

53. They also requested the Secretary-General to increase the contribution of the Commonwealth to multilateral trade negotiations through the use of expert groups and other methods to explore issues and promote consensus; and to consult Commonwealth governments about convening a meeting of Commonwealth ministers responsible for international trade at an appropriate time to promote progress in WTO negotiations.
54. Heads of Government recognised the importance for a large number of Commonwealth countries of ACP-EU negotiations on post-Lomé- IV arrangements, and urged during a transitional period that the historical benefits upon which ACP countries depend for access to EU markets be retained.

### **HIV/AIDS**

55. Heads of Government expressed grave concern over the devastating social and economic impact of HIV/AIDS, particularly in sub-Saharan Africa. They agreed that this constituted a Global Emergency, and pledged personally to lead the fight against HIV/AIDS within their countries and internationally. They urged all sectors in government, international agencies and the private sector to co-operate in increased efforts to tackle the problem, with greater priority given to research into new methods of prevention, the development of an effective vaccine and effective ways of making affordable drugs for the treatment of HIV/AIDS accessible to the affected population.

### **Education**

56. Heads of Government reaffirmed their commitment to education and training as essential foundations of human development and emphasised their central importance in equipping people with the knowledge and skills to meet the challenges of development and to take advantage of the opportunities presented by globalisation. They recognised the contribution of the Commonwealth of Learning in supporting the efforts of Commonwealth developing countries to benefit fully from the new information and communication technologies in developing their human potential through distance education.

### **Commonwealth Functional Co-operation**

57. Heads of Government considered various aspects of Commonwealth functional co-operation, which they reaffirmed as essential for translating the benefits of membership, particularly to developing member states. They approved the attached Report of the Committee of the Whole. They requested the Secretariat to intensify its efforts to establish priorities in its areas of responsibility based on the Commonwealth's comparative advantage.