



**Concluding Statement of the
58th Meeting of the
Commonwealth Ministerial Action Group**

Virtual Meeting, 24 March 2021
12h30 - 14h30 GMT

1. The Commonwealth Ministerial Action Group (CMAG) held its fifty-eighth meeting by video conference on 24 March 2021. The meeting was chaired by Ambassador Raychelle Omamo SC, EGH, Cabinet Secretary for Foreign Affairs of Kenya. Ministers and Representatives of Australia, Barbados, Belize, Ghana, Malaysia, Namibia, Samoa and the United Kingdom also participated in the video conference.
2. Ministers expressed their condolences on the passing of His Excellency President John Magufuli, and conveyed their sympathies to his family, the Government and people of the United Republic of Tanzania.
3. Ministers expressed their collective condolences on the passing of other Commonwealth leaders, including the Prime Minister of Eswatini, the Honourable Ambrose Dlamini, and the First Vice-President of Zanzibar, His Excellency Maalim Seif Sharif Hamad, amongst others.
4. The Group acknowledged that, a year after the first lockdowns were imposed in many Commonwealth countries, Ministers remained concerned about the ongoing disruptions and devastating impact of the Coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic on economic, social and political life, while noting the significant recovery efforts that have been undertaken by member countries since. Ministers welcomed the emergence of the first approved vaccines for COVID-19. The Group expressed support for the COVAX facility and the shared aspiration for the global vaccine rollout to be fair, equitable and swift, though acknowledged the challenges that remained, including issues with access to vaccines, access to testing and procurement issues with COVID-19 supplies, which impacted significantly on Commonwealth small states.
5. Ministers welcomed unwavering Commonwealth solidarity in collectively addressing the pandemic, noting that, since the Group's previous meeting, further ministerial meetings, including those of Law Ministers, had provided opportunities for coordinated action. They underscored that measures to address the pandemic must be undertaken with due regard to the human rights of all Commonwealth citizens. In this regard, Ministers reiterated their encouragement to the Secretary-General to continue supporting the mobilisation of resources to assist member states, particularly small and vulnerable Commonwealth countries; and those affected by climate change and other challenges.
6. The Group expressed regret at the unfortunate rise in human rights violations that had arisen as a result of the coronavirus pandemic, particularly massive increases in gender-based violence, and reiterated their unequivocal support for the value of inclusion in member countries. Ministers commended the

Secretariat's work in addressing gender-based violence, noting in particular the Secretary-General's leadership, in partnership with the UN Special Rapporteur, in convening a virtual dialogue on cyber-enabled gender-based violence, in commemoration of the 20th Anniversary of UN Security Council Resolution 1325, on Women, Peace, and Security. Ministers also welcomed and expressed support for the International Women's Peace Centre that was launched in Namibia in October 2020.

7. Ministers encouraged the Secretary-General to continue using such innovative ways to continue advocating the protection and empowerment of vulnerable groups, as well to support member countries in adhering to fundamental Commonwealth values during the COVID-19 pandemic.
8. In line with the commitments and aspirations reflected in various high-level meetings held since the Group's last meeting in October 2020, Ministers reaffirmed their call for actionable measures to be implemented by member countries, to foster greater tolerance, inclusion and non-discrimination, and to end violence against women and girls.

Secretary-General's Good Offices and Secretariat's Promotion of Commonwealth Fundamental Values

9. A report on trends in the deterioration of the Commonwealth's fundamental values and principles was tabled by the Secretariat and the Ministers discussed the methodology adopted.
10. The Group received an update from the Secretary-General on her Good Offices engagements and bilateral visits, as well as technical support to enhance member governments' efforts in strengthening their human rights, rule of law and democratic processes. The Group reaffirmed that the Secretary-General's Good Offices complements CMAG's pursuit of its 2011 enhanced mandate. Ministers commended the Secretariat's ongoing democracy work, which had been adapted to virtual and hybrid modes during the pandemic, and extended felicitations on the commemoration of 40 years of election observation.
11. While encouraging inclusive socio-political processes to help address issues of national interest in member states, Ministers reaffirmed their unwavering commitment to advancing and supporting the fundamental political values and principles in the Commonwealth Charter, in accordance with the Group's enhanced mandate. The Group committed to working proactively and constructively with member governments to address these challenges, and to recommend measures for collective Commonwealth action aimed at addressing the root causes of these issues.

Next Meeting

12. The Group agreed that, in principle, its next meeting will take place in the margins of CHOGM Week in June 2021, to consider its biennial report to Commonwealth Heads of Government.

ENDS