

Concluding Statement of the Commonwealth Ministerial Action Group (CMAG)

17 March 2017

1. The Commonwealth Ministerial Action Group (CMAG) held its fiftieth meeting in London on 17 March 2017.
2. The meeting was chaired by Hon Ioannis Kasoulides, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Cyprus, and was attended by Hon Carl B. Greenidge, Vice-President and Minister of Foreign Affairs of Guyana; Hon Dr George Vella, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Malta; Hon Sartaj Aziz, Adviser to the Prime Minister on Foreign Affairs, Pakistan; Hon Mobashar Jawed Akbar, Minister of State of External Affairs of India; HE Lazarus O. Amayo, High Commissioner of Kenya to the United Kingdom; HE Steve Vemunavi Katjuwanjo, High Commissioner of Namibia to the United Kingdom; and HE Dr Lockwood Smith, High Commissioner of New Zealand to the United Kingdom.
3. On the occasion of its fiftieth meeting, CMAG acknowledged with gratitude the opportunity to have an exchange of views with His Royal Highness The Prince of Wales, representing Her Majesty The Queen. The Group welcomed the strong interest and support from His Royal Highness for the Group's mandate as the custodian of the association's fundamental values as outlined in the Commonwealth Charter.
4. CMAG received a briefing from the Secretary-General regarding some of her ongoing Good Offices engagements in support of member Governments' efforts to strengthen their human rights, rule of law and democratic processes. The Group received an update on the work and results from the deployment of Commonwealth Observer Group missions led by former Heads of Governments. The Group was also briefed on some of the Secretariat's follow-up work and technical support provided to Election Management Bodies and other key democratic institutions. The Group encouraged the Secretary-General to continue the use of her Good Offices in this regard.
5. In line with its strengthened mandate, the Group continued to review developments in a number of Commonwealth member states. CMAG acknowledged that challenges to democracy and other political values of the Commonwealth should be addressed in an integrated approach, cognisant of the need to enhance economic development and capacity building in collaboration with regional organisations and other international institutions.
6. CMAG acknowledged and welcomed the 2017 Commonwealth theme, "A Peacebuilding Commonwealth". CMAG encouraged the Secretary-General to pursue youth empowerment, through leadership initiatives, as a tool for achieving sustainable development and peace. The enduring potential of sport as a tool for development and peace, especially among the youth, was also reaffirmed, and the Group urged the Secretary-General to continue to explore ways to expand programmes in this area.

7. CMAG recalled that the Commonwealth was created as a bearer of peace and harmony and recognised the roles and responsibilities of both Governments and their citizens to enhance these ideals. The Group recognised the importance of shared prosperity through innovation and the need to pursue strong partnerships between Governments, the private sector, and non-governmental organisations.

Other Matters

8. CMAG noted and conveyed support to the Secretary-General's ongoing efforts in considering applications from countries who have expressed an interest to join the Commonwealth. The Group noted Togo's expression of interest and welcomed the Secretary-General's ongoing exchanges with The Gambia's President, His Excellency Adama Barrow and his Government, to discuss the country's interest to return to the Commonwealth family.
9. The Group expressed sadness at the Government of Maldives' decision to leave the Commonwealth. The Group hoped that the separation will be temporary, and expressed its support for regional countries to continue dialogue and engagement with Maldives.

Next Meeting

10. CMAG's next meeting will be held in New York in the margins of the Commonwealth Foreign Affairs Ministers Meeting during the 2017 United Nations General Assembly.