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DEPARTMENTAL MEMORANDUM  
COMMONWEALTH HEADS OF GOVERNMENT  
MEETING LUSAKA 1-7 AUGUST 1979

1. Posts will have received telegraphic summaries of the CHGM Sessions, the text of the communiqué, and telegrams after the meeting - both on Rhodesia and on the CHGM as a whole - giving our preliminary assessment. They may find it useful however to have some aspects spelt out in more detail, insofar as we can: we do not of course know all that went on, particularly during the weekend "retreat" for Heads of Government held in the grounds of State House, where officials only had access for special reasons, and where it was once again demonstrated that CHGMs are, quite properly, very much the special preserve of Heads of Government.

2. Lusaka had always promised to be a difficult location, and speculation that the venue might have to be changed or the meeting postponed persisted well into July. In the end Mr Ramphal and President Kaunda managed to persuade Mr Nkomo to give a public commitment (albeit qualified) to operate a ceasefire for the period of The Queen's visit and the CHGM: from 25 July to 10 August ZAPU would "not engage in any such activities at the Zambia-Rhodesia border as are likely to provide pretext to the Rhodesian regime to undermine the prospect of the Commonwealth Conference being held in Lusaka". Bishop Muzorewa, with our encouragement, issued a statement in reply that "our own security forces will take no action which would endanger Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth or anyone attending the Commonwealth Conference". Although not perfect, this exchange was about as good as we could expect. The meeting duly took place, neither the Patriotic Front nor the Rhodesians did anything to threaten the security either of The Queen or the delegates, arrangements were much better than expected and the outcome was more successful than anyone could have hoped.

HM THE QUEEN

4. Of prime concern to the Government was The Queen's visit. It is customary for her to be present during the first days of CHGMs in her capacity as Head of the Commonwealth - to give audiences and to entertain participants (although not to open or attend the meeting). This was the first regular CHGM in Africa (a special one on Rhodesia was held in Lagos in 1966) and the first in a land-locked country, thus preventing the use of HM Yacht Britannia. While it was important to relations with Zambia that the visit should go ahead, the question of security was vital. On the advice of the then Prime Minister, Mr Callaghan, The Queen had in February accepted President Kaunda's invitation to pay a State visit to Zambia and then remain for the opening days of the meeting. Prior visits to Tanzania, Malawi and Botswana were also arranged. It was clear that the advice needed to be kept under

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constant review and special arrangements were made to this end. The aim was to do everything possible to minimise the risks, and to monitor the situation throughout so as to be able to provide the new Prime Minister with as clear a picture as possible of the situation. Not long before The Queen's departure on the first leg of her African tour, the Prime Minister concluded that there was no reason to advise against the visit to Zambia proceeding as planned. Since part of this visit was in The Queen's capacity as Head of the Commonwealth, the Prime Ministers of all her other realms were informed before the decision was announced in Parliament, and the Prime Ministers of the old Commonwealth, whose governments had been kept informed of our own assessments of the security situation, were given an opportunity to comment on Mrs Thatcher's decision. There were no dissenting voices. President Kaunda was also informed of the decision but it was not thought necessary to inform the Heads of the other non-realms of what did not represent a change.

5. Without doubt The Queen's visit was extremely successful; and the warmth of the Zambian welcome probably helped to diminish a little the coolness of the reception, especially in the Zambian press, awaiting the Prime Minister on arrival. What is more, there can be no doubt that The Queen's presence in Lusaka helped significantly to improve the atmosphere for the CHGM. Commonwealth leaders have an enormous respect and admiration for her.

**ATTENDANCE**

6. The full British delegation in 1973 (Ottawa) numbered 70, in 1975 (Kingston) 57 and in 1979 62. We tried hard beforehand to keep the 1979 figure below the Kingston level but the special problems posed by Lusaka, eg security, transport and telecommunications, necessitated a very long "tail". The High Commission also backed us up superbly. The actual team of advisers was quite small, consisting of Sir John Hunt (Cabinet Secretary), Sir Michael Palliser (PUS), Sir Antony Duff (who spent much time on Rhodesia), Mr Derek Thomas (ditto on economic subjects) and myself, plus Mr Henry James (No. 10) and Mr Nick Fenn to deal with the press side. It should be possible to reduce substantially the support staff in our delegation for the 1981 CHGM, since it is to be held in Australia.

7. There was a good turn out, with 27 Heads of Government present and all 39 full Commonwealth members represented. Our particular efforts beforehand to allay Lee Kuan Yew's doubts about security paid dividends; he duly attended, and launched the discussion on the world political item with what many considered to be the best contribution of the meeting. Mr Desai had been scheduled to open this discussion but resigned shortly before the meeting - which lost something by his absence: India was represented by its new Foreign Minister, whose contribution was not outstanding - and he was moreover involved in an unfortunate controversy over the Secretary-Generalship. Other notable absentees were Datuk Hussein (Malaysia) because of ill-health, General Obasanjo (Nigeria) who was preoccupied with the approach of civilian rule and Dom Mintoff (Malta) - whose absence we did not particularly regret. Dr Williams (Trinidad), the doyen of the Commonwealth, predictably decided once more not to attend, and peevishly sent no minister either. This was to show his displeasure at one of Mr Ramphal's proposals to encourage

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greater informality - that Heads of Government should have precedence in discussion over delegation leaders of lesser status. Ghana, beset by internal problems, was represented by the Commissioner for External Affairs, Mrs Nikoi. Notable for his presence, after our agonies over Amin in 1977, was President Binaisa of Uganda.

AGENDA

8. The agenda emerged very much as we had wanted, with a balance between the three major items, namely the world political and economic scenes and Commonwealth cooperation. Mr Ramphal was keen to have a substantive discussion of economic issues, but the fact that UNCTAD V in Manila had recently taken place meant that such issues were less likely to predominate, although it seemed probable that developing Commonwealth countries would use the occasion to express disillusionment over the state of the North/South dialogue, including recent negotiations for the new Lomé Convention. On the political side, the plight of Indo-Chinese refugees brought onto the agenda an item of great concern to Commonwealth members from the area (and of course ourselves) which helped to offset discussion of Southern Africa. Commonwealth cooperation provided a healthy third major item, especially as initiatives in industrial cooperation and proposals for helping with the special problems of small Commonwealth countries were now ready for endorsement by Heads of Government.

RHODESIA

9. For months before, the question of Rhodesia had loomed threateningly; and the timing of the CHGM made it the natural culmination of the process of consultation which the Government had initiated - although it was far from certain that the meeting would contribute to a solution. There was, understandably, no lack of Cassandras recalling the 1971 CHGM in Singapore, when controversy over the supply of arms to South Africa had threatened to destroy the Commonwealth, or to still earlier CHGMs when Rhodesia had completely dominated discussions (to our discomfort). Warning noises on Rhodesia, with implications for relations with Britain and the continued cohesion of the Commonwealth, were also made by certain African Commonwealth hard-liners, notably Nigeria. The July OAU Summit, with its endorsement of the Patriotic Front as the sole legitimate authentic representative of the people of Zimbabwe, did not augur well for Lusaka. Our own arrival there coincided, moreover, with the announcement of the nationalisation of BP's Nigerian assets, and there was much apprehension lest the controversy over this might affect the atmosphere of the CHGM. That it did not owed much to the momentum of the search for an agreed plan on Rhodesia. Before the Conference ever began it was established British policy that a decision to convene a constitutional conference would be announced at or after the CHGM - but the timing very much depended on how things went in Lusaka. The Prime Minister and Lord Carrington made good use of the full day there before the beginning of the meeting to hold bilateral talks with colleagues, and by the end of the first day of the meeting (Wednesday) the atmosphere had already lightened considerably, helped by a statesmanlike and well-received speech during the opening session by the Prime Minister. It had been agreed in advance between Mr Ramphal, President Kaunda

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and ourselves that it would be best to hold back the opening of the Southern Africa debate until the Friday, both because the atmosphere would benefit from the discussion of less controversial subjects first, and because Heads of Government could thereafter go straight into their informal "weekend" for private discussions on this key topic. The debate duly opened on Friday and, following the example of the lead speaker President Nyerere, and of the Prime Minister, who delivered a key-note speech, the participants, almost without exception, contributed helpfully and constructively. From our point of view, this session achieved a general recognition that developments in Rhodesia had brought about a new situation, and acceptance that it was Britain's responsibility to take the initiative for a solution.

10. The weekend was used to put flesh on these ideas. A small group was set up by Messrs Ramphal, Kaunda and Nyerere, which also included Messrs Manley, Fraser and Adefope (it was thought best to have the Nigerians in from the beginning), together with the Prime Minister and Secretary of State. The Africans decided against bringing in President Khama, but kept him informed. Following a good initial discussion on the Saturday, Sir A Duff and Mr Ramphal set to to draft a Statement of Principles. This was agreed, with some amendments, by Heads of Government the following day, and should have been considered in full executive session on the Monday. Mr Fraser however chose to brief the press on Sunday afternoon, claiming considerable credit for the breakthrough, and the result was a hastily convened and very unusual "restricted" session at Mr Fraser's house that evening, where he was entertaining Heads of Government to a barbecue. Although not all Heads of Delegation were present, this meeting resulted in agreement that the document was acceptable to the Commonwealth as a whole and could be released to the press. Some feathers, eg those of India and New Zealand, had been ruffled initially at having been left out of the 'inner' group - but all worked out for the best in the end: the net result was that the plan to hold further discussions on Southern Africa on the Monday was dropped and the CHGM ended a day earlier than scheduled in an atmosphere of sweetness and light.

#### THE MEETING

11. Success over Rhodesia coloured the general mood which thereafter, in the executive sessions, became ever more constructive and friendly (although this was less the case in the officials' 'Committee of the Whole' - see below). The procedures and format of the meeting had been discussed by senior officials at Kuala Lumpur in November 1978, following which Mr Ramphal had submitted a long and useful list of suggestions designed to halt the trend of a steadily growing assembly towards formal and more "UN-like" procedures and practices eg the use of set speeches. We had done our best to encourage a movement back towards the traditional informality. Somewhat surprisingly, however, President Kaunda did not invite discussion of the proposals, merely suggesting that they be adopted, which they were. In practice most were observed. The executive sessions were certainly informal, with first names being freely used, but there were some features which could still be improved. In some sessions, eg the economic ones, there were still too many prepared speeches as opposed to informal discussion and exchanges of view. This no doubt reflected the difficulty which many Commonwealth leaders

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have in speaking substantively, at least on some subjects, without a prepared text. Another unsatisfactory aspect was, once again, the Communiqué and especially its handling in the Committee of the Whole (see paragraphs 19 and 20).

12. The standard of contribution was inevitably variable. The address by Lee Kuan Yew on the first day (Lusaka tel 814) was outstanding; and Nyerere's contribution to the critical discussion on 3 August (Lusaka tel 829) impressive. Some were mediocre; and one by the Mauritius Minister of External Affairs conspicuously (but at moments hilariously!) poor. The British Prime Minister's principal contributions were to the Southern Africa and economic discussions.

**COMMONWEALTH COOPERATION**

13. Under the item Commonwealth cooperation, Heads of Government themselves discussed the special problems of small states, industrial cooperation and the Commonwealth Fund for Technical Cooperation. Other aspects, including the Commonwealth Youth Programme and the Commonwealth Foundation, were remitted by them to the Committee of the Whole. You will see from the Communiqué that the Commonwealth Secretariat emerged from the meeting with ample work for the next 2 years. The Secretary-General is, for example, asked to:

- (a) assemble a group of 8 to 10 independent Commonwealth experts to report to governments on the question of structural change and economic growth before the 1980 UN Special Session;
- (b) establish an industrial unit within the CFTC with (it is hoped) £5 million to be provided for its first 3 years. This follows the publication of the Jha report and the meeting of Ministers of Industry earlier this year in Bangalore;
- (c) pursue the Secretariat's proposed programme of action on "Island developing and other specially disadvantaged [or small] states";
- (d) appoint an adviser on women and development;
- (e) urge governments to forward their views on the Gambian proposal for a Commonwealth Human Rights Commission; and to appoint a working party to consider it and make recommendations. This was the compromise solution reached in the face of President Jawara's insistence on pushing his hobby horse, although it received only limited support (eg from Uganda) and is viewed with considerable reserve by many Commonwealth members (including ourselves);

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- (f) prepare a feasibility study and report to Commonwealth governments on the proposal for a Commonwealth film and TV institute, which was welcomed in principle;
- (g) coordinate media exchanges and to set up a select committee to look at communication and media problems.

The extent to which these various initiatives will involve extra staff or special working groups is unfortunate in that they will tend to encourage the Secretariat's empire-building propensities; but for Heads of Government they represent, of course, a convenient way of dealing with matters which either need looking at in more detail or are simply difficult to resolve at the CHGM itself without hurting someone's feelings. Moreover some of the initiatives may well prove useful. Certainly, no-one could claim that the modern Commonwealth is not an active one.

14. This CHGM gave Commonwealth leaders a useful opportunity to review the work of three of the main Commonwealth institutions, the Commonwealth Fund for Technical Co-operation, the Commonwealth Youth Programme and the Commonwealth Foundation. To some extent the opportunity was taken. Tribute was paid to all three, and Heads of Government were quick to agree to significantly increased budgets - but without seriously considering where the extra money was to come from. We were, moreover, not impressed with the way some of our old Commonwealth partners made commitments which, although deliberately phrased to sound generous, in fact fell short of the levels required. We were almost alone in seeking to inject realism into these discussions. As it was, the Communiqué endorsed:

- (a) a "positive approach" to "the provision of additional real resources" for the CFTC;
- (b) an increase of at least one-third in pledges to the CYP and for funds to reach £1 million per annum for 1980-82;
- (c) a target of £1.1 million for the Commonwealth Foundation's income, although it was recognised that resources for 1979-80 would probably not exceed £900,000.

We are prepared to increase our contribution in all three cases but do not consider it appropriate that they should exceed our customary 30% share of the total contributed: much therefore depends on other governments. We are ready in principle to provide £1.5 million of the £5 million target for the first 3 years of the new Industrial Development scheme - and this is over and above our contributions to the main CFTC programme.

RESTRICTED SESSIONS

15. One of the features of CHGMs since Ottawa has been the "Restricted" session, involving Heads of Government only (plus the Secretary-General). It had been envisaged that more use might be made of these at Lusaka; but in the

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event there were only two - one after the Friday afternoon's normal executive session, and the other the extraordinary one on Rhodesia at the Australian barbecue. The former was badly handled in that Heads of Government were given no notice: thus those with previous engagements - like our own Prime Minister - were unable to be present. There were two matters for discussion at the first session. One was Nauru's request to attend CHGMs. Nauru and Tuvalu, as special members, pay little or nothing for the benefits of membership but do not attend CHGMs. This question was satisfactorily resolved by agreement that Nauru could apply for full membership if she wanted, while the concept of special membership was retained as an option for all - one which new "mini states" might find attractive. (In fact, since the meeting, St Vincent has asked to become a special member on achieving independence this month.) The second subject was the question of the Secretary-Generalship. Ramphal withdrew for this part of the discussion.

**SECRETARY-GENERAL**

16. Three months before the CHGM the Indians had started canvassing the idea that the Secretary-Generalship should be held only for 5 years and that Ramphal should be replaced in 1980 by an Indian (known to be Jagat Mehta), equivalent to the PUS, and a very able official. This move stimulated Ramphal into informing Governments that he was available for reappointment. Moreover, exploiting both his close relationship with President Kaunda and the wide Commonwealth support which he undoubtedly enjoys, especially in Africa and the Caribbean, he cleverly inspired President Kaunda to write to Heads of Government shortly before the meeting to say that "the overwhelming opinion, ... already constituting considerably more than a majority of our full membership, is strongly in favour of Mr Shridath Ramphal continuing for a second term". Our own assessment was that Ramphal's re-election was indeed almost a foregone conclusion and the Prime Minister therefore, in reply to President Kaunda, said that she would be very ready to support a consensus in favour of reappointing him. In the Restricted session, Ramphal was duly reappointed, with, so far as we are aware, only India dissenting. We were not best pleased by Kaunda's failure to give advance notice of this important meeting, although we would not have dissented from the decision.

17. The Indians took the decision badly and their Foreign Minister wrote sharply to Kaunda the following day complaining of his handling of the issue and proposing new procedures for electing future Secretaries-General (and Deputy Secretaries-General), with a maximum 5 year term. The letter and Kaunda's (again rather sharp) reply were subsequently circulated to governments - who are now invited to write to the Secretary-General with any views they may have on the procedure. None of those involved came out of the episode particularly well, although part of the trouble was the lack of an established procedure for electing Secretaries-General. The Indians had some valid points, but did not handle the affair with sufficient care; Ramphal was less than scrupulous in canvassing on his own behalf; and Kaunda allowed himself to be used by Ramphal. However none of this, we believe, affected the actual outcome.

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COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE/COMMUNIQUE

18. The Committee of the Whole (senior officials) was reasonably workmanlike and constructive when discussing the subjects remitted to it by Heads of Government. But when it came to the drafting of the communiqué the approach changed. This contrasted sharply with the atmosphere in the Heads of Government sessions, being marred by UN-type tactics, with a marked unwillingness to compromise on the part of some, eg Jamaica on Southern Africa and Malta on the Middle East and the Mediterranean. The economic sub-committee was like a mini-UNCTAD. The consensus nature of Commonwealth decisions resulted in long and tedious discussions which lasted throughout the final night (in separate political and economic groups) and led to the emergence of a communiqué of a turgid and indigestible 70 paragraphs, unfortunately just as long as in 1977. Without the considerable tact and patience of the two Deputy Secretaries-General in the chair, things might have been even worse - although, equally, a firmer hand might have helped. The formulation of the Communiqué was a haphazard process. Texts were produced on political items both by individual countries and by the Secretariat, and on economic matters the latter produced a lengthy draft only minutes before the officials sat down to consider it. It was often difficult if not impossible to equate what was said in the Communiqué with the actual discussions in the executive sessions. The problem is that the Communiqué is the major document to emerge from CHGMs, and that there are not a few members who want to use it as a vehicle for pronouncements on their special concerns. The resultant text was one we could live with, whilst not much caring for some of the phraseology. It was still much too long, despite our urgings over the last two years that the Communiqué should be shorter and should reflect actual discussion. We shall however persevere: prospects at the 1981 CHGM in Australia may be a little better.

SPORT AND SOUTH AFRICA

19. Noticeable by its absence was the subject of sporting contacts with South Africa which had caused so much difficulty in 1977. There were grounds enough for someone to raise the issue, since two British rugby clubs were touring South Africa at the time of the Meeting. In the event, the subject was not to the best of our knowledge, raised, not even by the Nigerians. It could well have been otherwise if the Rhodesian discussions had gone badly and if the Southern African discussion had been pursued on the Monday. It is still very much a matter of Commonwealth concern.

OTHER SUBJECTS NOT DISCUSSED

20. Two other subjects which were not raised were
- (a) the possible readmission of Pakistan to the Commonwealth; and
  - (b) the proposed new Commonwealth arts organisation.



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We were not expecting (a) to be raised - on this, the ball rests firmly in Pakistan's court and seems likely to remain there for some time to come. On (b), we had heard that Bangladesh or Australia might raise the subject; but in the event neither did. Nothing was lost by this - discussion at this early stage could have achieved little.

**AUSTRALIA**

21. The Australians came to Lusaka well primed to make their mark both in the third world generally and more particularly in Africa. Mr Fraser made major interventions on nearly every item: he was lead speaker in the economic debate; it was he who proposed, on Mr Ramphal's behalf, the group on structural change and growth; he reported on the Asia/Pacific Regional CHGM which he hosted last year; he was a member (though not playing quite such a leading role as he would have the world believe) of the small group on Rhodesia; and Australia was responsible both for the Declaration on Racism and for the initiatives on communications and the media. Whilst one can perhaps adduce certain ulterior domestic motives for Mr Fraser's hyper-activity at Lusaka one should not, on Rhodesia, discount the considerable Australian efforts in the months preceding the Meeting on behalf of compromise and the continued cohesion of the Commonwealth (but their leak of the Rhodesia agreement to the press was another matter). On economic subjects however they tended, as at UNCTAD, to take a more 'pro-South' line than we liked. Nor were we particularly happy about the proposal for a Declaration on Racism, although we went along with the final text - it is not a legally binding document. Thus Mr Fraser cast a long shadow at Lusaka. We may have reservations about the wisdom of some of his initiatives but we cannot deny that the Commonwealth owes to him something of its current vigour. We cannot assess exactly how others viewed what was rather an Australian assault but suspect that many Governments will have pondered the motives for these considerable efforts.

**OTHERS**

22. Of the other participants President Kaunda was in his own, endearing way an admirable Chairman. The warm and friendly atmosphere owed much to him. He had of course to rely quite heavily on Ramphal's guidance in steering the meeting through its agenda. At the end he was clearly delighted that the meeting, for which he and his country had made great efforts, had proved such a success. It is not often that international meetings can break up a day early. Of other leaders not so far mentioned, Mr Clark of Canada, being new in the saddle, did not make as significant a contribution as Mr Trudeau would have done but played a quiet and constructive part and made the customary Canadian contribution on Namibia. Mr Manley's contribution to the Rhodesia group and in the economic discussions was the most significant from the Caribbean. The delegation leaders from The Bahamas, Dominica and Ghana said practically nothing, while those from St Lucia, Swaziland, Tonga, Trinidad and Kiribati (the Commonwealth's newest member) were silent throughout. President Banda of Malawi appeared only at the opening session and the Prime Minister's lunch for a number of Prime Ministers, after which he returned home.

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BILATERAL TALKS

23. A particularly valuable aspect of the meeting, which contributed to the successful outcome on Rhodesia, was the opportunity for bilateral talks with colleagues. The Prime Minister met most Heads of Government over the 7-day period, either for pre-arranged meetings or for shorter chats during and between sessions and functions, of which there were many. The weekend provided an excellent chance to meet others. She had pre-arranged meetings with Presidents Kaunda, Nyerere, Banda, Khama, Moi, Binaisa and with Maj Gen Dlamini (Swaziland) of the African contingent; and with Presidents Kyprianou and Ziaur Rahman as well as with Messrs Muldoon, Clark and Fraser.

PRESS

24. There were over 400 media representatives in Lusaka, some covering the royal tour as well. The No 10/FCO press team played a key role especially in presenting correctly, under difficult circumstances, our policy on Rhodesia, which was of course the big story. The British press in particular were inclined to present as a U-turn what was to a considerable extent the progressive revelation of a pre-determined strategy, and this needed constant correction. It was also important to monitor the press statements of other participants and the Patriotic Front. The media were not altogether happy with the accommodation and other arrangements and were no doubt glad of the considerable efforts that we made to listen to their woes and to provide them with the fullest possible briefing. The Secretary of State personally gave unattributable briefings to the British correspondents every evening and there was a parallel programme of briefings for other journalists. The Prime Minister gave two Press Conferences towards the end. We must be reasonably happy with the presentation of the meeting in the British media. It helped in "selling" the meeting that the agreement reached at it was genuinely impressive. Even the representative of the Daily Express gasped in disbelief when we first showed him the text of the statement on Rhodesia - and this was duly reflected in a favourable editorial.

GENERAL

25. This CHGM, like others before it, demonstrated how much can be achieved by the extended personal contact between the Heads of Government which these unique meetings provide. The agreement reached on Rhodesia is a striking testament to this. The Prime Minister, for her part, attending her first CHGM, made good use of this valuable opportunity to get to know Commonwealth colleagues - and left Lusaka on first name terms with quite a number. The Prime Minister herself scored a considerable personal success at the meeting - reflected in a very warm tribute which President Kaunda paid to her.

26. The Lusaka CHGM thus turned out very much better than expected, and gave a distinct fillip to the Commonwealth association. Due credit must go to Mr Ramphal for his efforts to keep the Commonwealth intact and on course, and to President Kaunda and his Zambian colleagues who in the end worked something of an organisational miracle; it was - despite our well-founded doubts - "all right on the night". One looks back on it with some sense of unbelief. Despite all the

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anxieties of the preceding months, Lusaka not only happened but was a remarkable success. It showed the world that, for all its imperfections, there is much fundamental goodwill within the Commonwealth association, and that, not often, but sometimes, it can surprise us all.

27. Copies of this report go to all Commonwealth posts, to Washington and Pretoria and to UKMIS New York.

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