

of racial justice and equality and the right of all peoples to self determination which are embodied in the United Nations Charter and in the Declaration of Human Rights. These matters went to the heart of the Commonwealth relationship and were therefore of deep concern to all Commonwealth members.

25. The Meeting recalled that, for these reasons, Rhodesia had been an important subject of discussion at recent Commonwealth conferences, and Heads of Government reiterated the principles and objectives affirmed at their four previous meetings.

26. They also reviewed developments since their last Meeting, noting that the illegal regime had continued acts of political repression against the African majority population, and that there were increasing trends towards an apartheid system in Rhodesia.

27. The constitutional proposals drawn up on board HMS *Fearless* were discussed. Most Heads of Government emphasized their view that these proposals were unacceptable as the constitution of an independent Rhodesia, and should therefore be withdrawn. They considered that to transfer sovereignty to a racial minority as the result of an agreement reached with that minority would settle nothing, if the settlement was not freely accepted by the people of Rhodesia as a whole including the four million African Rhodesians and seen by the international community, especially the independent African countries to be so accepted. Otherwise internal strife, and outside support for guerilla activities would increase, with the inevitable risk of increasing instability and eventual race war. They stated that historical experience suggested that once independence was achieved, a minority in power could not be prevented from changing a constitution in whatever way they might wish. The only effective guarantees of political and civil rights lay in vesting those rights in the people as a whole.

28. The Meeting recalled the pledge given by the British Prime Minister, following discussion at the Commonwealth Conference in September, 1966, that independence would not be granted before majority rule was achieved (NIBMR). The British Prime Minister stated that although the Fearless Proposals remained on the table, there had been no change in the British Government's policy on NIBMR. The Meeting welcomed the statement that the British Government's policy on NIBMR remained unchanged, but most Heads of Government reiterated their position that the Fearless Proposals should be withdrawn.

29. Some Heads of Government reiterated their call on the British Government to use force to quell the rebellion in Rhodesia. The British Prime Minister explained the reasons why the British Government regarded the use of force as wrong and impracticable.

30. The British Prime Minister said that he had taken careful note of the view expressed by most other Heads of Government that the Fearless Proposals ought to be withdrawn. But he could not himself accept this view since he considered that it would be right, if it proved possible, to give the people of Rhodesia as a whole an opportunity to decide for themselves whether or not they wished for a settlement which would be fully consistent with the Six Principles laid down by successive British Governments. Any such settlement would need to be clearly shown to be the wish of the Rhodesian people as a whole. If that took place, he would consult his Commonwealth colleagues about the NIBMR commitments. He emphasized, however, that a settlement based on the Six Principles would not be possible if it were shown that there could be no genuine test of its acceptability in present circumstances in Rhodesia.

31. It was agreed that any settlement must depend for its validity upon the democratically ascertained wishes of the people of Rhodesia as a whole. The process for ascertaining their views was the British Government's responsibility, but the test of the acceptability of any proposed settlement would need to be made in a manner which would carry conviction in the Commonwealth and in the international community generally, so that its results would be accepted as truly reflecting the wishes of the people of Rhodesia. Many Heads of Government urged that this could only be carried out through the normal democratic process of election or referendum, and doubted whether adequate safeguards for free political expression and verification of the results could be provided so long as the rebel government remained in power. The Meeting noted the British Prime Minister's statement that it would be open to the proposed Royal Commission to say that in the circumstances prevailing in Rhodesia, no genuine assessment was possible of the acceptability of the proposed settlement to the people of Rhodesia as a whole and that, further, if the Royal Commission felt themselves unable to adjudicate on the acceptability or otherwise of the proposals to the people of