

REPORT OF COMMISSION "A"

CLOSER CO-OPERATION WITHIN THE UNOFFICIAL COMMONWEALTH

1. The unofficial Commonwealth is the totality of non-governmental relations that exist bilaterally and multilaterally among the peoples of the Commonwealth, whether on an individual or on an organisational level.
2. Within the framework of the Commonwealth such relations have developed and will only develop in areas of mutual concern and practical activity. Five categories of non-governmental activity relevant to the work and priorities of the Commonwealth are:
 - (a) Knowledge-based organisations, including professional, scientific, political, educational, the media.
 - (b) Interest-based organisations, including chambers of commerce farmers, industry, trade unions, employers and consumers.
 - (c) Social service based organisations, including youth and religious.
 - (d) Development agencies;
 - (e) Arts and sport.
3. In considering the expanded role which NGOs throughout the Commonwealth could play, it is advisable to recognise:
 - (a) the lack of factual information about NGOs and the extent of their activities;
 - (b) the still small number of NGOs working on a pan-Commonwealth basis;
 - (c) the increasing need to think of NGOs not in their totality but within categories relating directly to the priorities of Commonwealth.
4. The unofficial Commonwealth has developed pragmatically, in response to the need for co-operative action with a Commonwealth framework, in four principal areas. First, in the professional field - largely through the work of the Commonwealth Foundation, set up to stimulate and foster professional links; second, in the field of