

Concluding Statement of the Commonwealth Ministerial Action Group (CMAG)

23 September 2016

1. The Commonwealth Ministerial Action Group (CMAG) held its forty-ninth meeting in New York on 23 September 2016.
2. The meeting was chaired by Hon Ioannis Kasoulides, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Cyprus, and was attended by Hon Carl Greenidge, Vice-President and Minister of Foreign Affairs of Guyana; Hon Dr George Vella, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Malta; Hon Netumbo Nandi-Ndaitwah, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of International Relations and Cooperation of Namibia; Hon Murray McCully, Minister of Foreign Affairs of New Zealand; Hon Sartaj Aziz, Adviser on Foreign Affairs to the Prime Minister of Pakistan; Hon George Milner Tozaka, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Solomon Islands; Ms Sujata Mehta, Secretary, Ministry of External Affairs of India; and Ms Koki Muli-Grignon, Ambassador and Deputy Representative of the Permanent Mission of Kenya to the United Nations.

Maldives

3. Ministers were addressed by the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Hon Dr Mohamed Asim, and the Attorney-General of Maldives, Hon Mohamed Anil. The Group welcomed the expressed commitment of the Government of Maldives to the Commonwealth's values and principles, and to continuing to work with the Commonwealth.
4. Ministers affirmed their unwavering commitment to support the Government and people of Maldives in advancing the values and principles in the Commonwealth Charter.
5. CMAG recalled that, at their extraordinary meeting in February 2016, the Group had underlined the importance of progress in six areas occurring as matters of priority and with urgency. At their April 2016 meeting, Ministers had undertaken to assess progress in the six areas, take stock, and take decisions when they next met.
6. Ministers welcomed the appointment of the former Chief Justice of Kenya, Dr Willy Mutunga, as the Secretary-General's Special Envoy to Maldives and expressed appreciation for his work to date.
7. Ministers noted that further Commonwealth technical assistance was being initiated, at the request of the Government of Maldives, as part of longer-term efforts to strengthen judicial independence and the separation of powers.

8. Ministers welcomed the efforts of the United Nations to facilitate political dialogue, and expressed regret that a substantive dialogue was yet to be initiated. The Group stressed that time-bound dialogue remains critical to achieve national agreement on institutional reform, and to ensure a conducive environment for credible and inclusive Presidential elections in 2018. They emphasised that all political parties and leaders have a responsibility to create conditions for dialogue, and that all must compromise and show flexibility to strengthen democratic institutions and traditions in the larger national interest. They underlined that there is an obligation on both government and opposition to participate fully and without preconditions in this dialogue.

9. Ministers expressed deep disappointment at the lack of progress in the priority areas that they had earlier identified, and therefore placed Maldives on CMAG's formal agenda. Ministers agreed that, in the absence of substantive progress across the priority areas, the Group would consider its options, including suspension from the Councils of the Commonwealth, at its next meeting, in March 2017.

10. Ministers recognised the mutual interest of the Commonwealth family at large and Maldives of working together. The Group emphasised that it is for Maldives to find its own national solutions to the challenges it currently faces, as the country seeks to advance on its own path of national development and democratic strengthening. CMAG encouraged the Secretary-General to continue to use her Good Offices to support Maldives in those efforts in cooperation with other international partners.

Other Matters

11. CMAG continued to consider developments in a number of other Commonwealth member states, given the Group's supportive and constructive role to advance the Commonwealth's fundamental political values. The Group encouraged the Secretary-General to continue to use her Good Offices in this regard.
