



What's New

02/26 - Meeting of Commonwealth Chairpersons' Committee on Zimbabwe

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Marlborough House Statement on Zimbabwe

The Commonwealth Chairpersons' Committee on Zimbabwe, consisting of the Prime Minister of Australia, Rt Hon John Howard, the President of Nigeria, H E Chief Olusegun Obasanjo, and the President of South Africa, H E Mr Thabo Mbeki, met at Marlborough House, London on 19 March 2002 to discuss the situation in Zimbabwe. The Commonwealth Secretary-General, Rt Hon Don McKinnon, also attended the discussions.

The Committee recalled the mandate given to them by Commonwealth Heads of Government at their recent meeting in Coolumb, Australia, to determine appropriate Commonwealth action on Zimbabwe, in the event of an adverse report from the Commonwealth Observer Group to the Zimbabwe Presidential Election, in accordance with the Harare Commonwealth Declaration and the Millbrook Commonwealth Action Programme.

The Committee noted that the Commonwealth Observer Group, led by General Abdulsalami Abubakar of Nigeria, had concluded that the Presidential Election was marred by a high level of politically motivated violence and that "the conditions in Zimbabwe did not adequately allow for a free expression of will by the electors". They deemed these conclusions, together with other aspects of the Report of the Observer Group, to be an adverse reflection on the electoral process, requiring an appropriate Commonwealth response.

The Committee took note of the various recommendations contained in the Commonwealth Observer Group Report. It also received a Report from the Commonwealth Secretary-General on his consultations with other Commonwealth leaders.

The Committee expressed its determination to promote reconciliation in Zimbabwe between the main political parties. To this end the Committee strongly supported the initiatives of the President of Nigeria and the President of South Africa in encouraging a climate of reconciliation between the main political parties in Zimbabwe which they considered essential to address the issues of food shortages, economic recovery, the restoration of political stability, the rule of law and the conduct of future elections.

The Committee called upon the international community to respond to the desperate situation currently in Zimbabwe, especially the shortages of food.

The Committee noted the reference in the Commonwealth Observer Group Report to national reconciliation being a priority and that the Commonwealth should assist in this process: and requested the President of Nigeria and the President of South Africa to continue to actively promote the process of reconciliation in Zimbabwe between the main political parties and to appoint special representatives to remain engaged with all the parties concerned towards this end.

The Committee decided to suspend Zimbabwe from the Councils of the Commonwealth for one year with immediate effect. This issue will be revisited in twelve months time, having regard to progress in Zimbabwe based on the Commonwealth Harare principles

and reports from the Commonwealth Secretary-General.

The Committee mandated the Commonwealth Secretary-General to engage with the Government of Zimbabwe to ensure that the specific recommendations from the Commonwealth Observer Group Report, notably on the management of future elections, in Zimbabwe are implemented.

In line with the Abuja Agreement and the Coolum Statement, the Committee stated that land is at the core of the crisis in Zimbabwe and cannot be separated from other issues of concern, and the Commonwealth will be ready to assist Zimbabwe to address the land issue and to help in its economic recovery in co-operation with other international agencies. The Committee requested the Commonwealth Secretary-General to remain actively involved with the United Nations Development Programme in promoting transparent, equitable and sustainable measures for land reform in Zimbabwe.

The Committee will actively promote the implementation of all the goals contained in this Statement in consultation with the Commonwealth Secretary-General and will meet at the request of the Commonwealth Chairperson-in-Office.

Marlborough House
London

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