

Civil Society

42. Heads of Government declared that people-centred development implied that people must be directly involved in the decision-making process and in the implementation of development plans and programmes through their own organisations. They noted the significance of civil society in empowering people to benefit from globalisation, in contributing towards the goals of poverty elimination, equal opportunity and fair distribution of resources and in helping to deal more effectively with ethnic, racial and religious conflicts. They acknowledged the need to enable capacity-building efforts of local and regional non-governmental organisations. They noted the report of the Commonwealth Foundation on Citizens and Governance and the Communiqué of the Third Commonwealth NGO Forum and asked Senior Officials at their next meeting to study the issue of the Forum presenting its views to the next CHOGM.

Financial Services

43. Heads of Government affirmed the right of member countries to compete in the international financial markets, through the provision of both onshore and offshore financial services. They recognised the substantial importance of financial services to the economies of certain member countries. They also recognised the need for improvements in the existing framework to regulate international financial transactions and markets, given their increasing volume, size and complexity occasioned by globalisation. They requested the Secretariat to offer assistance to member countries to improve, where appropriate, their operating practices and regulatory standards relating to this activity, in order to safeguard the international banking and financial system and to prevent financial crime, notably money laundering.

Environment and Development

44. Heads of Government agreed that the Commonwealth should continue to help to build consensus and strengthen international co-operation towards the conservation of biological diversity to avert existing and new threats to the global environment especially to small island and other vulnerable states from the impact of climate change. They emphasised the need to resolve outstanding issues and to bring the Kyoto Protocol into force as soon as possible. They expressed concern about the effects of deforestation and called upon the Commonwealth Secretariat and other international organisations, upon request by member states, to initiate studies to increase the availability of alternative, sustainable and affordable sources of energy especially in Africa south of the Sahara.
45. They called for the adoption of a balanced and effective Biosafety Protocol under the Convention on Biological Diversity at the resumed Extraordinary Conference of the Parties (ExCOP) which takes place from 24 to 28 January 2000.

Commonwealth Business Council

46. Heads of Government warmly commended the efforts of the Commonwealth Business Council and received the report of the Commonwealth Business Forum, held in Johannesburg from 9 to 11 November 1999. They recognised the essential role of the private sector as a partner in shaping globalisation with equity. They noted the Forum's recommendations on trade, investment, ethics, corruption and corporate