

Foreword by Commonwealth Secretary-General

We are today witnesses to momentous change in the international order. The end of the Cold War is ushering in a new era requiring adjustments to long-held perceptions and patterns of international behaviour. Change is evident in all aspects of human life—political, economic, social and environmental. Technological and economic change is heightening the interdependence of nations. There is a growing awareness of humanity's capacity for inflicting global damage as it persistently lays waste the environment; and of a corresponding and urgent need to pursue policies of sustainable development, both nationally and through international cooperation. The basis of political and social organisation is fast changing as appreciation grows of the positive role of market forces and of pluralistic political structures.

These changes present the international community with both problems and opportunities. And they come at a time when large parts of the developing world are burdened by the legacy of the 1980s, when external indebtedness emerged as a major barrier to economic growth and spreading poverty punctured the hopes of earlier decades. If many developing countries are to be able to make use of the available opportunities, they urgently need help. But, as many of them are increasingly coming to recognise, it will be help in support of the crucial role that must be played by the developing countries themselves.

The persistent constraint upon development is not only a source of widespread human suffering and environmental degradation. It holds back human creativity. It also threatens global peace and security; for peace can neither be achieved nor sustained when vast numbers of humanity are falling deeper into poverty.

What then can the world community do to help revive development? And what can the developing countries themselves do? These are some of the questions which were uppermost in their minds when, following initial

consideration by Commonwealth Finance Ministers, Commonwealth Heads of Government, in 1989, requested the Secretary-General to establish an Expert Group to pursue these issues.

The Commonwealth has been fortunate in being able to secure the services of a highly distinguished group of people, under the very able and experienced Chairmanship of Arthur Brown, Governor of the Bank of Jamaica and former Deputy Administrator of UNDP. All members served the Group in their individual capacities. Representatives of the UN, UNCTAD, IMF and World Bank also participated in the Group's work.

The Group's Report points to the danger of further increase in the existing disparities, if action is not taken urgently by the developed and developing countries as well as the world community as a whole. It points to the mutuality of interest which makes action a necessity; and to the opportunities presented by change, such as the peace dividend, the greatly enhanced technological capacity to tackle problems of all kinds, and the creative energy and ingenuity arising from accumulated human resource development, market-oriented economy and political pluralism. But effective action will only be possible if there is ready acceptance that the challenge of development cannot be ignored; and that current piecemeal efforts are not the answer. International understanding and cooperation will be a critical requirement.

It is my hope that this Report will help to mobilise international partnership to meet the challenge of development which I believe to be one of the most important challenges currently facing the world community. I therefore have great pleasure in commending the Report to Commonwealth governments and in making it available to the international community.

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