Annex I

Small is Beautiful but Vulnerable

Opening Address by the Commonwealth Secretary-General to the First Meeting of the Commonwealth Consultative Group on the Special Needs of Small States, 18 July 1984.

My first words must be of welcome and of thanks: a welcome to Marlborough House to which many of you are not strangers and which is, I hope for all of you, a symbol of the Commonwealth in whose service you are engaged. And gratitude for your willingness to undertake this task. You are, all of you, persons of eminence in your own countries and regions and spheres of operation. You are, all of you, busy people with many demands on your time and your thoughts. That is why, of course, we have chosen you. But what is specially rewarding about our approaches to you is that not one of you needed to be nudged into still further service—into acceptance of the challenge which this Study of the Special Needs of Small States represents. And it is specially important that you contribute as individuals, not as representatives of governments —as men and women who speak against the background of your national experience it is true, but also in articulation of your international vision; who bring to the Group the orientations of your several community perspectives, but the perspective also of a wider global orientation.

In much of our work in the Commonwealth, particularly on economic issues polarised between North and South, this facility to bring together persons of eminence from North and South to work as individuals and point the way forward together, is of supreme importance. At first sight it may seem that this is not the case in relation to the problems of small states; that there is no polarisation of positions that needs the bridging facility of a Commonwealth Group working at the level of individuals. But that may be essentially because the problem is not yet on the agenda in either a North-South or an

East-West context. I have no doubt whatever that as you enter the complex maze of issues that this Study encompasses the danger of orthodoxy in terms of national or group positions in both the economic and the political domain will rise up to challenge innovative thinking. This is why your independence, your service as individuals, the personal qualities of experience and wisdom and vision that you bring to the Study are so centrally important.

And that need for innovative thinking is at the very heart of your task; for this is, I believe, a creative opportunity. Alastair Buchan once described the period between 1945 and 1970—the first 25 years of the United Nations system—as the true post-war era. He saw the period from 1970 onwards as ushering in a new 'era of negotiation'. I happen to believe that he was profoundly right; although sadly we have failed to respond adequately to the challenges of that era of negotiation. But that is not really my point. Those first 25 years were, in another sense, the era of decolonisation. It brought to 'freedom' over 100 new states. Freedom was the symbol of the progression, sometimes the struggle, towards independence; freedom was the epithet employed to describe the achievement of independence. It was an accurate description of the aspirations of the decolonisation movement. It is arguable how accurate it was as a description of what was achieved. In many respects the era that followed from 1970 onwards has been concerned with bringing reality into line with expectation; with the actuality of political independence; with the reality of economic freedom. This striving towards fulfilment of the promise of decolonisation has to do with the development, not always characterised by flawless progress, of the Non-Aligned Movement; with its effort to find a place of self-respect and safety for the new countries out of range of the contests of the major power alliances. It has to do with the emergence of the Group 77; with the evolution of the World Bank into a Bank for 'development' and not merely 'reconstruction'; with the succession of Trade and Development Conferences and the establishment of UNCTAD. And it found expression eventually (in the early years of that era of negotiation of which Buchan wrote) in the arguments about a New International Economic Order and the beginnings of a North-South dialogue. It was paralleled by the changing climate of East-West relations—by the storms of the Cold War, by the calming influence of detente, and, more recently, by the return of the harsh winds of an East-West winter.

Through all of this, some of the very smallest countries that the process of decolonisation brought to formal independence have been relatively unnoticed. For just a moment in the sixties there were some questionings about eligibility for independence and United Nations membership—but for just a moment. In the end, for some of the smallest states it was less a struggle for freedom than an insistence of metropolitan

powers to be free of them. They passed into the mainstream of new countries, were acknowledged to share with the Third World generally the highest aims to which the Non-Aligned Movement reached and for which the Group of 77 battled. They were proud of their independence; they experimented, with regional linkages through which they might sustain it and fulfil its promise of development; and they played their part modestly but seriously in the councils of world society.

For the greater part their needs were acknowledged within the compass of the needs of developing countries generally; scaled-down needs, it is true. If they happened to fall in the category of the poorest countries, measured by what were for them the largely artificial standards of per capita income, they were acknowledged to be deserving of special treatment. Special needs for aid and special terms; special facilities for access of their products. But, of course, because these standards were artificial not many of the world's small states managed to qualify for special treatment. The reality of economic disadvantage inevitably conditioned many aspects of national potential.

When the new concepts implicit in what has become the Law of the Sea Convention were advanced, for example, many small states seemed promised a release from smallness itself. For some, a 200-mile jurisdiction in terms of the resources of the Exclusive Economic Zone represented a larger jurisdiction than the state had ever known. But how to possess that patrimony? How to garner those resources? How to keep predators at bay? How, even, to negotiate to share in their exploitation?

And with political independence came, of course, (sometimes at the birth of nationhood, sometimes later) political schisms that sometimes developed a secessionist bent—threats to territorial integrity almost coincident with the realisation of sovereignty. But there were other threats to the quality of sovereignty. Small states by their nature are weak and vulnerable. The democratic virtues of ideological pluralism have inevitably to contend with the side winds, and occasionally the frontal pressure, of the contest for primacy between the super-powers and their major allies. Sometimes it seems as if small states were like small boats pushed out into a turbulent sea, free in one sense to traverse it; but, without oars or provisions, without compass or sails, free also to perish. Or, perhaps, to be rescued and taken on board a larger vessel.

The truth probably is that the world community has not yet thought its way through the phenomenon of very small states in the world that is emerging in the end years of the twentieth century. At best, it has applied to them the same set of assumptions it applies to states generally. But what is the right to self-defence without the means of defence? What is the right to equality in the councils of the world without the means to

participate in those councils? What is the quality of sovereignty if reality dictates the absence of choices? In all these respects small states are so specially disadvantaged that their needs in large measure become qualitatively different from those of other developing countries. They are not merely scaled-down needs, they are different needs. It is to that element of difference that the world community is only now beginning to pay attention. It is out of that difference that your work is born. It is to that difference that it must respond.

The Commonwealth has a very special reason for being in the forefront of such response, for many of the world's smallest states are in the Commonwealth. They are of the Commonwealth community. The problems of The Gambia or Grenada, of Lesotho or Seychelles, of Vanuatu or of Belize—are Commonwealth problems. They are, of course, international problems also. But if we do not help to provide an intellectual response to the needs that are at the heart of the problems, we can hardly complain if the wider community passes them over.

The Commonwealth is a community now of 49 countries. Twenty-seven of them are states with populations of less than a million, fifteen of them with populations of less than two hundred thousand. If we include in the Commonwealth community countries not fully independent as well as dependencies, we must admit to 40 states with populations of a million or less and 26 with populations of less than two hundred thousand. The Commonwealth has been made possible because of the process of decolonisation.

It is a good time to give a lead. Events around the world, and perhaps most dramatically in Grenada less than a year ago, have forced attention to the security needs of small states. But it has forced attention, too, to a wider dimension of the problem. It is not only a question of making the world safe for small states. It is also a question of making small states safe for the world.

But there is an even wider dimension. Can the world proceed any longer on the old assumptions that underpinned the concept of the nation state? Must the right to sovereignty and territorial integrity depend exclusively on the capacity of a state, however small, to defend itself—to assert its nationhood by superior arms? Must its survival be contigent on its capacity to repel predators? Does the decolonisation process mean that the new state is independent for only so long as it can survive under the rule of the jungle, not under a rule of world order? Or is it not, indeed, a premise of independence under the Charter that the international community has obligations to help to sustain those whom it has helped to bring to freedom—and to do so not only by resolutions after the event but by the machinery of collective security and a will to use it? Do not the

special needs of small states call for an acceptance of the relevance of these precepts and require the evolution of ways and means of fulfilling them?

It is against that wide and varied backdrop that Commonwealth leaders in New Delhi called upon me to undertake a study, drawing as necessary on the resources and experience of Commonwealth countries —a study of the special needs of small Commonwealth countries consonant with the right to sovereignty and territorial integrity that they shared with all nations. In the background paper the Secretariat has prepared in relation to your work, we have drawn attention to these essential parameters of the Study.

I cannot emphasise too strongly one element of that framework— because I believe it to be fundamental to the approach which Commonwealth Heads of Government have adopted in this matter; namely, that nothing would be more alien to their purpose than response to the special needs (and particularly the security needs) of small states which turns them gratuitously into second class members of the world community or invites paternalism or hegemony under the guise of enhancing security. On the contrary, in their Goa Declaration on International Security (which served for this purpose as a supplement to their Communique paragraphs on the small states Study) Commonwealth leaders articulated their particular concern at the 'vulnerability of small states to external attacks and interference in their affairs'. They looked, as I hope you will look, to the international community for some of the solutions. 'These countries', they declared, 'are members of the international community which must respect their independence and, at the very least, has a moral obligation to provide effectively for their territorial integrity'. It is not without significance that they went on to add that they will play their part as members of the international community 'to make an appropriate response to the United Nations Secretary-General's call for a strengthening of collective security in keeping with the Charter'. I do not labour the point. I am sure I need not.

Earlier in these remarks I drew attention to the economic needs of small states and to the processes by which we have gradually come to recognise that they are special needs. As we have tried to make clear in the background paper, and as is evident from the New Delhi conclusions of Commonwealth leaders, the Study for which they have called, while having high among its concerns the security needs of small states, invites attention to their special needs in general. Their needs in the context of economic development are, therefore, an important part of this study. It could hardly be otherwise; security and development are inextricably linked. There are many respects in which the threat to sovereignty and territorial integrity begins in the economic domain. That is not to invite

you to undertake a technical analysis of specific economic issues. It is to invite you to recognise and take account of those macro-economic factors that bear perceptibly on the fortunes of small states and in many respects on their physical security as well.

Let me end, therefore, by recalling to you sentiments with which I ended recently some reflections in one of our smallest states—Seychelles; reflections addressed specifically to these economic problems. The world is happy, I said then and repeat to you now, (the world is happy) to acknowledge that 'small is beautiful'. Small states, in particular, know that it is. But they, above all, know that small is also weak and fragile and vulnerable and relatively powerless; that they live in a world where the weak are not rewarded for the beauty of their smallness but are ignored, imposed upon and generally discounted—until there is talk of change, when the virtues of smallness are summoned up as the basis of maintaining the status quo. If small is beautiful—and if Keats was right that 'beauty is truth, truth beauty'—then let the truth about the special needs of small states be better told and better known so that truth might inform action to improve even on beauty.

It is through you and your Study that the truth may be better told. There is no Group anywhere in the world better equipped than you to discern and to tell it. Not only the Commonwealth but a wider, keenly interested, international community will be listening to what you say. I wish you well in a task which I know to be onerous; but which I am confident you will discharge worthily and well.

Annex II

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GLOSSARY OF ABBREVIATIONS

ACP	African/Caribbean/Pacific countries—Lomé Convention
ANZUS	Treaty between Australia, New Zealand and the United States of America
ASEAN	Association of South-East Asian Nations
CANA	Caribbean News Agency
CARICAD	Caribbean Centre for Developmental Administration
CARICOM	Caribbean Community
CBI	Caribbean Basin Initiative
CDB	Caribbean Development Bank
CFF	Compensatory Financing Facility of the IMF
CFTC	Commonwealth Fund for Technical Co-operation
CHOGRM	Commonwealth Heads of Government Regional Meeting (Asia/Pacific)
CPA	Commonwealth Parliamentary Association
CPU	Commonwealth Press Union
CSCE	Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe
EEC	European Economic Community
EEZ/s	Exclusive Economic Zone/s
ECOSOC	Economic and Social Council of the United Nations
ECOWAS	Economic Community of West African States
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations
GATT	General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade
GDP	Gross domestic product
GSP	Generalised System of Preferences
IBRD	International Bank for Reconstruction and Development
IDA	International Development Association
IFC	International Finance Corporation
IMF	International Monetary Fund

IMO	International Maritime Organisation
IOC	Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission of UNESCO
IPA	International Peace Academy
MFA	Multi-Fibre Arrangement
NAM	Non-Aligned Movement
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organisation
NGO/s	Non-governmental organisation/s
OAS	Organisation of American States
OAU	Organisation for African Unity
ODA	Official development assistance
OECS	Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States
OMAs	Organised marketing arrangements
PANA	Pan-African News Agency
PRAS	Pacific Regional Advisory Service
SADCC	Southern African Development Co-ordination Conference
SARC	South Asian Regional Co-operation Association
SPARTECA	South Pacific Regional Trade and Economic Co-operation Agreement
SPEC	South Pacific Bureau for Economic Co-operation
SPF	South Pacific Forum
TAG	Technical Assistance Group of the CFTC
UNCTAD	United Nations Conference on Trade and Development
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNDRO	United Nations Disaster Relief Organisation
UNEP	United Nations Environment Programme
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation
UNITAR	United Nations Institute for Training and Research
VERs	Voluntary export restraints
WHO	World Health Organisation

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