

An intellectual economy, based more on services than on goods, is coming into being, and it requires a new vocabulary that is values-based, not cost-based. It also requires new thinking on how to deal with the speed of decision making and of accumulation of information embodied in this new economy. The Commonwealth can assist in building interactive knowledge networks for the transfer and collaborative development of skills, and can provide forums for the discussion of emerging issues.

Government and Justice

10. The member countries of the Commonwealth share a rich legacy of laws, institutions, and legal values including the rule of law, independent courts, the adversary system, an independent bar and the ideal that no person is above the law. From these core traditions, the Commonwealth has gradually developed a code of principles which now seem more susceptible of consistent application. At the same time, many member countries have adopted innovations which they believe better reflect their local needs. In some cases, such as the Native sentencing circles in Canada, these innovations maintain respect for the rule of law; in others, such as in Nigeria, they openly defy human rights.

11. Civil society is grounded in this general Commonwealth tradition, and has taken on new prominence with the end of the Cold War and the outbreak of local conflicts. Democracy is more than the economy, and more than political parties and elections. The leadership of a democratic society is trained and recruited in the institutions of civil society, which can hold government accountable and provide genuine expression of local concerns and needs. While civil society associations need help from external bodies such as the Commonwealth, they are not delivery mechanisms for donor agencies or governments. The best and most successful international links are those between civil society organizations in one country and those in another - professional bodies, youth associations, women's organizations.

12. We urge the Commonwealth to press member states more forcefully to adopt the guidelines embodied in the Singapore, Lusaka, Harare and Edinburgh Declarations, together with the Millbrook Action Programme, as a framework for the continuing development of their legal and justice systems. At the same time, the institutions of civil society deserve stronger support. The recently-published NGO Guidelines of Practice should be widely distributed to help NGOs in their efforts to make governments accountable for implementing their Declarations.

Government

13. We believe that the Commonwealth's greatest tool is its political, as opposed to technical, influence. We urge it to continue its work helping member countries strengthen core institutions and their functions, because improvements in governance are critical to development. The key roles of government include policy formulation, implementation and coordination, finance and audit, and civil service and law reform. These create and strengthen the legal institutions which regulate the promotion of democratic structures and multiparty systems. We challenge