

External Affairs
Supplementary Paper

No. 61/1 Commonwealth Conference

Meeting of Commonwealth Prime Ministers,
London, March 8 - 17, 1961.

Final Communiqué

The meeting of Commonwealth Prime Ministers was concluded today. Pakistan, Ghana and Cyprus were represented by their Presidents. The other Commonwealth countries were represented by their Prime Ministers.

It had been agreed that on this occasion the Prime Ministers would concentrate their main attention on a limited number of specific problems which are currently of common concern to them all -- namely, disarmament, the structure of the United Nations and certain constitutional problems affecting the Commonwealth itself. At the outset of the meeting, however, the Prime Ministers held a general review of the international situation as a whole, in order to set these particular problems in the perspective of current world events. They also considered, in the course of their meeting, recent developments in the Congo and in Southeast Asia.

The Prime Ministers reaffirmed the support of their governments for the efforts of the United Nations to restore order in the Congo and to secure the independence and integrity of the republic. They adopted outside intervention in the Congo and recognized that many of the problems which had arisen were due to such intervention. They considered that United Nations forces in the Congo should be strengthened and that the Security Council resolution of February 21 should be fully implemented.

The Prime Ministers noted with concern the situation which had developed in Laos. They expressed the hope that the parties would be able to reconcile their differences, that intervention from outside would cease, and that Laos would be enabled to enjoy an independent, neutral and peaceful existence.

The Prime Ministers held a full discussion on the problem of disarmament. They recognized that this was the most important question facing the world today and considered that a favourable opportunity was now at hand for a fresh initiative toward a settlement of it. They agreed that the aim should be to achieve general and complete disarmament, subject to effective inspection and control, on the general lines indicated in the statement in Annex I of this communiqué. They recalled the resolution on general and complete disarmament which was adopted unanimously at the fourteenth session of the General Assembly. They agreed that every effort should be made to implement this resolution by agreement between the major powers and that further negotiations for this purpose were necessary. Certain proposals designed to promote such negotiations have been put by various countries before the United Nations.