



The Commonwealth

Concluding Statement of the Sixty-Third Meeting of the Commonwealth Ministerial Action Group

18 September 2023

1. The Commonwealth Ministerial Action Group (CMAG) held its sixty-third meeting at the Joint Commonwealth Office in New York, on 18 September 2023. The meeting was chaired by the Hon Fiame Naomi Mata'afa, Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs, Trade and Tourism, of Samoa. Ministers from Barbados, Canada, Ghana, Mauritius, Rwanda, and representatives of Belize, Malaysia and Malta, were in attendance.
2. Ministers recognised that the fundamental values and principles enshrined in the Charter are the prerequisites for achieving and sustaining peace and that without peace the full potential of the Charter cannot be achieved.
3. Ministers expressed the collective concern of the Commonwealth on the political situation in Gabon, strongly condemned the unconstitutional removal of the elected government from office and called for the restoration of democracy. Ministers commended the Secretary General's prompt assessment of the situation and technical assistance to the transition processes.
4. The Group thanked the Secretary-General for her Good Offices in seeking a democratic solution to the situation in Gabon. In accordance with the steps set out in the Millbrook Commonwealth Action Programme on the Harare Declaration, the Ministers decided to partially suspend Gabon from the Commonwealth pending the restoration of democracy. This partial suspension entails suspension from the Councils of the Commonwealth, and the exclusion of Gabon from all Commonwealth intergovernmental meetings and events, including ministerial meetings and CHOGM.
5. Further, Ministers determined that if acceptable progress is not made within two years, consideration will be given to fully suspending Gabon from membership of the Commonwealth. The Ministers urged the Secretary-General to continue her Good Offices engagement with Gabon, including providing technical assistance, with a view to redressing the situation and facilitating Gabon's return to democracy.

6. The Group called upon Gabon as a Commonwealth member, to uphold the values and principles of the Commonwealth and to hold credible elections as soon as possible and within a maximum of two years from 30 August 2023.
7. The Group called upon Gabon to guarantee the personal integrity, safety, health and human rights of former President Ali Bongo Ondimba, his family members and members of his Government.
8. Ministers reaffirmed their support for the Secretary-General's Good Offices, a mechanism to protect and promote Commonwealth values and principles. Ministers welcomed the report from the Secretary-General on her Good Offices engagements with member states. Ministers welcomed initiatives like the Marlborough House Dialogues where leaders were able to discuss their aspirations for peace and for protecting the values of the Commonwealth Charter as well as the youth-focused Marlborough House Get-Togethers, which enable intergenerational dialogues around peace democracy and the rule of law.
9. Ministers also received reports on the status of applications for readmission and on the Secretariat's ongoing work to promote the Commonwealth's fundamental political values.
10. Ministers received reports on and welcomed the work of the Secretariat on strengthening democratic institutions and the rule of law in member states through election observer missions, electoral technical assistance to member countries, and the Commonwealth Election Professionals (CEP) Initiative. Ministers also welcomed the Secretariat's support for member states on human rights capacity building, rule of law, anti-cybercrime, preventing and countering violent extremism, legislative drafting, civil and criminal justice, and public sector governance reform, among others.
11. Ministers recognised the Secretariat's efforts to strengthen partnerships with regions and with the international development community. Ministers are encouraged by the Secretariat's relationships with the African Union Commission, CARICOM, Caribbean Development Bank, Pacific Island Forum, and the United Nations to promote sustainable development, democracy, good governance, stability, and peace.
12. The Group agreed that, in principle, its next meeting will take place around Commonwealth Day, in March 2024 at Marlborough House in London.