

MEETING OF COMMONWEALTH PRIME MINISTERS, JANUARY 1966

(Lagos, 10-12 January)

FINAL COMMUNIQUE

The meeting of Commonwealth Heads of Government under the Chairmanship of Alhaji The Right Honourable Sir Abubakar Tafawa Balewa, Prime Minister of Nigeria, ended today in Lagos. Cyprus was represented by its President and Zambia by its Vice-President. In addition to Nigeria, Britain, Canada, The Gambia, Malawi, Malta, Sierra Leone, Singapore and Uganda were represented by their Prime Ministers: Jamaica was represented by its Acting Prime Minister while Malaysia and Trinidad and Tobago were represented by their Deputy Prime Ministers. Ceylon was represented by its Minister of Justice; India by its Minister of Law and Social Security; Kenya by its Minister of Finance; and New Zealand and Pakistan by High Commissioners. There was an Australian observer.

On the eve of the meeting news was received of the death of the Prime Minister of India, Mr Lal Bahadur Shastri. The Prime Ministers paid tribute to the work of the late Mr Shastri and a message of condolence was sent by the Chairman on behalf of the meeting.

The Prime Ministers welcomed Singapore to their discussions as an independent member of the Commonwealth.

They expressed their special appreciation of the invitation from the Prime Minister of Nigeria to meet in Lagos. Observing that this was the first meeting to be held in Africa, they agreed that to assemble from time to time in a different Commonwealth capital would underline the essential character of the Commonwealth as a free association of equal nations, spanning all races and continents.

The Prime Ministers noted that this was also the first meeting to be held after the establishment of the Commonwealth Secretariat and were glad to welcome the Secretary-General.

This was the first meeting called to deal with a single political issue and was devoted entirely to the question of Rhodesia. The Prime Ministers discussed in particular the ending of the rebellion; the need for co-operation with the assistance to Zambia; and the future of Rhodesia under constitutional rule. A Working Party of officials discussed in greater detail the nature and efficacy of economic measures against the illegal régime in Rhodesia; ways in which Zambia could be helped in its co-operation in these measures; and the question of Commonwealth assistance in training Africans in Rhodesia. They reported their conclusions to the meeting.

The Prime Ministers reaffirmed that the authority and responsibility for guiding Rhodesia to independence rested with Britain, but acknowledged that the problem was of wider concern to Africa, the Commonwealth and the world.

The Prime Ministers recalled their statement, first made in 1964, that 'for all Commonwealth Governments, it should be an objective of policy to build in each country a structure of society which offers equal opportunity and non-discrimination for all its people, irrespective of race, colour or creed. The Commonwealth should be able to exercise constructive leadership in the application of democratic principles in a manner which will enable the people of each country of different racial and cultural groups to exist and develop as free and equal citizens'.

They further recalled that in their 1965 communique they stated that 'the principle of one man one vote was regarded as the very basis of democracy and this should be applied to Rhodesia'.

They expressed their concern at the danger to all multi-racial communities in the Commonwealth, particularly in East and Central Africa, and at the danger to the future of the multi-racial Commonwealth itself if the situation in Rhodesia were to continue.

Objectives

The Prime Ministers declared that any political system based on racial discrimination was intolerable. It diminished the freedom alike of those who imposed it and of those who suffered under it. They considered that the imposition of discriminatory conditions of political, social, economic and educational nature upon the majority by any minority for the benefit of a privileged few was an outrageous violation of the fundamental principles of human rights.

The meeting agreed that the goal of future progress in Rhodesia should be the establishment of a just society based on equality of opportunity to which all sections of the community could contribute their full potential and from which all could enjoy the benefits due to them without discrimination or unjust impediment.

To this end several principles were affirmed. The first was the determination of all present that the rebellion must be brought to an end. All those detained for purely political reasons should be released. Political activities should be constitutional and free from intimidation from any quarter. Repressive and discriminatory laws should be repealed. The Prime Ministers noted the statement of the British Government that a period of direct rule would be needed, leading to the holding of a constitutional conference. This conference representing all sections of the Rhodesian people would be for the purpose of recommending a constitution leading to a majority rule on a basis acceptable to the people of Rhodesia as a whole.

Ending the Rebellion

The Prime Ministers reviewed and noted the measures taken by Commonwealth and other countries against the illegal régime. Some expressed concern that the steps taken so far had not resulted in its removal. They called on all countries which had not already done so to act in accordance with the recommendations of the Security Council Resolution of 20th November 1965, making at the same time necessary arrangements to provide for the repercussions of such further measures on the economy of Zambia.

The Prime Ministers discussed the question of the use of military force in Rhodesia and it was accepted that its use could not be precluded if this proved necessary to restore law and order.

In this connection the Prime Ministers noted the statement by the British Prime Minister that on the expert advice available to him the cumulative effects of the economic and financial sanctions might well bring the rebellion to an end within a matter of weeks rather than months. While some Prime Ministers had misgivings in this regard, all expressed the hope that these measures would result in the overthrow of the illegal régime in Southern Rhodesia within the period mentioned by the British Prime Minister.

The Prime Ministers decided on the following measures of Commonwealth action, starting now:

(1) To appoint two continuing committees composed of representatives of all Commonwealth countries to meet with the Secretary-General in London. The first will review regularly the effect of sanctions and also the special needs which may from time to time arise in honouring the Commonwealth's undertaking to come to the support of Zambia as required. The second will co-ordinate a special Commonwealth programme of assistance in training Rhodesian Africans as set out below.

(2) The Sanctions Committee will recommend the re-convening of the Prime Ministers' meeting when they judge that this is necessary. In any case, the Prime Ministers agreed to meet again in July if the rebellion has not been ended before then.

(3) The Sanctions Committee will advise the Prime Ministers if it considers action by the United Nations is called for.

(4) Some Prime Ministers indicated that they reserved the right if need arises to propose mandatory United Nations action under Articles 41 or 42 of Chapter VII of the Charter. This statement was noted by the other Heads of Government.

Co-operation with Zambia

The Prime Minister of Britain informed his colleagues of British actions in support of Zambia. The Prime Ministers welcomed the effort made by Commonwealth and other countries in organizing the emergency transport of oil and vital supplies. The meeting agreed that members of the Commonwealth should give full consideration to concerted assistance to Zambia and that this assistance should be extended to include Malawi if necessary.

Assistance in training Rhodesian Africans

The Prime Ministers were agreed that planned assistance to a lawfully constituted Government of Rhodesia should begin at once. They therefore approved the establishment of a special Commonwealth programme to help accelerate the training of Rhodesian Africans and directed the Secretary-General to arrange as soon as possible a meeting of educational and technical assistance experts to consider detailed projects of aid by Commonwealth countries, including the early establishment of an administrative training centre in Rhodesia.

Conclusion

Finally, the Prime Ministers saw the Rhodesian question in the context of the world-wide problem of race relations. They re-affirmed the declaration made in their communique of July 1964 and expressed the hope that a just solution to the Rhodesian question would light a ray of hope for men and women of all races throughout the world for a future giving assurance of greater harmony between nations and recognition to the dignity of man.

12 January 1966

Heads of Delegation

Britain	The Rt Hon Harold Wilson, Prime Minister
Canada	The Rt Hon Lester B Pearson, Prime Minister
Ceylon	The Hon A F Wijemanne, Minister of Justice
Cyprus	His Beatitude Archbishop Makarios, President
The Gambia	Sir Dawda Jawara, Prime Minister
India	Shri Asoke Sen, Minister of Law
Jamaica	The Hon Donald B Sangster, Acting Prime Minister
Kenya	The Hon James Gichuru, Minister of Finance
Malawi	Ngwazi Dr H Kamuzu Banda, Prime Minister
Malaysia	Tun Abdul Razak bin Hussein, Deputy Prime Minister
Malta	Dr The Hon G Borg Olivier, Prime Minister
New Zealand	Sir Thomas MacDonald, High Commissioner for New Zealand in Britain
Nigeria	The Rt Hon Alhaji Sir Abubakar Tafawa Balewa, Prime Minister
Pakistan	HE Hakim M Ahson, High Commissioner for Pakistan in Nigeria
Sierra Leone	The Rt Hon Sir Albert Margai, Prime Minister
Singapore	The Hon Lee Kuan Yew, Prime Minister
Trinidad and Tobago	The Hon P J V Solomon, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of External Affairs
Uganda	Dr The Hon A Milton Obote, Prime Minister
Zambia	The Hon R C Kamanga, Vice-President
Commonwealth Secretariat	HE Arnold Smith, Secretary-General
Australia	HE Dr J W C Cumes, High Commissioner for Australia in Nigeria (Observer)