
THE COMMONWEALTH

Now a 50-member association of states with one-quarter of the earth's population, the Commonwealth has been central to the growth of Canada's role in the world and continues to be an active forum for its diplomacy. The 50th member, Namibia, joined upon independence in March 1990; and a new Secretary-General, Chief Emeka Anyaoku of Nigeria, took office in July 1990.

Mandated by the 1989 Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting in Kuala Lumpur, a review committee worked to adapt the Commonwealth to the challenges of the 1990s and beyond. At the biennial Senior Officials' Meeting, November 1990 in Port Moresby, Papua New Guinea, Canada emphasized human rights, democratic values, and women's equality as central tenets of the future Commonwealth.

A Commonwealth Committee of Foreign Ministers chaired by the Secretary of State for

External Affairs, the Right Honourable Joe Clark, outlined real and practical steps by the South African government to end apartheid as a prerequisite to changes in sanctions against that country. A Commonwealth Expert Group chaired by a Canadian, John Harker, prepared for the human resource development needs of a post-apartheid South Africa.

Canada supported the Commonwealth's heightened commitment to human rights, democratic values and women's equality. Canada strongly supported the establishment of a Commonwealth election observer facility, and participated in observer missions to Malaysia and Bangladesh.

In October 1990, the Honourable Mary Collins, Minister Responsible for the Status of Women, hosted a landmark meeting of Commonwealth Ministers Responsible for Women's Affairs.

HUMAN RIGHTS AND SOCIAL AFFAIRS

The Department continued to promote respect for human rights and their integration into all aspects of foreign policy.

At the 47th session of the UN Commission on Human Rights, January 28 - March 8, Canada co-sponsored some 20 resolutions. By agreeing to a chairperson's statement on the Baltics, the Commission showed, for the first time, a willingness to scrutinize the records of countries such as the U.S.S.R. New special rapporteurs were appointed to look at the situations in Iraq, occupied Kuwait and Cuba. Finally, the Commission made progress in developing improved human rights standards for the victims of administrative detention, torture and disappearances, as well as in defining rights for minorities.

Canada's leadership on children's issues was evident in its co-sponsorship of the World Summit for Children, September 29 - 30 1990, and particularly in the co-chairmanship of the Summit by Prime Minister Mulroney. The Summit, attended by over 70 heads of state or government, was the largest meeting of world leaders ever held. It drew attention to the problems faced by children around the world and recommended practical solutions.

The Department stepped up its contacts with aboriginal groups, through formal consultations with national organizations, to ensure that native concerns are reflected in the operations of the Department. Canada supported the decision that aboriginal groups should participate in the planning for the UN's 1993 International Year for the World's Indigenous Peoples.

On July 5, 1990, Canada ratified the UN Convention Against Illicit Traffic in Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances, which entered into force in November 1990. Canada was one of the first of the G-7 countries to take this step. Canada also participated in the G-7 Chemical Action Task Force to prevent diversion of precursor and essential chemicals to the manufacture of illicit drugs.

INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S EQUALITY

Advancing women's equality throughout the world continued to be an important element of Canadian foreign policy. To that end, Canada hosted the Third Meeting of Commonwealth Ministers Responsible for Women's Affairs and joined the Inter-American Commission of Women, a specialized body of the Organization of American States.