



Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II, Head of the Commonwealth, is joined by participants in the Coolum meeting: from left, Prime Minister John Howard of Australia, Commonwealth Secretary-General Don McKinnon, Prime Minister Tony Blair of the United Kingdom, President Thabo Mbeki of South Africa, Prime Minister Bethuel Pakalitha Mosisili of Lesotho, King Mswati III of Swaziland, Prime Minister Tuilaepa Sailele Malielegaoi of Samoa and President Yoweri Museveni of Uganda.

Challenges of the 21st century

In line with the theme for the meeting at Coolum, the leaders agreed to preserve the traditional strengths of the Commonwealth while adopting various measures to improve its effectiveness. To this end they approved the report of the High Level Review Group, which included a summary of the values and assets of the Commonwealth and a series of recommendations that provide direction for Commonwealth programs over the next decade. The aim is to ensure that the Commonwealth focuses on areas in which it has a comparative advantage, including youth programming, dealing with the digital divide and issues of globalization.

In view of the events of last September 11, another important focus in Coolum was strengthening cooperation between Commonwealth nations to more successfully fight terrorism, and an action plan on counterterrorism was adopted. Provisions in the plan include model laws to assist countries with the implementation of counterterrorism

instruments, enhanced mutual legal assistance and extradition arrangements, and assistance with implementing anti-money laundering and anti-terrorism financing arrangements. The leaders also recognized the effect these events had on the global economic slowdown, and stressed the need to assist developing and vulnerable countries to cope with the challenges of a more adverse external environment.

The leaders resolved to work closely together to increase trade liberalization and market access, which are essential to enable developing countries to rise out of poverty. They recognized the importance of sustainable and equitable growth, and called on governments to participate in the UN Conference on Financing for Development (March 18 to 22 in Monterrey, Mexico) and the World Summit on Sustainable Development (August 26 to September 4 in Johannesburg, South Africa).

The Commonwealth recognizes the vulnerabilities of small states, and in Coolum leaders endorsed the New Agenda for the Commonwealth's

work on small states. The main objectives of the New Agenda are: to ensure that small states benefit from further integration into the global economy; to address the impact of climate change and natural disasters; and to mitigate the impact of the events of September 11 on small states.

The Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting provided an excellent opportunity for Prime Minister Jean Chrétien to speak with his colleagues about issues of importance to Canada, including his plans for the G8 Summit in Kananaskis, Alberta, and the New Partnership for Africa's Development. The Prime Minister also took the opportunity to note the importance, for countries that have not already done so, of signing and ratifying both the Convention on Anti-Personnel Mines and the Rome Statute establishing the International Criminal Court.

Mr. Chrétien reiterated his support for the work of the Commonwealth and the importance of the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meetings: "We represent different continents, cultures and histories. This is a most extraordinary forum because we can have access to the opinion of political leaders from all over the world. It's a great privilege for Canada." 🍁

To learn more about Canada and the Commonwealth and the Coolum meeting, go to www.dfait-maeci.gc.ca and click on "Foreign Policy," then "Multilateral Relations."