

Mr. Chairman, Mr. Secretary-General, Distinguished Heads of Delegation,

At Vancouver, in 1987, Heads of Government established the Commonwealth Committee of Foreign Ministers on Southern Africa to provide high-level guidance on Commonwealth programs to oppose apartheid. At Kuala Lumpur, in 1989, Heads of Government requested that the Committee continue its work and report again when Heads of Government next meet. I am honoured to submit its Report today.

The Secretary-General has already circulated the written Report summarizing the activities of our Committee. This morning I want to highlight briefly some of the principal points in the Report for your consideration and approval.

My colleagues -- the Foreign Ministers of Australia, Guyana, India, Malaysia, Nigeria, Tanzania, Zambia and Zimbabwe -- and I were tasked with monitoring a period of dramatic change in South Africa. As Heads of Government met in Kuala Lumpur, the newly elected government of President de Klerk was taking the first tentative steps toward opening a dialogue with their political opponents, notably the African National Congress (ANC). In fact it was on the eve of that Heads of Government meeting that a number of black political leaders, including the present Deputy Head of the African National Congress, Walter Sisulu, were released from prison. Heads of Government wisely directed the Foreign Ministers' Committee to give the new de Klerk government six months in office to determine if it was really serious about reform.

By February 1990, dramatic political change began to take place in South Africa. The African National Congress and other parties were once again allowed to take their legitimate place in political life. Nelson Mandela was finally released from his long pain of prison, followed by more than a thousand other political prisoners. The State of Emergency was ended and security legislation was substantially reformed. More than 3,000 South African exiles were permitted to go home, and the recent signature of an agreement with the United Nations High Commission for Refugees will facilitate the return of the others in the months ahead. The South African Parliament has abolished the legislative pillars of apartheid: the Separate Amenities Act, the Group Areas Act, the Land Acts and the Population Registration Act.

Equally important, a dialogue has been launched between the South African government and representatives of the black majority. In October 1990, the government and the ANC signed an accord in Pretoria which paved the way for the release of prisoners and the return of exiles. In response, the ANC agreed to suspend the armed struggle. While my colleagues and I were meeting in Delhi, a National Peace Accord was signed in Johannesburg by the government, the African National Congress, the Inkatha Freedom