

ROUNDTABLE ON NIGERIA

February 10, 1997

Summary of Recommendations

The Roundtable on Nigeria was held as a result of Minister Axworthy and Minister Stewart's request for consultation with Commonwealth NGOs in preparation for the CMAG meetings in London on February 17, 1997.

Several of the NGOs, including the Journalists Association, the Lawyers Association, the Human Rights Initiative, the Trades Union Council, the Royal Society and Judicial Education were represented along with departmental officials and ministerial staff. The Roundtable was chaired by Steve Lee, Director of the CCFPD. Both Ministers were also present.

The NGOs were asked to present their views and assessment of Canadian government's policy and the situation in Nigeria. They were also asked to address the capacity and the role civil society in both countries could play in helping the Nigerian people restore the rule of law.

In general, the NGOs agreed with the government's policy on Nigeria. They suggested however, that the government take a proactive approach by supporting Canadian NGO activities which enable communication between the civil societies and which could result eventually in putting an end to the human rights violations.

To this end several policy options were identified; that,

- as currently two parallel courts have been set up, one judicial and one military, the Canadian government consider supporting the CBA and the CLA in establishing links with the judiciary in Nigeria. This would assist the judiciary in both countries exchange information and expertise, and assist the Nigerian judiciary in their efforts to return the country to civil law,
- the government consider asking Desmond Tutu, who led the last fact-finding mission to the prisons in Nigeria, to conduct a sermon at the St. Giles Cathedral on the Sunday prior to the New Edinburgh meetings, and,
- that the Canadian government consider persuading the CMAG members to request a second tour of the prisons in Nigeria.

In addition, that,

- as suggested by the CLA which is willing to be actively involved in the process, the Canadian government consider negotiating the potential for hi-level mediation between Shell