Closing Remarks by Professor K.S. Murshid Assistant Secretary-General

The moment has come when we must yield to the sentiment of parting and reflect a little on the work we have done during the past week. Ministers will agree with me that our deliberations have been friendly, expeditious, professional and constructive. Our committees have all tackled the tasks before them with imagination, vigour and realism, as demonstrated by the final report which we have just adopted.

The theme Health and the Family has served as an important focus in our discussions and proved most fecund in ideas. We are indebted to our lead speaker, Professor Ramalingaswami, for setting us off on such a high note. His paper showed all the way his brilliance of perception and his deep humanity and culture. The Meeting has covered a wide range of issues, but its success will be judged eventually by the success of individual Commonwealth countries in implementing its recommendations.

Workers in the field, experts, and Ministers who make policies have contributed to our deliberations their experience, perception and authority in an exemplary spirit of cooperation. Concepts, needs, modalities, and solutions within the over-arching theme of Health and the Family, have engaged your minds and stimulated wide-ranging discussion. You stressed the family as a bio-social unit, an idea crucial to the expansion of primary health care and community health. You have drawn attention to the problem of food deficiency and chronic endemic malnutrition and emphasised the need for national food and nutrition policies, especially for the vulnerable segments of society. You have recognised the central role of education for better health, with the media as a versatile means to that end; you have given critical attention to the gap between available knowledge and action in the field of health and underlined the connection between national health and political commitment. Your recommendations cover all these areas and more. A horizon indeed bristling with challenges! But your message is one of quiet and reasonable hope.

Each member country will adopt its own appropriate approaches to these recommendations. Their implementation, however, should lead to a more effective mobilisation of community resources, to beneficial modifications of individual and family life-styles, and to a more informed role of the citizen as a custodian of his own health. The end-results can only be healthier, more responsible and more self-reliant family units; and the beneficial effects should be felt at all social and economic levels and throughout the wider family of Commonwealth countries.

I know, Mr. Chairman, that I speak for all in congratulating you on the skill and grace with which you have chaired this Meeting. You ruled us without seeming to rule at all! We also owe very sincere thanks to the Chairmen and Vice-Chairmen of the committees for their hard work and the expertise which they have brought to the tasks before them.

I know that I also speak for the staff of the Commonwealth Secretariat

when I add that we are deeply indebted for the tremendous help we have received from you and all your staff on the Tanzanian task force. The patient and happy cooperation we have received in the planning and arrangements for this conference have been invaluable to the smooth running of our Meeting. For this splendid organisation we extend our gratitude and will greatly value the friendships made here which will remain with us long after this conference is over.

I would also like to thank you, Mr. Chairman, and your fellow delegates for the kind sentiments which have been expressed about the work of the Commonwealth Secretariat during the Meeting. These are shared with our Tanzanian counterparts and we now look forward to implementing to the best of our ability the follow-up work which will flow from your decisions. At this point it would be appropriate for me to pay a tribute to the Medical Adviser, Sir Kenneth Stuart, whose undoubted professional knowledge, capacity for winning friends and allies in the fraternity of medicine, eye for the essential and the achievable, and utter devotion are an asset to the Secretariat in carrying through the initiatives recommended or blessed by Ministers.

As regards the question of resources, which always tends to curb enthusiasm and make initiatives difficult, we hope that you will also carry the message of the achievements of this Meeting and the needs which have been identified back to those ministers and officials in your own governments who have an influence on budgetary matters. This is particularly relevant in ensuring continued and enhanced support for the Commonwealth Fund for Technical Cooperation, whose assistance has been central to our achievements to date.

Every meeting has its own character. This one too had its own. It has been harmonious and positive, as noted earlier. More than that, it has been, as it were, touched by a vision - the grand vision of a revolution in health for all mankind - an unbearably beautiful vision, if we only took in what it meant. It surely meant a globe where man would give up war, stop degrading the environment, work for the nutrition of all, create life-styles for the full enjoyment of the body and the spirit. And yet it has been a very practical meeting, for it began not from a desire for tranquil knowledge as an end in itself but from the pressing and unquiet need to force ideas to have catharsis in intelligent beneficial action in society in the central domain of Health and the Family, the most menaced and the most necessary resources of man on earth. I should like to hope that our deliberations here would enable the Commonwealth to contribute in some measure to the realisation of that vision.

Before concluding, I am sure that you would wish me to express our thanks again to the Government of Canada for offering to host the next Meeting. We look forward to our discussions with them on this matter, which we will pursue in the customary manner.

Finally, I would like, on behalf of the Secretary-General, to offer our heartfelt thanks again to the Government of Tanzania for hosting this Meeting. We will remember the wonderful hospitality which has been extended to us in the last few days, the hills of Kilimanjaro and the slopes of Mount Meru, where we met the bright-eyed young men who are toiling to live President Nyerere's philosophy in action, and the many kindnesses of the Tanzanian people, one of whose outstanding charms seems to be a natural gift for friendship. KWAHERI NA SALAAM NYINGI, KWA WATANZANIA WOTE.