

continued to offer support to member countries seeking to implement improved rural policies and programmes, specific poverty alleviation measures, noting the particular vulnerability of women and children, and strategies to increase food security.

Environment

52. Heads of Government reaffirmed the high priority they attached to environment issues and the pursuit of sustainable development as well as to the reduction of poverty through effective follow-up to the outcome of the 1992 United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED). They welcomed the progress being made toward the early entry into force of the Framework Convention on Climate Change and the Convention on Biological Diversity, and looked forward to a successful conclusion to the negotiations on a Convention to Combat Desertification and Drought as well as on the restructuring and replenishment of the Global Environment Facility. They stressed the need for all the Rio commitments to be translated urgently into action. They welcomed the positive outcomes of the first substantive meeting of the UN Commission on Sustainable Development and expressed their full support for the Commission's work in helping to ensure the effective implementation of Agenda 21.

53. Heads of Government expressed support for the Global Conference on the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States, to be held in Barbados in April 1994 and urged participation by all Commonwealth countries at the highest possible level. They noted that the Conference was of great importance not only to small states but to the entire international community, since it presented an early opportunity for implementation of the commitments reached at UNCED and for building a partnership for the implementation of Agenda 21. They also expressed the view that the Conference would make a major contribution in the search by small island developing states for more sustainable patterns of development and encouraged support for several of the expected outcomes of the Conference, including the Regional Sustainable Development Centres (RSDC); the Small Island Developing States Technical Assistance Programme (SIDS/TAP); a Small Island Developing States Information Network (SIDSNET) and for the creation of Regional Disaster Emergency Funds.

Role of the Commonwealth

54. Heads of Government noted with appreciation the progress made since their last meeting in pursuing the priorities enshrined in their Harare Commonwealth Declaration. They stressed the importance of maintaining the balance reflected in the Harare Declaration between the social and developmental activities of the Commonwealth and the promotion of fundamental political values. In that context, they welcomed the development of a rolling Strategic Three Year Plan by the Secretariat and the