



**Concluding Statement of the
57th Meeting of the
Commonwealth Ministerial Action Group**

Virtual Meeting, 19 October 2020,
12h30 - 15h30 BST

1. The Commonwealth Ministerial Action Group (CMAG) held its fifty-seventh meeting by video conference on 19 October 2020. The meeting was chaired by Ambassador Raychelle Omamo SC, EGH, Cabinet Secretary for Foreign Affairs of Kenya. Ministers and Representatives of Australia, Barbados, Belize, Ghana, Malaysia, Namibia, Samoa and the United Kingdom also participated in the video conference.

Guyana

2. Cognisant of their decision to place Guyana on its formal agenda at its 56th Meeting in March 2020, the Group received a briefing from the Commonwealth Secretary-General on her Good Offices engagements, in supporting Guyana to strengthen its adherence to Commonwealth fundamental values. The Group also received a briefing from the Foreign Minister of Guyana, Honourable Hugh Todd, on the current situation.
3. The Group welcomed the conclusion of the election process, and the announcement of official election results by the Guyana Elections Commission (GECOM) on 2 August 2020. Ministers commended the Good Offices efforts of the Commonwealth Secretary-General in Guyana in advocating the conclusion of a credible, transparent and inclusive electoral process, in cooperation with partners, in particular CARICOM. The Group also commended the two Senior Electoral Advisers who were deployed to support GECOM under the auspices of the Secretary-General's Good Offices, Dr Nasim Zaidi (India) and Dr Kwadwo Afari-Gyan (Ghana), noting that Dr Kwadwo Afari-Gyan had given exceptional service to Guyana and the Commonwealth in the support given to GECOM throughout a difficult process, complicated by COVID-19. He stayed in the country until the electoral process concluded in August 2020. Ministers also extended their condolences to the Government of Barbados and the family of late Rt Hon Prof Owen Arthur, former Prime Minister of Barbados, who passed away on 27 July 2020, and who had chaired the Commonwealth Observer Group to the Guyana elections. The Group noted and lauded the impact of his work to encourage Guyana along a democratic trajectory.

4. Ministers noted the subsequent inauguration of President Irfaan Ali and his Government and extended their congratulations, calling on all stakeholders in the country to continue working together to strengthen its democratic culture, and to continue exploring opportunities for dialogue on critical matters of national importance.
5. Ministers recalled that the constitution of Guyana clearly states that sovereignty belongs to the people of Guyana. In this regard, Ministers noted and welcomed the commitment by President Ali to inclusive governance, without discrimination and with due regard to fairness and equity; in consonance with the abiding values of the Commonwealth.
6. The Group noted that post-election petitions have been filed by the Opposition and, in recalling the Commonwealth principle that an independent, effective and competent legal system is integral to upholding the rule of law, Ministers urged that the petitions be allowed to conclude through due legal process.
7. Ministers expressed their appreciation for the briefing by the Foreign Minister of Guyana and, in considering the current situation in the country, noted that the circumstances in Guyana have evolved and no longer represent serious breaches of the Commonwealth's fundamental political values and principles. In this regard, Ministers agreed to remove Guyana from its formal agenda. The Group requested the Secretary-General to remain actively engaged with Guyana as needed, and accompany them through this transition, to further consolidate their adherence to democratic values.

COVID-19 and Commonwealth Values

8. Recalling the Group's 56th meeting in March 2020, at the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, Ministers reaffirmed their concern about the disruptive and devastating impact the coronavirus has had on economic, social and political life, while noting the significant recovery efforts that have been undertaken by member countries since.
9. Ministers acknowledged that, since the emergence of the pandemic, strengthened Commonwealth solidarity through the Leaders' meeting and various ministerial meetings including those of Health Ministers, Sports Ministers, Women's Affairs Ministers, Small States Ministers, Finance Ministers, and Foreign Ministers have provided opportunities for coordinated action. They underscored that measures to address the pandemic must be undertaken with due regard to the human rights of all Commonwealth citizens.

10. In this regard, Ministers acknowledged the Commonwealth Secretariat's support to member countries in adhering to fundamental Commonwealth values during the COVID-19 pandemic.
11. Ministers reaffirmed the commitments and aspirations reflected in the Commonwealth Statement on the COVID-19 Pandemic and the Commonwealth Statement on Racism, which they had endorsed at the Commonwealth Foreign Affairs Ministers Meeting (CFAMM) held on 14 October 2020. Ministers also reaffirmed the support they expressed at CFAMM for the Commonwealth Says NO MORE campaign, which seeks to end domestic and sexual violence across the Commonwealth. The Group also noted, in particular, the impact of COVID-19 on girls' education and other vulnerable groups. Ministers affirmed the important role women played as peace-makers, in line with UN Resolution 1325 adopted in October 2000. Ministers called for actionable measures to be implemented by member countries, to foster greater tolerance, inclusion and non-discrimination, and to end violence against women and girls.

Secretary-General's Good Offices

12. The Group received an update from the Secretary-General on her Good Offices engagements in support of member governments' efforts to strengthen their human rights, rule of law and democratic processes. The Group commended the Secretariat's ongoing democracy work, which has been adapted to virtual and hybrid modes during this pandemic.
13. Ministers reaffirmed their unwavering commitment to advancing and supporting the fundamental political values and principles in the Commonwealth Charter, in accordance with the Group's enhanced mandate, and to working proactively and constructively with member governments to address these challenges.

Next Meeting

14. The Group agreed that, in principle, its next meeting will take place in March 2021.

ENDS