

# **MEETING OF COMMONWEALTH PRIME MINISTERS, 1960**

*(London, 3-13 May)*

## **FINAL COMMUNIQUE**

1. The Meeting of Commonwealth Prime Ministers ended today. Pakistan was represented by its President. The United Kingdom, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, India, Ghana, the Federation of Malaya and the Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland were represented by their Prime Ministers. South Africa was represented by the Minister of External Affairs, and Ceylon by the Minister of Justice.

2. This was the tenth of these Meetings to have been held since the war. It has taken place at a time of great significance to the Commonwealth and to the world.

3. The continuing growth of the membership of the Commonwealth was marked by the attendance at this Meeting of the Prime Minister of the Federation of Malaya, which achieved independence in August 1957. The representatives of the other Commonwealth countries welcomed the presence of the Federation at the conference.

4. The Commonwealth is an association of independent sovereign States, each responsible for its own policies; but the primary objective of all is world peace and security. It is their declared purpose to do everything in their power to achieve that objective, and to continue to co-operate to that end with all the peace-loving nations of the world.

5. In this spirit the Commonwealth Ministers have reviewed the major international problems of the day on the eve of the impending Summit Conference which is to be attended by the Prime Minister of the United Kingdom. They expressed their sincere hopes for a successful outcome of that Conference as a further step in the relaxation of international tension. They discussed, in particular, the problem of disarmament; and they welcomed the progress made at the Geneva Conference on the Discontinuance of Nuclear Weapons Tests. They hoped that, on the basis of the preliminary work already done, the Summit Conference would be able to make some significant progress towards an eventual settlement, under international control, of the problem of disarmament. An advance towards a solution of that problem, linked with a progressive lessening of political tensions, would afford a firm basis for strengthening confidence between nations and promoting world security.

6. The Commonwealth Ministers also discussed the problems of Africa, the Middle East, the Far East and South-East Asia. They recognised that economic and social progress are essential for political stability. They welcomed the continuing contribution which mutual assistance under the Colombo Plan affords throughout South-East Asia to these aims; and they agreed that there and elsewhere throughout the less developed areas of the world the best hope of peace, stability and political freedom lies in practical international co-operation of this kind.

7. The Ministers reviewed the world economic situation. They noted that, while in general the outlook was favourable, the economic expansion which had taken place since their last Meeting had been greater in the industrialised countries of the Commonwealth than in the primary producing countries. They agreed that an important condition of the prosperity of these countries was their ability to develop their export trade. They also recognised the urgent need to maintain and, where possible, increase the flow of economic assistance to the less developed countries. They welcomed the decision to establish an International Development Association.

8. The Ministers discussed European trade problems. They expressed concern at the prospect of any economic division in Europe and its possible political implications. The countries of Europe form an important market for Commonwealth exports. The Ministers expressed their hope that these countries would follow trade policies in accordance with the principles of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade, and thus avoid damage to the economies of the primary producing countries and those that are also developing exports of manufactured goods. In addition, European countries have an important contribution to make in assisting the economic development of the less advanced countries. The Ministers hoped that these problems could be speedily and satisfactorily resolved, with due regard to the interests of countries outside Europe.

9. The Commonwealth Ministers reviewed the economic development of Commonwealth countries in Africa which have recently attained or are approaching independence. They agreed that consideration should be given to the possibility of co-operative action among members of the Commonwealth in assisting the economic development of these countries. This possibility will be studied in the first instance by officials of Commonwealth Governments, and the Commonwealth Economic Consultative Council will examine it at its next meeting.

10. Ministers also reaffirmed their belief in the value of exchanges between Commonwealth countries of persons with specialised skills and experience. They agreed that further efforts should be made to foster and encourage these exchanges, whether on a regional or other basis, and that the Commonwealth Economic Consultative Council should take this question into urgent consideration. They trusted that employers in Commonwealth countries—whether Governments, statutory bodies or private companies—would be ready, wherever possible, to encourage members of their staffs to undertake a period of public service abroad and would do their best to ensure that their prospects in their home countries would not thereby be prejudiced.

11. The Ministers considered various questions of constitutional development within the Commonwealth. They noted that the Federation of Nigeria would attain independence on 1st October 1960. They extended to the Federation their good wishes for its future and looked forward to welcoming an independent Nigeria as a member of the Commonwealth on the completion of the necessary constitutional processes.

12. The Meeting was informed that, in pursuance of the recent plebiscite, the Constituent Assembly in Ghana had resolved that the necessary constitutional steps should be taken to introduce a republican form of constitution in Ghana by 1st July 1960. In notifying this forthcoming constitutional change, the Prime

Minister of Ghana assured the Meeting of his country's desire to continue her membership of the Commonwealth and her acceptance of the Queen as the symbol of the free association of its independent member nations and as such the Head of the Commonwealth. The Heads of Delegations of the other member countries of the Commonwealth assured the Prime Minister of Ghana that the present relations between their countries and Ghana would remain unaffected by this constitutional change and they declared that their Governments would accept and recognise Ghana's continued membership of the Commonwealth.

13. The Meeting noted a statement by the South African Minister of External Affairs that the Union Government intended to hold a referendum on the subject of South Africa becoming a republic. The Meeting affirmed the view that the choice between a monarchy and a republic was entirely the responsibility of the country concerned. In the event of South Africa deciding to become a republic and if the desire was subsequently expressed to remain a member of the Commonwealth, the Meeting suggested that the South African Government should then ask for the consent of the other Commonwealth Governments either at a Meeting of Commonwealth Prime Ministers or, if this were not practicable, by correspondence.

14. The Ministers reviewed the constitutional development of the Commonwealth, with particular reference to the future of the smaller dependent territories. They agreed that a detailed study of this subject should be made for consideration by Commonwealth Governments.

15. Whilst reaffirming the traditional practice that Commonwealth conferences do not discuss the internal affairs of member countries, Ministers availed themselves of Mr Louw's presence in London to have informal discussions with him about the racial situation in South Africa. During these informal discussions Mr Louw gave information and answered questions on the Union's policies, and the other Ministers conveyed to him their views on the South African problem. The Ministers emphasised that the Commonwealth itself is a multiracial association and expressed the need to ensure good relations between all member States and peoples of the Commonwealth.

*13 May 1960*

## **Heads of Delegation**

<b>Australia</b>	The Rt Hon R G Menzies, Prime Minister
<b>Britain</b>	The Rt Hon Harold Macmillan, Prime Minister
<b>Canada</b>	The Hon John Diefenbaker, Prime Minister
<b>Ceylon</b>	The Hon E J Cooray, Minister of Justice
<b>Federation of Malaya</b>	Tunku Abdul Rahman Putra, Prime Minister
<b>Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland</b>	The Hon Sir Roy Welensky, Prime Minister
<b>Ghana</b>	Dr The Hon Kwame Nkrumah, Prime Minister
<b>India</b>	Shri Jawaharlal Nehru, Prime Minister
<b>New Zealand</b>	The Rt Hon Walter Nash, Prime Minister
<b>Pakistan</b>	Field Marshall Mohammed Ayub Khan, President
<b>Union of South Africa</b>	The Hon E H Louw, Minister of External Affairs