

The Nassau Declaration on World Order

The Bahamas, 1985

1. On the Fortieth Anniversary of the founding of the United Nations, we, the Commonwealth Heads of Government assembled at Nassau, recall to all countries and peoples the need for world order and the central importance of the United Nations system in which all should participate and from which all should benefit. In the world of today and of tomorrow, international co-operation is not an option but a necessity.
2. We believe that at this historic moment our world society should take stock of its considerable achievements as well as its failures, and allow hope and encouragement from the former to strengthen resolve in redressing the latter. Yet these very achievements make the more disturbing any movement away from multilateralism and internationalism, from a world aspiring to be governed by fair and open rules towards unilateral action and growing ascendance of power in all spheres: economic, political and military. We warn that a return to narrow nationalisms, both economic and political, in a climate of tension and confrontation between nations heightened by the nuclear arms race, invites again the dangers from which the world set out to rid itself at San Francisco in 1945. We issue that warning mindful that the nuclear menace imperils all peoples and nations and the very survival of our human species.
3. The conduct of relations between nations necessitates adherence to, and preservation of, certain accepted international norms and principles. A retreat from these norms and principles increases the threat to the sovereignty, independence, unity and territorial integrity of states. In particular, we are concerned that the world community face up to the nature and needs of small states, many of them among our membership, respond to their particular vulnerability with imagination and resolve and work to create an environment for their protection and support.

4. As a Commonwealth whose great majority live in poverty, we believe it imperative that the world community redouble its efforts to enlarge the prospects of social and economic advance for three-quarters of the human race. We recognise the progress achieved in developing countries in the last four decades through domestic effort and international support. However, the world must make better use of its collective resources to secure more equitable progress for all. In a global community of acknowledged and increasing interdependence between nations, which is undergoing rapid technological advance and which has the resources to meet the needs of all, the continuing disparities that divide the world's rich and poor are a daily reminder that only partnership and collective effort and recognition of economic realities will give a fresh thrust to growth and development for all. There is thus a pressing need to renew the consensus on international co-operation for development within the United Nations system and to revitalise multilateral institutions to meet the goals of our global society for sustainable economic growth within a framework of stability.
5. We recognise that the United Nations and its institutions are not without imperfections, but are convinced that the solution lies not in their rejection but in their rejuvenation. Using the system effectively is as important as changing it. We therefore welcome the efforts of the United Nations Secretary-General and others to enhance the effectiveness of the world body and its capacity to prevent and resolve conflicts, and pledge to work to this end.
6. In the spirit of international democracy, to which we attach importance, we hope that all nations will demonstrate the desire to seek accord and the will to negotiate constructively which are crucial to the success of global institutions. We believe that the Commonwealth's way of doing business, of seeking consensus based on equality and justice between nations, serves as an example for all.
7. Therefore, as leaders of the Commonwealth comprising one thousand million people and one third of the world's nations, and mindful that obligations devolve upon us separately and collectively:

We commit ourselves and our nations to work tirelessly in the pursuit of a world marked not by disorder and the use of competitive power but one governed by the principles of collective international co-operation and respect for the rights of all nations and peoples as the necessary foundation for lasting peace and assured economic and social development.

We reaffirm our commitment to the principles and precepts of the Charter of the United Nations and to the goal of strengthening the United Nations system as the central instrument of peace, security and co-operation among nations. As we ourselves categorically reject the use or threat of force as a means of settling disputes, we appeal to all governments to work to strengthen the institutions which contribute to orderly resolution of differences between nations and which sustain peace.

We rededicate ourselves to the principles of self-determination, non racialism, human freedom and equality, and co-operation between nations in the service of international understanding, development and world peace, which have guided the Commonwealth throughout its evolution.

We pledge ourselves to play a full part in revitalising international co-operation for development and concerted action to confront the crucial issues of international economic inequality.

We call upon the world community to construct a framework of collective security based on mutual trust and shared interest. All nations have a stake in disarmament. We therefore look for urgent agreement in reversing the arms race and on significant reductions, and eventual elimination, of nuclear and other weapons of mass destruction.

We invite all peoples and nations to join in a universal effort to fulfil these objectives.

8. Believing that the theme of the Fortieth Anniversary celebrations, 'United Nations for a better world', expresses a profound need, we place the Commonwealth's proven qualities of understanding and bridge-building across the divides of race, religion and economic and political systems, at the service of the United Nations and of all efforts to make it more effective. We do so convinced that in the future of the United Nations lies the future of humanity.

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