



Commonwealth Ministerial Group on Guyana

New York 2017

Concluding Statement

The Commonwealth Ministerial Group on Guyana met in New York on Thursday 21 September 2017 to discuss recent developments in the controversy arising from the contention of Venezuela that the 1899 Arbitral Award, which definitively settled the land boundary between the Co-operative Republic of Guyana and Venezuela, is null and void.

The meeting was convened by the Commonwealth Secretary-General at the request of the Government of the Co-operative Republic of Guyana, and was chaired by the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Bangladesh, H.E. Mr Abul Hassan Mahmood Ali.

The Group recalled the outcome of their last meeting in September 2016 and received an update on recent developments from the Vice President and Foreign Minister of Guyana, the Hon Carl Greenidge.

The Group noted Guyana's concerns that this longstanding controversy has impacted on the country's economic development.

The Group acknowledged with appreciation the efforts by the United Nations Secretary-General to facilitate a resolution between the two countries and commended Guyana's commitment to engage in the UN Secretary-General's Good Offices process.

The Group recalled that at the last Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting, in Malta in November 2015, the leaders noted that *“the Geneva Agreement of 1966 between the Parties provides a range of mechanisms for an expeditious solution to the controversy arising from Venezuela's contention of invalidity of the 1899 Arbitral Award. The Heads expressed their full support for the United Nations Secretary-General to choose a means of settlement in keeping with the provisions of the Geneva Agreement 1966, to bring the controversy to a definitive end.”*

The Group noted and reaffirmed the statement by the CARICOM Leaders' on 7 July 2017, welcoming the appointment of His Excellency Dag Nylander as a Personal Representative of the UN Secretary General in the Good Offices Process for the duration of 2017. The Leaders' noted that *“if by the end of 2017, the Secretary-General concludes that significant progress has not been made toward arriving at a full agreement for the solution of the controversy, he will choose the International Court of Justice as the next means of settlement,”* unless the Governments of Guyana and Venezuela *“jointly request that he refrain from doing so”*. CARICOM Leaders' reiterated the firm and unequivocal support of the Caribbean Community for the maintenance and preservation of Guyana's sovereignty and territorial integrity.

The Group reiterated the unequivocal and collective support of Commonwealth member governments for the maintenance and preservation of Guyana's sovereignty and territorial borders, in accordance with the 1899 Arbitral Award.

The Group also agreed to draw the conclusions of their meeting to the attention of all Commonwealth member governments.

New York, 21 September 2017

Note to editors:

Members of the Group as constituted following the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting held in Durban in 1999 are: Antigua and Barbuda, Bangladesh, Canada, Guyana, Jamaica, South Africa, and the United Kingdom.