

The Millbrook Commonwealth Action Programme on the Harare Declaration

New Zealand, 1995

1. At Harare in 1991, we pledged to work for the protection and promotion of the fundamental political values of the association, namely democracy, democratic processes and institutions which reflect national circumstances, fundamental human rights, the rule of law and the independence of the judiciary, and just and honest government. We agreed at the same time to work for the promotion of socio-economic development, recognising its high priority for most Commonwealth countries. During our Retreat at Millbrook, we decided to adopt a Commonwealth Action Programme to fulfil more effectively the commitments contained in the Harare Commonwealth Declaration. This Programme is in three parts:
 - i. advancing Commonwealth fundamental political values;
 - ii. promoting sustainable development; and
 - iii. facilitating consensus building.

I. Advancing Commonwealth Fundamental Political Values

A. Measures in Support of Processes and Institutions for the Practice of the Harare Principles

2. The Secretariat should enhance its capacity to provide advice, training and other forms of technical assistance to governments in promoting the Commonwealth's fundamental political values, including:
 - assistance in creating and building the capacity of requisite institutions;

- assistance in constitutional and legal matters, including with selecting models and initiating programmes of democratisation;
- assistance in the electoral field, including the establishment or strengthening of independent electoral machinery, civic and voter education, the preparation of Codes of Conduct, and assistance with voter registration;
- observation of elections, including by-elections or local elections where appropriate, at the request of the member governments concerned;
- strengthening the rule of law and promoting the independence of the judiciary through the promotion of exchanges among, and training of, the judiciary;
- support for good government, particularly in the area of public service reform; and
- other activities, in collaboration with the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association and other bodies, to strengthen the democratic culture and effective parliamentary practices.

B. Measures in Response to Violations of the Harare Principles

3. Where a member country is perceived to be clearly in violation of the Harare Commonwealth Declaration, and particularly in the event of an unconstitutional overthrow of a democratically elected government, appropriate steps should be taken to express the collective concern of Commonwealth countries and to encourage the restoration of democracy within a reasonable time frame. These include:
 - i. immediate public expression by the Secretary-General of the Commonwealth's collective disapproval of any such infringement of the Harare principles;
 - ii. early contact by the Secretary-General with the *de facto* government, followed by continued good offices and appropriate technical assistance to facilitate an early restoration of democracy;
 - iii. encouraging bilateral *démarches* by member countries, especially those within the region, both to express disapproval and to support early restoration of democracy;

- iv. appointment of an envoy or a group of eminent Commonwealth representatives where, following the Secretary-General's contacts with the authorities concerned, such a mission is deemed beneficial in reinforcing the Commonwealth's good offices role;
- v. stipulation of up to two years as the time frame for the restoration of democracy where the institutions are not in place to permit the holding of elections within, say, a maximum of six months;
- vi. pending restoration of democracy, exclusion of the government concerned from participation at ministerial-level meetings of the Commonwealth, including CHOGMs;
- vii. suspension of participation at all Commonwealth meetings and of Commonwealth technical assistance if acceptable progress is not recorded by the government concerned after a period of two years; and
- viii. consideration of appropriate further bilateral and multilateral measures by all member states (e.g. limitation of government-to-government contacts; people-to-people measures; trade restrictions; and, in exceptional cases, suspension from the association), to reinforce the need for change in the event that the government concerned chooses to leave the Commonwealth and/or persists in violating the principles of the Harare Commonwealth Declaration even after two years.

C. Mechanism for Implementation of Measures

4. We have decided to establish a Commonwealth Ministerial Action Group on the Harare Declaration in order to deal with serious or persistent violations of the principles contained in that Declaration. The Group will be convened by the Secretary-General and will comprise the Foreign Ministers of eight countries*, supplemented as appropriate by one or two additional ministerial representatives from the region concerned. It will be the Group's task to assess the nature of the infringement and recommend measures for collective Commonwealth action aimed at the speedy restoration of democracy and constitutional rule.

* It was subsequently announced that the Group would comprise the Foreign Ministers of Britain, Canada, Ghana, Jamaica, Malaysia, New Zealand, South Africa and Zimbabwe.

5. The composition, terms of reference and operation of the Group will be reviewed by us every two years.

II. Promoting Sustainable Development

6. We reaffirmed our view that the Commonwealth should continue to be a source of help in promoting development and literacy and in eradicating poverty, particularly as these bear on women and children. With a view to enhancing its capacity in this area, we agreed on the following steps:
 - i. to strengthen the Secretariat's capacity for undertaking developmental work through support for its various Funds and especially by restoring the resources of the CFTC to their 1991/92 level in real terms; and to provide adequate resources to the Commonwealth of Learning and to the Commonwealth Foundation;
 - ii. to support a greater flow of investment to developing member countries through such schemes as the Commonwealth Private Investment Initiative;
 - iii. to work for continued progress in assisting countries with unsustainable debt burdens and to promote enhanced multilateral concessional financial flows to developing countries; in particular, to support new and innovative mechanisms for relief on multilateral debt, such as the one proposed by the British Chancellor of the Exchequer at the 1994 Commonwealth Finance Ministers Meeting in Malta, and reiterated subsequently;
 - iv. to support the Secretariat in facilitating the adoption by more Commonwealth countries of successful self-help schemes, with non-governmental agencies and others acting as catalytic agents, for mobilising the energies of people in alleviating poverty;
 - v. to support the efforts of small island developing states to mitigate the effects on their development of environmental change, natural disasters and the changing international trading system; and
 - vi. to combat the spread of HIV/AIDS, which threatens large parts of the younger population of many countries, recognising that the effective exploitation of economic opportunities requires a healthy and educated population; and to provide further resources to

renew the core funding of the Southern African Network of AIDS Organisations (SANASO), along with increased funding for UNICEF initiatives in Southern Africa.

III. Facilitating Consensus Building

7. We were convinced that the Commonwealth, with its global reach and unique experience of consensus building, was in a position to assist the wider international community in building bridges across traditional international divides of opinion on particular issues. We therefore agreed that there was scope for the association to play a greater role in the search for consensus on global issues, through:
 - i. use of their governments' membership of various regional organisations and attendance at other international gatherings to advance consensual positions agreed within the Commonwealth;
 - ii. use, where appropriate, of special missions to advance Commonwealth consensual positions and promote wider consensus on issues of major international concern; and
 - iii. use of formal and informal Commonwealth consultations in the wings of meetings of international institutions with a view to achieving consensus on major concerns.

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