

In 1985, the Commonwealth Heads of Government meeting in Nassau set the agenda for international action on South Africa. An agreed package of sanctions was adopted and the Eminent Persons Group was created. Seven leading citizens from five continents - a former Prime Minister of Australia, a former President of Nigeria, a former Chancellor of the Exchequer of a Conservative Government in Great Britain, a former President of the World Council of Churches from the Bahamas, and Archbishop of the Anglican Church of Canada, - spent four months in Africa, speaking to all sides, seeking a peaceful solution. Their Report defined a negotiating concept that would lead to peaceful acceptable change. Unfortunately, on the day these Eminent Persons returned to Cape Town, the South African Government bombed the headquarters of the African National Congress in Lusaka, and the hope of negotiations was stalled. The next Heads of Government meeting in Vancouver in 1987 established a Committee of Commonwealth Foreign Ministers which has since served to provide an on-going forum for considered debate and to refine the Commonwealth's approach. The October Commonwealth Heads of Government meeting in Kuala Lumpur this year will provide an important opportunity to review the aftermath of the elections in South Africa and to consider new means by which the process of reform can be made inevitable.

Since the 1985 Commonwealth meeting, no country has adopted more measures designed to end apartheid and encourage dialogue than has Canada - over 50 distinct steps. These have ranged from financial and trade sanctions to assistance programs for the education of blacks; from a ban on sporting contacts to support to the Front Line States; from an embargo on the import of South African arms to support for workshops and conferences which have brought together South Africans of all races.

The purpose of Canadian policy has been clear and constant: to convince South Africa that it must abolish the system of apartheid. From the outset, this has dictated the specific approach we have taken.

That approach was based on a recognition the change would not come without pressure, and that pressure is most effective if exerted collectively, and steadily.