

days of private and unstructured conversation between heads of delegation. Through these means, I hope that the value of our unusual meetings will be increased even further, and that we shall be able to exploit to our advantage our diversity.

Diverse we may be, but that condition has not in the past been employed as an excuse for deviation from certain principles: there is no dissimilarity of views with respect to our regard for human equality and dignity; the economic disparity that exists among us only intensifies our resolve that it be diminished; our belief in the value of association and co-operation is genuine.

The word Commonwealth has been employed again and again by scholars, writers and statesmen over a period of several thousand years. The conception has varied widely in the minds of such persons as Plato, Locke and Oliver Cromwell, yet none of those conceptions has met so well the acid test of practical application and value as has the one that brings us together in Ottawa this week. To contemporary observers and, I am confident, to future historians, the word Commonwealth will be irrevocably associated with the desire of free men and women representing more than a quarter of the world's population to gather, to discuss and to understand.

It is in that Commonwealth that we recognize this morning two new members, Bangladesh and Bahamas. To the Prime Ministers of those countries, and to those of our colleagues from other countries attending this meeting for the first time, I offer a warm welcome.

In the 30 months since we last gathered in Singapore under the distinguished chairmanship of Prime Minister Lee Kwan Yew, the world has undergone sweeping changes of considerable significance: The People's Republic of China has taken its place in the United Nations. The shock-waves of the United States August 1971 economic policies travelled around the globe, affecting most heavily the developed countries. Immensely important steps were taken by the United States and the Soviet Union, on the one hand, and by the United States and the People's Republic of China, on the other, to ease the tensions of the Cold War and to permit progress toward *détente* and friendly relations. As one consequence, the first round of the Strategic Arms Limitations Talks was successfully concluded; as another, the European Security Conference was launched earlier this summer. The European Economic Community expanded from six members to nine, one of the additions being Britain. A tragic series of events on the Indian subcontinent resulted in the severing of the two wings of Pakistan and the emergence of a new state, Bangladesh. That severance was followed by the withdrawal of Pakistan from the Commonwealth. The scale of hostilities in