwealth countries. Some people might ask: Will this be a further distraction to those charged with the responsibility of operating the machinery of government? Or will it give them strength and, through shared experiences and common purpose, lessen their load? This is an important question.

At a time when most governments are eager to rationalise or downsize, as it is perhaps accurately described these days, their institutions, I have no doubt that to be successful, CAPAM must enhance the capabilities of public servants as they undertake the responsibilities with which they are charged by their governments. These include, to deliver responsive and equitable services, efficiently ensuring social and economic progress in a secure and principled environment, thereby providing a crucial underpinning for good governance.

I have referred to this meeting as the birth of CAPAM. In order to throw into bolder relief the nature of some of the challenges faced by the governments which your members have to serve, I will reflect a little on the world that it has entered.

The ending of the Cold War has clearly not delivered the full results that many had hoped for. Tearing down the Berlin Wall generated much hope that ideologies were converging – that there were fewer points of political principle around which unproductive conflicts might cluster. Expectations were raised that a new

internationalist spirit would arise, strengthening the United Nations and facilitating more effective international co-operation for improvement in the human condition.

True, some successes have been achieved. Real progress towards peace and greater personal freedom has been made on many fronts. The inhuman system of apartheid has been replaced by non-racial democracy in South Africa. Israelis and Palestinians have taken greater strides towards each other than anyone would have dared hope just one year ago. Israel and Jordan are now making headlines in their progress towards peace and mutual accommodation. Mozambique tenuously, and Angola hopefully are finding paths towards freedom and the end of internal conflict. Nuclear arsenals have been dismantled in the Ukraine and despite the cloud of economic disappointments, few would seek to return the newly-independent parts of the former Soviet Union to a centralised command economy.

Unhappily however, the total picture so far has fallen well short of the general hope. In many places, new divisions are emerging around old religious and ethnic fault-lines. Even the sophisticated urban centres of the developed countries are themselves showing signs of becoming easy prey to the tensions which arise from their growing cosmopolitanism.

Thus, as the frightened victims of the seemingly increasing ethnic and sectarian intolerance in places like Rwanda or the former Yugoslavia can attest, dangerous social divisions can no longer be traced mainly to the continuing legacy of arbitrarily imposed colonial boundaries and constitutional structures.

Nor have the optimistic expectations from the peace dividend materialised. While significant progress is being recorded in such South-East Asian countries as Malaysia and Singapore, the economic fortunes of many developing countries, especially in Sub-Saharan Africa remain very poor. The pursuit of sustainable development with its environmental implications must therefore be ranked among the major challenges faced by many of our governments. This should take into account the fact that in many of these countries the present situation is exacerbated by external debt burden and such other factors as can be effectively tackled by greater multilateralism.

Multilateralism, the policy of international collective action towards the common good, is, quietly, in crisis. More precisely I should say that there is a quiet crisis in the commitment to multilateralism. Set alongside the strength of the response to the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait, the hesitancy of the international community's intervention in Bosnia and the initial reluctance to become involved in the appalling tragedy of Rwanda emphasise the point that national strategic interests overwhelmingly outweigh more far-sighted concerns. Serious responses from the major powers are reserved for those situations where a calamity is also a domestic economic threat.

I have argued before that the missing element in contemporary multilateralism is only partly related to organisational shortcomings in the international fora. This is not to under-estimate the logistical difficulties of mobilising human, material and financial resources from a variety of national sources, and the need to reconsider the assumptions underlying some UN structures and funding. The weak spot I wish to emphasise is in the moral not the organisational dimension. It concerns the supporting framework of beliefs and values. Genuine multilateral action is founded on an interlocking patchwork of personal moral codes which collectively confirm that us means everybody. None of us is "them", "the other", or "the not quite so important". Without that interlocking framework of values, multilateralism is doomed to be little more than rhetoric.

The Commonwealth is growing evidence of the potential of such collective, pluralist values to assist in national and international renewal. The 1.5 billion people of the Commonwealth constitute one quarter of the human race, and its 51 member countries inhabit every continent and embrace virtually every major ethnic group. It is a remarkable melting pot of cultures and traditions, fashioning a sense of common purpose out of diversity.

The values of the Commonwealth were spelt out by Heads of Government in the 1971 Declaration of Commonwealth Principles made in Singapore. In setting out a new set of priorities for the Commonwealth, designed to maintain the progressive momentum of this voluntary association of independent states well into the next century, the Harare Commonwealth Declaration of 1991 reaffirmed the commitment to these fundamental values. This secure moral underpinning has enabled the Commonwealth to serve its members well, and to elicit a unique sense of co-operation and mutual support. I believe that South Africa's application and subsequent return to the Commonwealth on the first of June this year, which was one of the first acts of foreign policy of the newly democratised nation, speaks volumes about the abiding appeal of those Commonwealth values and the potential for multilateral co-operation which they embody.

The return of South Africa to the Commonwealth is a source of much joy, and I should add, of considerable personal satisfaction. South Africa has been high on the Commonwealth agenda for forty years. The uniquely cruel system of apartheid was opposed by all Commonwealth members, and indeed by everyone who respects the basic principles of human dignity and the equality of all humanity. The Commonwealth played a leading role in challenging that iniquitous system, and took a significant part in the country's process of transition.

Apart from diplomatic support for the multiparty negotiations, the Commonwealth Mission to South Africa, working alongside teams from the United Nations, the Organisation of African Unity and the European Union, and supporting the diverse peace structures within the country, assisted in preparing the ground for the first

ever multi-racial elections. These endeavours were supported by additional diplomatic and technical assistance provided by the Commonwealth, and very particularly by the practical and timely help which the Commonwealth was able to offer to the newly-established bodies with responsibility for peace-keeping and electoral organisation.

The Commonwealth is now offering its full support to the enormous task of reconstruction. Later this year we will be facilitating a donor's conference, jointly with the United Nations, to assist South Africa develop its human resources to meet the challenges of the post-apartheid era. A new generation of public servants and diplomats will be necessary to steer the country along its new course and we are providing training in these key areas.

Many of you here will be familiar with, and perhaps directly involved in the work of the Secretariat through the Commonwealth Fund for Technical Co-operation (CFTC) in support of practical Commonwealth co-operation. Across the Commonwealth, senior officials within government are giving their time, in a genuine spirit of mutual co-operation, to map out in detail some of the key developments and practices of the public service in their country. These insights will be shared so that public sector managers learn from each other - so that better wheels are copied and not reinvented. The door to this has been unlocked by strong but informal relationships between professionals in the field and those in the Commonwealth Secretariat, working to a common agenda of collaboration and respect for diversity.

This is the stage onto which CAPAM is a welcomed new actor. The Harare Commonwealth Declaration, to which I referred, included a pledge to work with renewed vigour to protect and promote democratic processes and institutions, and to assist in entrenching the practices of accountable administration and the rule of law. CAPAM will further the work of the Commonwealth in these important dimensions.

The experience of many countries within and outside the Commonwealth has emphasised the role of the public service as a vehicle for carrying forward key national and public values. In some democratic countries, where governments have tended to change with more than the common frequency, the public service has largely been responsible for sustaining national stability by keeping the institutions of the state operating fairly normally. In other countries, where governments have been prone to unconstitutional change, for example, as a result of military coup d'etats, good public services have often proved to be the only real defence of the countries concerned against total anarchy.

But it is also true that in a number of countries, the public service has not always been able to resist either the pressure or the temptation to become an accomplice in the negation of democracy and good governance. CAPAM, I trust, will have the

capacity to contribute to the development of the level of professionalism that can help to counter this tendency. For a stable democracy needs civil servants who are able always to offer objective advice and to perform in non-partisan ways while retaining the confidence of all, including their political bosses, in their loyalty and integrity.

Besides, there is a strong resonance between the respect for diversity implicit in the Commonwealth approach, and what perceive to be one of the principle contributions that CAPAM will be able to make to the public service of all our countries.

At a time of seemingly increasing agreement on the approaches for improving efficiency within public administration, there is a remarkable diversity of options available to government. As is evident from your conference themes, in designing the structures by which they seek to ensure the implementation of their policies, governments in very different settings increasingly draw from a similar menu of options ranging from privatisation to performance management. However, and to my mind reassuringly, their selections from that menu can be and are usually very different reflecting as they must local circumstances including the cultural milieu concerned. Consensus around the broad approach should not prevent diversity in practice. I trust therefore that CAPAM will put the Commonwealth knack for managing plurality to good purpose by encouraging professional collaboration amidst such a stimulating variety of public sector strategies.

On a final note, I am confident that as senior public administrators, this audience is more aware than most that the only certainty for the future is continuing change. Our need to achieve the right results in-cost effective ways, has moved us from one mindset to another. It is something of a caricature, but not an unfair one, to suggest that both governments and international organisations have historically taken existing structures as given, hoping that any shortcomings might be ameliorated by larger budgets or reduced expectations. It was perceived that basically sound systems needed fine-tuning, but little more.

The paradigm within which we all work now is very different. We see a need for constant improvement, and a consequent need for balancing respect for continuity with some healthy scepticism that we are achieving as much as we might.

The Secretariat is the principal institution for the Commonwealth's multilateral intergovernmental action. It has itself recently been extensively reorganised to increase efficiency and cost-effectiveness. You will all recognise the key themes which have shaped that reorganisation – streamlining, tighter strategic planning, performance management, programme budgeting, increased transparency and enhanced accountability. The Secretariat knows the pains, and the gains, of reorganisation very well.

I wish you, Sir Kenneth, and the other members of your Steering Committee every success in this Conference and in setting CAPAM on a path towards professional respect and long-term viability. I look forward to following what I am sure will be the upward progress of this important new association as it pursues its agreed objectives.