

Foreword by the Commonwealth Secretary-General

Over the years, the Commonwealth has played an important role as advocate for small states' issues and contributed to greater international awareness of the particular vulnerabilities and special needs of these countries. In this regard, a seminal contribution was the 1985 Commonwealth report, *Vulnerability: Small States in the Global Society*. This report raised the political profile of small states' issues in international fora. The international context faced by these countries has changed dramatically since the Cold War ended. At the second meeting of the Ministerial Group on Small States held in Auckland in 1995, Ministers recognised this and concluded that recent international developments pointed to the need for small states' vulnerability to be analysed in all its dimensions to cover political, economic, social and environmental concerns.

Ministers therefore called for an updating of the *Vulnerability* report to address the fundamental global changes since 1985, in areas such as international trade, sustainable development and new threats to small states' security.

In order to prepare the new report, and after consultations with member governments, I constituted an Advisory Group of eminent persons to reflect the diversity of the Commonwealth. I was fortunate in being able to bring together a group with a wealth of knowledge from around the Commonwealth. The Group was supported by two excellent resource persons, Dr Paul Sutton and Professor David Pearce, as well as the Secretariat. Under the able guidance of its chairperson, Dame Eugenia Charles, former Prime Minister of Dominica, the nine-member Group completed a challenging task in a remarkably short period of time.

The Advisory Group met twice in London in May and July 1997. At its first meeting, the Group agreed to pursue the investigation and analysis of a range of concerns facing small states. These included the possible marginalisation of small economies as a result of the progressive liberalisation of the global economy and the growing trend towards regionalism; likely disastrous consequences for small states resulting from global warming and climate change, and environmental fragility; vulnerability to criminal activities, such as money laundering and drug trafficking; and possible threats to security arising from the trans-boundary movement of hazardous waste and nuclear material.

At its second meeting, the Group discussed further and completed its report, incorporating a series of practical and achievable recommendations on globalisation, environment and political security for action at national, regional, international and Commonwealth levels. Their assessment and recommendations provide important guiding principles for mainstreaming small states' issues in international fora, as well as for designing programmes for action at all levels.

I am pleased to commend the Report, *A Future for Small States: Overcoming Vulnerability*, and its recommendations to Commonwealth Governments and to the wider international community.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading 'E Anyaoku'. The signature is stylized with a large, flowing 'E' and 'A'.

Emeka Anyaoku
30 July 1997