

## INTRODUCTION

We were appointed by the Commonwealth Heads of Government to draw up "in the context of the current international dialogue, a comprehensive and inter-related programme of practical measures directed at closing the gap between the rich and the poor countries". Our detailed terms of reference are set out in Annex I of this Report.

2. In accordance with the general framework of our terms of reference, we have seen our task essentially as one of identifying a coordinated programme of measures which could provide a basis for implementation of a new international economic order. As requested by the Heads of Government, we took as one of our starting points the Declaration and the Programme of Action on the Establishment of a New International Economic Order as adopted by the United Nations General Assembly. In this context, we have worked with the central assumption that the effective implementation of a new order would require international cooperation and effort on an unprecedented scale, both in quantitative and qualitative terms.

3. Our own analysis of the development prospects and needs of the poor countries indicates the necessity for fundamental changes in the world economy, involving a progressive re-distribution of economic activity in favour of the developing countries. This will demand bold and complementary action on several fronts to accelerate and deepen the processes of agricultural and industrial development in the developing countries. It will also require a substantially different structure of international economic relations than has been in existence up to now.

4. It is clear, therefore, that it is nothing short of wishful thinking to suppose that solutions to global poverty could be found in case-by-case adjustments of an essentially marginal character. In coming to terms with the tasks with which it is confronted in this field, the international community has to demonstrate a new resolve for urgent and imaginative action.

5. We have ourselves sought to impart a sense of urgency in our own recommendations. We recognise that the complexities arising in many areas will call for continuing study of alternative solutions. Nonetheless, it is our view that action and further study should go hand in hand, so that valuable time is not lost in achieving concrete progress. In our opinion it is far less dangerous to err on the side of experimentation than to make such a virtue of perfection that it results in deleterious delay and inaction.

6. The World Food Conference is a good example. Its short-term emergency recommendations call for 10 million tons of grain to be contributed annually by the wealthy grain producers of the world for food aid. Its institutional proposals envisage a World Food Council, a Consultative Group for Food Production and Investment and an International Fund for Agricultural Development. Immediate action is needed so that the implementation of its short-term objective could itself lead to long-term institutional development drawing on the collective responsibility of the whole world.

Seen this way, a continuous process is established, with each stage defined and achieved and new objectives unfolding themselves on the horizon, on the basic premise that all and not only some have a stake in a stable future in which human life is meaningful to all.

7. In this connection we wish to draw attention to the need for the international community to adopt more appropriate norms as to what constitutes early action. Up to now there has been a tendency to regard a period of, say, two to three years spent in consultations and negotiations as reasonably prompt action. Our feeling is that the urgency of the present situation demands new deadlines for speeding up decision-making on questions of international development. This assumption underlies the time frames which are indicated throughout the Report.

8. It has been no easy task digesting the massive documentation which now exists on the subject of a new international economic order and on its component parts. We have been greatly assisted by the staff of the Commonwealth Secretariat, who worked at relatively short notice on summarising some of the material in a series of papers. We also owe a special debt of gratitude to our consultants who submitted concise analyses on key aspects of the question, and to those others who made oral presentations at our meetings. Special thanks are also due to the staff of the Secretariat who assisted with the drafting of this Report. In particular, we wish to pay tribute to Mr. Philip Hayes, the Director of the Trade and Finance Division of the Secretariat, who served us admirably as Secretary to the group. The office staff both from Canada and elsewhere, who worked assiduously on typing and reproducing many drafts, also deserve acknowledgment and thanks.

9. We must also express our gratitude to the Government of Canada for the facilities which they provided for our work here in Ottawa, and to our individual employers for releasing us for this period.