



# Commonwealth News Release

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## COMMONWEALTH COMMITTEE OF FOREIGN MINISTERS ON SOUTHERN AFRICA

Fourth Meeting: Canberra, 7-9 August 1989

### Members of the Committee

The Rt. Hon. Joe Clark (Canada) - Chairman; Senator the Hon. Gareth Evans (Australia); The Hon. Rashleigh E. Jackson (Guyana); The Hon P.V. Narasimha Rao (India); The Hon. Major-General Iks Nwachukwu (Nigeria); The Hon. Benjamin Mkapa (Tanzania); The Hon. Luke J. Mwananshiku (Zambia) and The Hon. Dr. Nathan Shamuyarira (Zimbabwe)

The Foreign Minister of Malaysia, The Hon. Dato' Abu Hassan bin Haji Omar, representing the host Government of the forthcoming Heads of Government Meeting in Kuala Lumpur attended the meeting as the guest of the Committee. The Foreign Minister of New Zealand, the Hon. Russell Marshall, held discussions with the Committee during its meeting.

### CONCLUDING STATEMENT

1. The Committee's fourth meeting considered developments and progress in the implementation of earlier decisions arising from its mandate from Commonwealth Heads of Government and the Okanagan Statement and Programme of Action. Its conclusions in Canberra included the following.

#### The Situation in South Africa

2. The Committee noted that despite talk about reform the situation in South Africa had not improved since its last meeting in Harare. Apartheid remained in place and the state of emergency had been renewed for the fourth consecutive year. Nelson Mandela and the other political prisoners remained incarcerated. Most of the detainees released at the beginning of the year following the country-wide hunger strike had since been restricted as part of the regime's effort to contain all opposition to the system. The Committee was distressed by the increasing and distorted application of the legal doctrine of "common purpose". Of particular concern was the sentencing to death of the Upington 14. Equally disturbing were growing instances of informal repression and attacks on anti-apartheid activists. The murder of Dr. David Webster on 1 May followed an all too familiar pattern of assassinations. According to a United States State Department report issued in February, South African "death squads" were said to be operating "completely outside the law inside and outside the country". The South African Government had also continued its pressure against the media on several fronts as part of the wider effort to quell peaceful opposition to apartheid. The ban on political parties remained in force and, notwithstanding the declarations of the new leadership of the ruling National Party, no beginning had been made on negotiations between the Government and the acknowledged representatives of the black majority.