

Final Statement on Commonwealth Strategies
against Youth Unemployment and its
Relevance to a New Economic Order

The second successful Meeting of Young Commonwealth Leaders was held in Colombo, 3-8 May 1979. Young Ministers, parliamentarians, Government officials, trade unionists, and community leaders discussed the extent of youth employment and the major impediment this caused on the road to national development. They recognised the overbearing constraints imposed on national development by the present international economic order. They deliberated for six days and produced a Final Statement on desirable Commonwealth measures against youth unemployment, and called for reform in present international economic conditions. Several Commonwealth Governments expressed a desire to use the Final Statement as a basic document for policy formation and reference. Its publication in this form enables its wider study and usefulness.

Commonwealth Secretariat
May 1979

PREAMBLE

1. Young Commonwealth Leaders met for the second time, in Colombo from 3 to 8 May 1979. 28 Commonwealth countries were represented. Delegates were nominated by their respective Governments as recognised young leaders under the age of 35. The Young Leaders were from a variety of backgrounds and organisations including Ministers, Members of Parliament, trade unionists, leaders of youth organisations and young professionals.

2. The major subject matter of the Meeting was youth unemployment, which is increasing in all Commonwealth countries at the present time. A second topic was consideration of the extent to which Young Leaders could provide a new dimension to public discussion of the campaign to establish a New International Economic Order and the likely effect of such an achievement on the creation of job opportunities and therefore on the future expectations of young people and the social conditions in which they might find themselves in years ahead.

3. Within the parameters of the major topics for discussion, three underlying themes were recurrent in the contributions made by the young leaders which, taken together, underpinned the spirit of Commonwealth agreement characterising the Second Meeting. The enthusiasm of Ocho Rios was sustained throughout the Meeting and the constructive tone of the deliberations was preserved and strengthened on this occasion.

4. Firstly, there was an overriding awareness of the responsibility devolving upon Young Leaders, stemming from the exercise of their functions and responsibilities. They accepted a commitment to the difficult task of communicating effectively between the world of idealism based upon principle, and the circumstances of reality which condition the everyday lives of those they represent.

Throughout the deliberations, the Young Leaders maintained the focus of their attention on practical levels whilst at the same time not sacrificing principle for expediency.

5. Secondly, Young Leaders were satisfied that the Meeting provided for informed discussion and an international exchange of ideas. It was acknowledged that among international associations of nations the Commonwealth alone makes it possible for Young Leaders to meet together in an atmosphere of unrestricted debate, with the full support of their Governments; while sharing the responsibilities of leadership and public accountability in the field of youth.

6. Thirdly, Young Leaders were conscious of the factor of generation, which they believed frequently distorts the relationships between youth and other sectors of society. They noted that in some countries experience was still felt to be a function almost exclusively of age. They welcomed the fact, however, that more Governments were displaying greater confidence in the role which young people can undertake in society and noted that the level of

representation at the Meeting reflected this changing emphasis.

FOLLOW-UP TO THE OCHO RIOS DECLARATION

7. The Young Leaders reviewed progress which had been made by Commonwealth Governments since the adoption at the First Meeting of Young Leaders of the "Declaration by Commonwealth Youth". They noted in particular that many Governments had endorsed the sentiments expressed in the Declaration and that the Commonwealth Youth Affairs Council on behalf of all Commonwealth Governments had officially endorsed the Declaration as an important milestone in the evolution of policy on youth affairs at Commonwealth level. They noted, however, that some Governments had not welcomed the Ocho Rios Declaration or indeed Meetings of Young Leaders as such. The Young Leaders acknowledged that unanimous Commonwealth support could only be expected in the light of the continuing inspiration engendered as a result of such Meetings and in the quality and practicality of the ideas which emerged as a result of them. The Young Leaders expressed their thanks to the Commonwealth Secretary General for arranging to place the Ocho Rios Declaration before the Meeting of Commonwealth Heads of Government in London in June 1977.

YOUNG MINISTERS

8. The Young Leaders welcomed participation at the Meeting by ten young Ministers from Commonwealth Governments whose responsibilities lay in several fields including youth affairs. They considered that the Meeting was considerably assisted and strengthened by the presence of the Ministers who occupy positions of senior responsibility in their Governments. They recognized that the wisdom and experience from which the Meeting as a whole had benefited as a result of the participation by the Young Ministers was an important feature, and had added to the effect which the outcome of the deliberations at Colombo would have in the Commonwealth generally. The Young Leaders believed that the association of those holding ministerial office with other Young Leaders in positions of authority in a variety of organisations had enabled the subject matter of the Meeting to be discussed with an awareness of the practical realities of implementation by Governments.

PART I

YOUTH UNEMPLOYMENT

The Young Leaders agreed that youth unemployment was an urgent problem the solution to which required immediate and sustained attention by Commonwealth Governments and organisations working with young people.

Traditional programmes and policies aimed at alleviating this problem were recognised as having only a minimal effect in many Commonwealth countries.

Young Leaders also strongly believed that the establishment of a NIEO could result in increased employment opportunities.

They therefore gave attention to practical action that could be taken towards both objectives.

The Young Leaders shared the belief that programmes leading to the creation of jobs by young people themselves in an atmosphere of national understanding and recognition on the part of Government and the private sector alike could make a significant contribution towards alleviating the problem.

The Young Leaders recognised that immediate responses to the problem of youth unemployment must be sought within the present planning by Governments of programmes for national development. They also felt it necessary and desirable for Young Leaders in the Commonwealth countries to mobilise public opinion amongst youth in support of the need for a NIEO. The Young Leaders urged their Governments to recognise that young people can contribute to the creation of fresh initiatives which could emphasise the lasting benefits accruing from investment in their energies and skills.

They accepted that only through shared responsibility between Young Leaders, youth organisations and Governments could effective formulae be developed. It was also recognised that measures to deal effectively with youth unemployment required an integrated approach involving several Government Departments whose responsibilities would span portfolios including commerce, agriculture, industry, labour, finance and social development. The following recommendations were made:

A. AREAS OF OPPORTUNITY FOR YOUTH — AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES, TRADING AND SECONDARY INDUSTRY

The Young Leaders firmly endorsed to their Ministers the role of small scale enterprises in national development as a sector of potential significance in alleviating youth unemployment. They called for increased attention to the initiatives which youth organisations, agencies working with youth and youth themselves could provide in developing enterprises in these areas of opportunity. They believed that Governments could also assist by the provision of

- (a) management advisory services
- (b) special access to finance — for example with respect to lending policies, interest rates, venture capital and loan guarantees — including if necessary a restructuring of the operations of financial institutions within countries
- (c) appropriate taxation reforms
- (d) development of appropriate technology as a basic element of self-reliance for use in local and traditional enterprises
- (e) guaranteed access to markets through avenues such as marketing agencies
- (f) provision for specialised training.

The Young Leaders invited Ministers responsible for youth affairs to discuss the establishment of these support mechanisms with their Ministerial colleagues.

The Young Leaders also encouraged Governments to ensure that products which can be efficiently produced on an employment-generating and labour intensive basis should not suffer from the competition of large scale capital intensive production processes whether by the private or public sectors. They suggested the following guidelines under which the broad scope of the development of small-scale enterprises could be beneficially reviewed.

- (a) The development of enterprises should be consonant with expressed goals of national development
- (b) Smaller countries, attempting to diversify their economies, should screen industries for their lasting benefit on employment opportunities, and attempt to develop industries which used local skills, and renewable resources.
- (c) The application of technology should at all times enhance the prospects of national development without causing extended dependence on foreign experts.

B. AN IMMEDIATE PRIORITY — YOUTH EMPLOYMENT IN RURAL AREAS

The Young Leaders recognised that significant numbers of young people live in rural areas in Commonwealth countries and agreed that programmes for employment of rural youth should be designed within the context of a comprehensive rural development strategy which in itself is a vital component in national development planning. They agreed that an objective of rural development strategy should be youth employment, and that this also would contribute in turn to the attainment of the further objective of attempting to reverse the rural-urban drift of young people.

The Young Leaders agreed the following policy objectives:

- (a) That agricultural land be made more available to them through land leasing and reforms in the difficult area of land ownership.

(b) That the largely unexplored areas of horticulture and inland fisheries should be assigned a greater degree of priority as potentially rewarding and relatively easy to develop.

(c) That in view of the need for advice on business management and marketing channels to youth groups within local rural communities, the older members of the community, many of whom are now in retirement, be invited to provide guidance to young agricultural developers on these important areas.

C. THE AVAILABILITY OF FINANCE

The Young Leaders fully recognised that the difficult economic circumstances in many Commonwealth countries posed major problems for the deployment of financial resources in the direction of youth employment initiatives generally. They noted, however, that the private sector of the banking community did not appear to recognise the scope for investment which they believed could be created by youth groups in both rural and urban areas, operating new ventures exclusively initiated by youth.

It was recommended that in order to move ahead on a pragmatic basis appropriate representatives of the banking, manufacturing, agricultural and commercial segments of the private sector together with youth groups and relevant Government agencies should agree upon a joint national approach to the encouragement of youth in business in which acceptance of 'venture capital' and business and agricultural advisory services as tools in the context of national economic development should be established.

D. PLANNING OF EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES

The Young Leaders affirmed that youth employment programmes must be integrated into national development planning processes. They emphasised that this is necessary because a key element in the employment of young people in various sectors of the economy, whether as young entrepreneurs in industry and agriculture or youth cooperatives will be the provision of carefully planned and maintained support mechanisms to ensure the success of youth employment undertakings as well as their integration within the overall development process.

They emphasised the strategic character of measures to alleviate youth unemployment, and recommended the creation of representative and democratic youth organisations which can contribute to and participate in the planning process.

E. TRADE UNIONS, YOUNG FARMERS CLUBS AND PROFESSIONALLY ORIENTED ASSOCIATIONS

The Young Leaders felt that much greater involvement of young people in trade unions, young farmers clubs and professionally oriented associations would enhance their understanding of the problem of youth unemployment in all Commonwealth countries. In particular it was felt that such organisations should also be invited to initiate

education programmes for their members and their families in order to broaden their understanding of the harsh effects of rising unemployment. In doing so, these organisations could enable their members to take a broader view of society as a whole and of the problems of the youth sector of the community in particular.

THE ROLE OF EDUCATION

(i) In Alleviating Youth Unemployment

The Young Leaders recognized the tragic human and psychological effects of prolonged unemployment stemming partly from the present unbalanced education systems in many Commonwealth countries and agreed that Governments should be encouraged to invest in schemes which would improve the employability and productive capacity of youth.

They recommended that the attention of Governments be drawn to the urgent need for reviewing educational systems, in order to establish a firm relationship between education, employment, and the requirements of national development. In this context, they recommended the following guidelines:

- (a) That education should be relevant to the pattern of development identified by each country.
- (b) That, consequently, education should be integrated with national manpower planning processes, careers guidance and forecasting services, and national goal-setting mechanisms, in order to fulfil its responsibility in preparing young people for national development and change.
- (c) That the employment orientation of education should be strengthened by the introduction of early work experience schemes and the continuation of education into adult life.
- (d) That national education systems should incorporate an element of political education to effect the necessary redirection of the aspiration and commitment of young people to national development.

The Young Leaders proposed that a review of educational aims and methods would ensure that, on the one hand, these schemes could encourage fuller and more varied units of training and, on the other hand, provide combinations of work experience, training and job-seeking skills on a graduated level.

(ii) To Mobilise Youth in Support of a New International Economic Order

The Young Leaders recommended that Governments should seek to establish curricula of development education, in order to educate electorates and young people about the economic inter-dependence of nations and the need for cooperation in implementing the mutuality of interest between developed and developing Commonwealth countries.

The Young Leaders recommended that the contents of a development education drive might include the following:

- (a) the need for inter-dependence between countries notwithstanding the difference in their economic and political systems;
- (b) the differences in national economic systems;
- (c) factors affecting trade in commodities;
- (d) the functioning of the international monetary system — foreign exchange and the operations of the IMF;
- (e) shipping and the transportation of products;
- (f) investment for development.

The Young Leaders also recommended that every encouragement should be given to the news media by Governments, Young Leaders, and youth organisations, to provide information and opinion on the need for a New International Economic Order so that sustained popular support might be mobilised for Government Ministers as they negotiate the complicated issues involved.

THE RESPONSIBILITIES OF YOUNG LEADERS

In accepting the shared objectives agreed by the Meeting and the need for a Commonwealth-wide orientation by Governments and youth organisations for increased youth employment initiatives, the Young Leaders committed themselves to concerted follow-up of the recommendations which the Meeting had unanimously endorsed. They established as their first priority the need for more sophisticated organisation of youth councils and other youth bodies and for liaison among these organisations at a national level. They agreed that the establishment or refinement of the structures in Commonwealth countries serving as framework for the implementation of the recommendations made by the Meeting could be enhanced by the process of leadership and management training within youth organisations themselves.

The Young Leaders acknowledged that they were in situations of advantage within which youth initiatives at local level particularly could considerably transform local employment conditions and greatly expand employment opportunities. They felt it essential that young people should exercise initiatives to the fullest extent possible in setting an example of self-help and in exhorting their Governments to support such initiatives and develop them on a broader and self-sufficient basis.

THE COMMONWEALTH YOUTH PROGRAMME

In view of the foregoing, the Young Leaders made the following recommendations to Ministers directly responsible for youth affairs and to the Commonwealth Secretary-General.

1. That Commonwealth Governments be encouraged, with assistance from the Commonwealth Youth Programme, to organise strong, viable and representa-

tive National Youth Organisations as was recommended by the Ocho Rios Declaration.

That the Commonwealth Secretariat should, in collaboration with the proposed Commonwealth Industrial Development Unit, facilitate the availability of venture capital to encourage the creation of small scale projects and cooperatives as a new base from which self-employment schemes could be promoted among young people.

That Commonwealth Governments, in association with the Commonwealth Youth Programme, continue to develop channels through which young people are enabled to participate actively in trade unions, professional associations and rural groupings.

2. That at national level the Commonwealth Youth Programme should assist Governments and other interested bodies by providing information to enable greater understanding among young people of the direct relevance of a New International Economic Order to their employment prospects and to enable young people to mobilise in order to secure such objectives.
3. That the Commonwealth Secretary-General be invited to revise the present concept of the Commonwealth Community Service Project. This should seek to enable exchanges of young people who are interested in small-scale enterprises to take place within the Commonwealth and to encourage an increase in the number of such enterprises.
4. That Ministers directly responsible for youth affairs are invited to recognise the urgent need on the part of their Governments to agree to increase the funds available to the Commonwealth Youth Programme, both in the field of youth unemployment and related areas. The Young Leaders feel strongly that the priority which was now accorded to the Commonwealth Youth Programme within the broad range of Commonwealth Secretariat activities requires revision. Accordingly they pledged themselves to support the Ministers responsible in their Governments in an endeavour to ensure increased priority for funding of the Commonwealth Youth Programme by Heads of Government at their forthcoming Meeting in Lusaka.

5. YOUTH AND SPORTS

The Young Leaders observed the increase in the extent of sporting links within the Commonwealth, noting that the Commonwealth Games are second only to the Olympic Games in the international calendar of sport.

At the 1978 Commonwealth Games in Edmonton, Canada, it was recognised that these games occasion more than sporting competition by the celebration of a Cultural Festival.

The Young Leaders recommended that the Commonwealth Secretariat should express a stronger interest in Youth and Sports and requested the Commonwealth Youth Affairs Council to consider possibilities for a programme of co-operation in the development of physical education and sport. The Young Leaders felt that the

establishment of such a sports programme could further strengthen the Commonwealth Games and the development of sporting links among young people of the Commonwealth.

The Young Leaders indicated their awareness of the fact that the primary strategy of the CYP is the alleviation of the socio-economic and political problems facing young people in Commonwealth countries.

The Young Leaders expressed their total agreement with this strategy and wished to place on record that the recommendation on Youth and Sports was made in the context of an ancillary sports development programme, in no way intended to dilute the historic and primary concern of the CYP.

PART II ADDRESSED TO THE COMMONWEALTH SECRETARY-GENERAL AND, UNDER HIS GUIDANCE, TO HEADS OF GOVERNMENT

1. International Economic Issues

The Young Leaders reviewed the wider international economic situation affecting their respective countries. They discussed aspects of existing international economic relationships, especially the call by developing countries for the establishment of a new economic order which would facilitate the growth and development of their countries.

In particular, the Young Leaders agreed to draw the attention of the Commonwealth Heads of Government to several matters of special concern to them, solutions to which could bring an end to the domination of many developing economies by foreign capital which constitutes a major obstacle to national development in many Commonwealth countries. The Young Leaders felt that fundamental economic transformation lies at the heart of strategies to overcome youth unemployment.

The Young Leaders expressed the desire that their views on these matters be referred to Commonwealth Heads of Government and urged that they be requested to take action as follows:

(a) The Young Leaders agreed that the operation of multinational corporations (MNCs) can harm the fullest development of countries in which they invest, especially with regard to investment patterns, the repatriation of profits and, on occasion, their intervention in the political affairs of Commonwealth nations. Governments should ensure that MNCs act in the best interests of the youth of their countries by adopting regulatory measures and co-operating through both individual commodity associations and regional economic organisations, to adopt a common and well regulated approach to MNCs.

(b) The Young Leaders expressed deep concern at the restrictive operations and undemocratic structures of international finance institutions such as the IMF and the IBRD. They emphasised the need for democratisation of these institutions and called on Commonwealth Governments to press for the necessary structural changes to be made.

The Young Leaders agreed that these institutions should not be permitted to obstruct Commonwealth countries in developing their preferred political structures and social systems, and they called for an end to the imposition of conditions for borrowing from these institutions which inhibited such development. In particular, the Young Leaders urged Commonwealth Head of Government to press for changes to the lending policies of the IMF and IBRD so as not to hinder the availability of finance for human development, anti-poverty projects, and projects directed specifically at reducing the high incidence of youth unemployment.

(c) The Young Leaders agreed on the need to make the policies whereby aid is disbursed by international agencies more responsive to the needs of the developing countries. In particular they felt that more aid should be in grant form. They also recommended that developing countries give priority to projects which would benefit the people, especially the youth. They believed that this objective might be facilitated initially if bilateral arrangements were reformed with the basic objective that aid should result in an eventual end to aid, with dependency on aid being eliminated.

(d) The Young Leaders noted that the aspirations of developing countries in particular were being constrained by the heavy burdens of debt and debt servicing requirements. They noted further that projects funded from international aid were often not completed before repayment requirements commenced. The Young Leaders therefore recommended that Commonwealth Heads of Governments give urgent attention to the need for re-scheduling, restructuring or writing-off of existing debts incurred by the developing countries.

(e) The Young Leaders also agreed that progress towards a New International Economic Order was threatened by the erection of new trade barriers, and that continuing high levels of protection could prevent the alleviation of youth unemployment in Commonwealth countries.

They considered that the developed Commonwealth countries should give special access to products from the developing countries although they recognised that such access must be considered in the context of those countries' overall production and trade policies. The Young Leaders agreed, however, that the developed countries should, wherever possible, shift their priorities to the production of goods which do not compete with the products of developing countries; thus increasing the export and marketing potential of those countries. The developing countries should seek to co-operate on a regional basis in the production

processes particularly of manufactured goods. Commonwealth Heads of Government were urged to give attention to these objectives, and to incorporate plans for structural adjustment of industries where necessary when developing national industrial goals, in order to promote the expansion and diversification of industry, agriculture and trade.

- (f) The Young Leaders referred also to the need to promote an effective international code to govern world trade in technology, particularly with respect to problems of ownership, control, use, taxation, financial flows, accounting procedure, utilisation of research and development funds, and transfer pricing. They agreed that, in so far as competence lay with Governments, technology transfers should take place between countries to their mutual advantage, complementing the development of indigenous technology.

In conclusion, the Young Leaders expressed the hope that Commonwealth Heads of Government, when considering the matters described above, would agree that their Governments should take appropriate action in the international negotiations in which they are involved on these issues, and the Young Leaders pledged the support of their organisations accordingly.

POLITICAL CONSTRAINTS WITHIN THE COMMONWEALTH AFFECTING THE ACHIEVEMENT OF A NEW INTERNATIONAL ECONOMIC ORDER

The Young Leaders acknowledged that a major political factor in the Commonwealth affecting advances towards a New International Economic Order is the situation in Southern Africa. They therefore believed that they should address themselves to Heads of Government through the Commonwealth Secretary-General on this issue. Young Leaders believed that the continued existence of forms of colonialism, neo-colonialism, imperialism and oppression — in particular the institutionalised racism practised in Southern Africa — constituted a major obstacle to the final achievement of a New International Economic Order, and the enhanced employment prospects for youth, particularly in Southern Africa, which a new order could provide. The Young Leaders considered the following statement which was issued by the Commonwealth Southern Africa Committee at the conclusion of its Meeting on 19 March 1979 in London.

“This Commonwealth Committee on Southern Africa, meeting in Marlborough House, London today (19 March) discussed the situation in Rhodesia. The Committee condemned the proposal to hold illegal elections on 20 April. It believed that these elections could not produce majority rule, and that they are not intended to do so. The Committee was appalled by the continuing bloodshed in Rhodesia and neighbouring countries and concluded that the proposal for these fraudulent elections could lead to a further widening of the conflict brought about by the illegal regime. It felt that a cease-fire agreed upon by all the warring parties was a necessary first step to any enduring settlement.

The Committee called on all governments to refrain from sending observers or from any other action that might give any semblance of legitimacy to the elections which are an exercise in mass deception.

The Committee asked the Secretary-General to bring to the notice of the international community the true nature of the arrangements embodied in the new illegal constitution which is calculated to entrench the political and military power of the white minority in Rhodesia.

The Young Leaders fully endorsed this Statement. They further noted that since the Meeting of the Southern Africa Committee, a fraudulent election had in fact taken place. They requested the Commonwealth Secretary-General to take note of their views that the new illegal regime should be denied Commonwealth recognition in any form and they pledged their support to Heads of Government to continue to do all in their power to assist in the creation as soon as possible of a free and independent Zimbabwe.

THE THIRD MEETING OF YOUNG COMMONWEALTH LEADERS

The Zambian Minister of Youth and Sports, on behalf of the Government of Zambia, invited the Third Meeting of Young Commonwealth Leaders to Lusaka in May 1981.