

This was preceded by a preparatory meeting which brought together 41 representatives of both government and opposition parties in practising democracies in Africa, some of whom had little or no direct contact in their own countries.

39. Secretariat assistance has been provided to member countries to strengthen *democratic structures, institutions and procedures* before and after elections and create or strengthen various watchdog institutions such as independent electoral commissions. Assistance has also been provided for preparing elections legislation, formulating codes of conduct for political parties and candidates, training programs for elections officials, voter education programs, election logistics and enhancement of gender perspectives. Promoting multi-party elections is important for the development of democratic systems. Secretariat assistance in this area has been provided at different stages of the electoral process. Pre-election technical assistance has enabled member countries to make adequate preparations for holding elections. Commonwealth monitoring teams have observed the electoral process, including parts of the campaign and the polling day itself in some eight countries over the past two years.
40. In regard to *the rule of law*, the Secretariat's emphasis has been to provide information on the best practice in constitutional, judicial, administrative and regulatory matters, and human rights issues to member governments. Priority has been given to areas which are critical for advancing democracy, the rule of law and accountable government. Workshops on administrative law were initiated in 1992 leading to the publication of a handbook on good government and administrative law to assist public officials respect the law when exercising their duties. The Secretariat has encouraged the wider accession to international human rights instruments and the implementation of international human rights standards at the national level. This has been pursued through a series of judicial colloquia which have resulted in the production of a computerised digest of judicial decisions on human rights which have constitutional implications. It enables judges throughout the Commonwealth to learn from the experience of colleagues. Another area where the Secretariat has provided assistance over the years has been in legal drafting to enable countries to establish a sound legal infrastructure. Both consultancy services and training have been provided.
41. The Action Programme reaffirmed the support of the Commonwealth for **Promoting Sustainable Development** by, among others,
 - restoring the financial resources of the CFTC to the 1991/92 level in real terms to sustain its technical assistance programs;