

meeting was in London in June 1977, where heads of governments embodied their conclusions and decisions in an impressive communiqué. There was no mincing of words. The Commonwealth went on record as supporting the struggle in Zimbabwe and Namibia, condemning racist minority regimes in southern Africa, and South Africa for its aid to them; questions of sanctions as well as additional aid in the area were examined; heads of government recorded their concern and sympathy with the aspirations of the developing countries for an improved international economic order and agreed on measures to forward this objective; they reaffirmed their commitment to fundamental human rights for all mankind and agreed on the now famous Glen-eagles Agreement against *apartheid* in sport. At the same time, they reviewed other major international issues such as the situation in the Middle East, Cyprus, Belize, the Indian Ocean area, law-of-the-sea matters and the increasingly-important role of regional arrangements in world affairs. The communiqué itself is an important document in international affairs. Even more important is the fact that these world leaders, representing such a cross-section of the world and its nations, could agree on such a wide range of issues and action, returning to their countries and regions fortified in the knowledge that each would work towards these goals with the support of his Commonwealth colleagues and in the knowledge that these goals are entirely consistent with national, regional and universal commitments and objectives.

Commonwealth membership grew rapidly in the 1960s from the small so-called "old Commonwealth" group to a larger "new Commonwealth" embracing the newly-independent Commonwealth states in Africa, Asia and the Caribbean, which, almost without exception, chose to remain in the Commonwealth. This was also the period of the forced withdrawal of South Africa over its unacceptable race policies. The heads-of-government meetings are, of course, still the main focus of Commonwealth activities but, with the growth in membership, heads of government recognized the need for more permanent staff arrangements, not only to support major conferences and continuing intergovernmental consultations but also to implement specific programs of functional co-operation and other agreed measures. As a result, the Commonwealth Secretariat was established in London in 1965, first under the leadership of the well-known Canadian diplomat Arnold Smith, and it is currently headed by our distinguished Secretary-General, Mr Shridath Ramphal, previously Foreign Minister of Guyana and a staunch believer in the potential of the Commonwealth.

The Secretariat is equipped to facilitate continuing political and economic consultations, and to implement a wide range of programs of functional co-operation — most notably, development aid, economic studies of mutual interest, science, health and welfare, education and youth. Commonwealth co-operation in development aid is long-established and is internationally regarded as a highly-successful program, providing development assistance over a wide range of projects for which assistance from the larger international development-assistance organizations may not be available. Being a relatively small group of countries, the Commonwealth can often supply the necessary experts and supporting finances required at a lower cost, and quicker, than other sources. In this process, of course, the availability of a common working language, common administrative, educational and legal traditions are enormously helpful.