

Discussions at the Coolum Meeting

“The Commonwealth in the 21st Century: Continuity and Renewal” will be the theme of the March 2–5, 2002, Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting in Coolum, Australia. The emphasis will be on both the Commonwealth’s enduring strengths and its ability to renew itself to face the challenges of an evolving world.

In light of the attacks on the United States on Sept. 11, 2001, there will also be particular emphasis in Coolum on the terrorism threat. The Commonwealth Ministerial Committee on Terrorism, of which Canada is a member, will present heads of government with an action plan that outlines proposed Commonwealth objectives and co-operation in the fight against terrorism.

Heads of government will also consider the recommendations of the 10-member High-Level Group, which they established at their 1999 meeting in Durban, South Africa, to review the role of the Commonwealth and advise on how best it could respond to the challenges of the new century. Participants will also consider the Secretary-General’s report on activities of the Secretariat, including those to promote the fundamental political values of the Commonwealth, and accounts of ministerial meetings held since the leaders’ meeting in Durban.

Promotion of fundamental political values

In Coolum, the Commonwealth Ministerial Action Group will report to leaders on developments in Fiji, Pakistan, Sierra Leone, Solomon Islands, The Gambia and Zimbabwe. The Commonwealth Secretary-General will also report on his “good-offices” role and activities under this mandate for quiet diplomacy based on the Harare Declaration and Millbrook Action Program.

Global issues

Heads of government will address trade, economic and development issues including market access for developing countries, the environment, globalization, and money laundering. The situation of small states will be examined, including proposals to facilitate their access to the World Trade Organization.