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MINISTER CLARK PRESENTS PROPOSAL TO STRENGTHEN GAMES

CANBERRA - The Secretary of State for External Affairs, the Right Honourable Joe Clark, today presented a comprehensive proposal aimed at strengthening the institution of the Commonwealth Games and at assisting developing countries seeking to host the Games.

Mr. Clark discussed his initiative with colleagues from nine other Commonwealth countries at the Committee of Foreign Ministers (CFM) on Southern Africa which he is chairing in the Australian capital. The Ministers agreed to a meeting of Commonwealth representatives to examine the proposals in detail.

The Canadian proposals seek to strengthen the Games by making it easier for less wealthy nations to act as host for the competitions which take place every four years.

"The Games are a valuable institution that promote athletic excellence and fitness and, just as important, provide a means for people in Commonwealth countries to get to know and appreciate each other better," said Mr. Clark.

He noted that, in recent years, there have been dissension and boycotts, real or threatened, over the policies of various member countries towards South Africa. The Secretary of State for External Affairs explained that the Canadian proposals are not a direct response to recent threats of boycott or banning. However, it is hoped the proposals would enable the developing nations to feel a stronger sense of identification with the Games, counter the notion that the Games are mainly for the rich countries, and generally increase Commonwealth co-operation and goodwill.

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Secretary of State
for
External Affairs

Secrétaire d'État
aux
Affaires extérieures

Canada

"If we succeed in making all members feel the Games belong to them," said Mr. Clark, "I think there's less chance of disruption over matters such as secondary boycotts."

The main points of the Canadian proposal at Canberra are:

- financial aid and assistance in services for less wealthy nations to host the Games;
- sports development assistance (e.g., coaching, administrative assistance, provision of equipment) to less-developed nations beginning with Southern Africa;
- creation of a Commonwealth Games Trust with members from government, sporting bodies and the Commonwealth Secretariat. It would review funding proposals and approve budgets. The Trust would report to Commonwealth Heads of Government Meetings (CHOGM);
- a bolstering of the Commonwealth Games Federation to give it the capacity to manage sport development and marketing programs;
- mini-Commonwealth competitions providing regional meets in one or more sports disciplines between Commonwealth Games;
- travel assistance to help developing countries meet the often high expenses of transportation to and from the Games; and
- scholarships and academic exchanges in physical education and sport-related studies.

"Our hope is to get early adoption of these or similar proposals in order that the 1998 Games could be held in a developing country," said Mr. Clark. The Games have been held in a developing country only once--Kingston, Jamaica, in 1966. The 1990 Games will be held in Auckland, New Zealand, and the 1994 Games in Victoria, B.C.

Canada is proposing that officials from CFM and other interested Commonwealth countries meet in London in September to study the Canadian initiative. Refined proposals from that exercise would then go to CHOGM in October in Kuala Lumpur and, if blessed by that body, be sent to the Commonwealth Games Federation meeting in Auckland next January for adoption.

In the meantime, Canada's High Commissioners in Commonwealth countries are seeking the views of their host governments on the Canadian initiative.