

Conference Arrangements

Background

1. The Nicosia Conference of Commonwealth Education Ministers was the ninth in a series which began at Oxford in 1959 and continued at New Delhi (1962), Ottawa (1964), Lagos (1968), Canberra (1971), Kingston (1974), Accra (1977) and Colombo (1980).

Preparations

2. Preliminary consultations on the nature and shape of the Ninth Conference were held with Education Ministers during the Eighth Conference in Colombo in 1980. Later, following the agreement of the Government of Cyprus to host the Conference, Commonwealth delegations attending the UNESCO General Conference in October 1983 were further consulted on an informal basis about suitable topics for the agenda. In the light of these discussions the Commonwealth Secretary-General wrote to Education Ministers in November 1983 to make proposals for the style, format, agenda and dates of the Ninth Conference and to set 9 December 1983 as the date for a meeting of the Commonwealth Education Liaison Committee (CELC) at which these matters would be considered in relation to responses received from Ministers.

3. The CELC meeting was attended by the representatives of 20 member states and chaired by the Assistant Commonwealth Secretary-General, Mr. M. Malhoutra. It approved an outline schedule providing for a four-day conference and a provisional agenda in which the four major topics would be resources for education and their cost-effective use (Agenda Item II); education and youth unemployment (Agenda Item III); student mobility and the proposed Commonwealth Higher Education Programme (Agenda Item IV); and the Commonwealth Secretariat's future work programme in education (Agenda Item V). Agenda Items II and III would be discussed by working groups as well as in plenary.

4. In January 1984, letters inviting Education Ministries to submit country papers on Agenda Items II and III were issued by the Commonwealth Secretariat together with guidelines on their preparation. In the period up to and including the Conference, papers were received from 37 countries*. Details are shown in Appendix B. Working papers on Resources for Educa-

* Copies of Conference papers not included in this Report may be obtained from the Education Programme, Commonwealth Secretariat.

tion and their Cost-Effective Use were commissioned from Professor Sanya Onabamiro (Chairman of the Implementation Committee for the National Policy on Education in Nigeria) and from Professor P.R.C. Williams (Professor of Education in Developing Countries at the University of London Institute of Education. Dr. Kenneth King (Executive Director of the Centre of African Studies and Reader in Education at Edinburgh University) was invited to prepare the working paper on Education and Youth Unemployment. Documentation for the session on Student Mobility and the Commonwealth Higher Education Programme consisted mainly of the Third Report of the Commonwealth Standing Committee on Student Mobility (May 1984), the Report of the Second Ten-Year Review Committee of the Commonwealth Scholarship and Fellowship Plan (March 1982), and papers by the Commonwealth Secretariat responding to them.

5. On 9 May 1984, a further meeting of the CELC was held under Mr. Malhoutra's chairmanship to review progress on the arrangements for the Conference. It was attended by the representatives of 28 countries, the Association of Commonwealth Universities, and the Commonwealth Foundation. It made some slight modifications to the proposed Conference schedule; and approved an agenda for two meetings of Senior Education Officials and Professional Officers, one to be held on Sunday 22 July the day before the Conference opened, and the other during the Conference itself. It agreed that two overview papers should be prepared to summarise the material in the country papers; that three further papers should be prepared to identify some of the main issues which the Conference and its working groups should address; and that deliberations on Agenda Items II, III and IV should be introduced by lead speakers, as follows:

Agenda Item II: Professor Sanya Onabamiro, Chairman of the Implementation Committee for the National Policy on Education in Nigeria, and author of one of the working papers.

Agenda Item III: Professor Peter Karmel, Vice-Chancellor of the Australian National University, Canberra.

Agenda Item IV: Sir Roy Marshall, Vice-Chancellor of the University of Hull and Chairman of the Commonwealth Standing Committee on Student Mobility.

The Conference in Session

6. The Conference was held at the Cyprus Hilton Hotel, Nicosia, from 23-26 July 1984. It was attended by 155 delegates from 35 countries, by observers from ten Commonwealth and international organisations, and by invited lead speakers and paper writers. (See Appendix D.) Twenty-seven education ministers were present.

7. On the day before the Conference opened, a meeting of senior officials and professional officers reviewed the proposed working arrangements, and recommended the adoption of the draft agenda and schedule. It also gave preliminary consideration to the Secretariat's proposed work programme in education for 1984-87, and to the Report of the Second Ten-Year Review Committee on the CSFP. It appointed a working group of

delegates with a special interest in the operation of the CSFP to review the suggestions received from Commonwealth Scholarship agencies for amending the CSFP Administrative Handbook. The working group was chaired by Mr. E.E. Temple (Britain), Assistant Secretary-General of the Association of Commonwealth Universities. Its report appears on pages 42-44.

8. At the Opening Ceremony, which was held on 23 July 1984, delegates were welcomed by the Hon. Minister of Education of the Republic of Cyprus, Mr. Stelios Catsellis. He was followed by the Commonwealth Secretary-General, Mr. Shridath S. Ramphal who spoke on the theme "Opportunity Beyond Constraint". H.E. the President of the Republic of Cyprus, Mr. Spyros Kyprianou, then gave an address and opened the Conference. The Hon. Mrs. Sheila Kaul, Minister for Education and Culture of the Government of India, responded to the President on behalf of Commonwealth Ministers of Education.

9. Later in the day H.E. the President of Cyprus received Heads of Delegation at a private meeting at the Presidential Palace, in the course of which he made a brief address and the Hon. K.P. Morake (Botswana) replied.

10. At the first business session of the Conference on 23 July, on the motion of the Hon. Ranil Wickremesinghe (Sri Lanka) seconded by the Hon. Dr. Mavis Gilmour (Jamaica), the Hon. Stelios Catsellis, Minister of Education of Cyprus was elected Conference Chairman. At the Chairman's suggestion, a panel of Vice-Chairpersons was appointed to take the chair as necessary on his behalf. Those who served in this capacity were:

The Hon. R. Wickremesinghe (Sri Lanka) - Agenda Item II, Working Group A : "The Cost-Effective Use of Resources".

The Hon. T.R.B. Donahoe (Canada, Nova Scotia) - Agenda Item II, Working Group B : "Additional Resources for Education."

The Hon. Darrell E. Rolle (Bahamas) - Agenda Item III, Working Group C : "Policy and Organisational Links between Education and Employment".

The Hon. Sir Barry Holloway (Papua New Guinea) - Agenda Item III, Working Group D : "The Contribution of Education Systems in Improving Young People's Access to Work".

The Hon. Miss Billie A. Miller (Barbados) - Agenda Item IV : "Student Mobility and the Proposed Commonwealth Higher Education Programme".

The Hon. I.N. Ojok (Uganda) - Agenda Item V : "The Commonwealth Secretariat's Future Work Programme in Education".

11. The Conference spent the remainder of the opening day in plenary considering Agenda Item II: Resources for Education and their Cost-Effective Use. The discussion was introduced by Professor Sanya Onabamiro from Nigeria. The following day, again in plenary, Professor Peter Karmel

introduced the discussion on Agenda Item III: Education and Youth Unemployment. The Conference then divided into four working groups on the second afternoon to consider aspects of both agenda items. These groups completed their work on Wednesday afternoon, and in a plenary session on the last afternoon of the Conference the Chairpersons of the four groups introduced their group reports which were then adopted by the Conference (Appendix A).

12. The third day, Wednesday, was devoted mainly to a discussion of Agenda Item IV: Student Mobility and the Commonwealth Higher Education Programme. The discussion was introduced by Sir Roy Marshall. In view of the considerable concern felt by delegates over student mobility matters the Conference decided to issue a statement on the subject. (See pp.22-24). Consideration of Agenda Item IV also included a pledging session for the Commonwealth Scholarship and Fellowship Plan at which the target of 1500 awards was surpassed, and a discussion of other aspects of higher education which continued into the final morning. The future work programme of the Commonwealth Secretariat in education (Agenda Item V) was also discussed on the last morning of the Conference.

13. On its last afternoon the Conference approved for issue a draft Communiqué which had first been scrutinised by senior officials and professional officers at their second meeting. The Hon. Peter Brooke (Britain) and the Hon. D. Mutumbuka (Zimbabwe) thanked the Government of Cyprus for hosting the Conference and for the warm hospitality that delegates had enjoyed.

14. In a closed session with the Secretary-General on Wednesday, Heads of Delegation reviewed the organisation of the Conference and made recommendations for the tenth in the series. The offer made by the Government of Kenya in plenary session to host the Tenth Conference of Commonwealth Education Ministers in Nairobi in 1987 was received with acclamation.