

a great global good?

reviewing Commonwealth
institutions and processes

The Report of a
Round Table Centenary Conference



The Round Table





The Round Table

Founded one hundred years ago, in 1910, The Round Table, published by Taylor & Francis, provides analysis and commentary on all aspects of international affairs. The journal is a major source for coverage of policy issues in the contemporary Commonwealth, though it also addresses other international and historical matters. There are six issues of the journal a year.

In addition to overseeing the production of the journal, the Editorial Advisory Board also sits as a Moot, or discussion circle. It has periodic dinner meetings and organises seminars and conferences on a regular basis.

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The Report of the Round Table Centenary Conference on
14–15 January 2010, Cumberland Lodge, Windsor

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Preface

The Commonwealth has been much reviewed in recent times, with the lofty pronouncements of 'high-level' reviews in turn spawning further, and more specific, evaluations and enquiries within the Secretariat in particular. Thus the 1991 High-Level Review encouraged the then Secretary-General, Emeka Anyaoku, to set in train an extensive internal management review, looking at structures and staffing; followed by a comprehensive job evaluation of individual posts; and a review of staff terms and conditions of service. This was accompanied by a major overhaul of the Secretariat and its relationship to its development arm, the Commonwealth Fund for Technical Co-operation (CFTC), and to its youth wing, the Commonwealth Youth Programme (CYP). The virtually autonomous budgets of these various bodies were brought together within a common system of planning, scrutiny and governance.

Root-and-branch reviews are inevitably costly, in terms of time and resources, diverting attention from other priorities and encouraging introspection and institutional paralysis. They are not to be embarked upon lightly.

At the same time, the election of each new Commonwealth Secretary-General – Kamallesh Sharma is now the fifth – offers the opportunity for a fresh start and for new leadership. Perennial and seemingly intractable problems re-surface in the hope that they might at last be capable of solution. Mounting frustration and unhappiness with the impact and profile of the Commonwealth can be absorbed in new debate. And the Secretary-General himself, with his internal compass set, will need the support of member governments and other allies if his ambitions for his time in office (now a maximum of 8 years) are to be realised.

The process of debate on first principles – such as Heads of Government conducted in Harare in 1991 – can lead to far greater consequences than those involved can ever have imagined. At the start of the 90s, it ushered in a decade of democratic development in the Commonwealth, and the creation of a groundbreaking mechanism – the Commonwealth Ministerial Action Group – for upholding the association's values and principles among its membership.

The 2009 Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting in Trinidad & Tobago again set the review process in motion, some seven years after the Coolum High-Level Review had, in particular, encouraged the growth of a new relationship between the intergovernmental and the 'people's' Commonwealth. The summit's voluminous communiqué and other statements revealed important differences from the reviews of 2002 and 1991, however.

First, with its concentration on institutions and processes – rather than policies and priorities – the emphasis seems to be on **how** the Commonwealth can achieve effective delivery of its programmes, rather than a more fundamental re-examination of **what** its purposes should be.

Secondly, there has been no attempt to confine this enquiry to the official, intergovernmental Commonwealth. Instead, in referring to all Commonwealth institutions, leaders seem to be

taking a more wide-ranging and holistic approach, recognising that improved delivery, collaboration and partnerships will inevitably involve straddling the government-civil society divide in the pursuit of more flexible working arrangements.

Thirdly, Heads of Government have resurrected an intriguing instrument for conducting much of the work of the review. There is to be no select high-level group of Heads who will meet on the eve of the 2011 summit to put the finishing touches to a year's worth of solid work by a representative band of senior government officials. Rather, an Eminent Persons Group will be appointed. The only previous EPG was established nearly twenty-five years ago with a formidable but specific remit: to promote negotiations between all the principal parties for an end to the system of apartheid in South Africa. While the new EPG will have a more prosaic task ahead of it, it is to be hoped that it will share some of the key characteristics of its predecessor.

Although member governments will undoubtedly forward their nominations of suitably experienced and eminent men and women to the Secretary-General, EPG members should not be beholden to governments, offering the Secretary-General no more, and no less, than their judgement and insights. The independence and stature of EPG members should encourage a more free and detached examination of the issues, and an open style of working. Given that the remit of the group so clearly covers civil society and non-government actors, as well as the intergovernmental institutions, it is obviously vital that EPG members should be recruited from a broad range of backgrounds and skills, including from civil society. They should also be seen to listen to the widest possible range of opinion.

The shape of this new review is unlikely to be clear before June or July 2010. That is why the Round Table was pleased to have anticipated these developments and to have devoted a special Centenary conference to examining Commonwealth institutions and processes.

What follows is a record of that debate, examining four key elements. First, the leadership of the organisation (through its three principal offices) and the kind of significant changes both to process and position that are almost certainly in prospect; secondly, the capacity of the Commonwealth Secretariat and the other intergovernmental institutions to be 'fit for purpose'; thirdly, the consultative function of the Commonwealth, its summits and ministerial meetings, and the growing interaction between the official and other sectors (business, youth, civil society); and, finally, the health of civil society organisations in the Commonwealth, their involvement in decision-making and delivery and their own fitness for purpose. Interwoven with all these themes are, inescapably, questions of profile and image, policy and priority. Coupled with the Secretary-General's own vision of the task ahead, the report is thus highly relevant to the work of this impending review.

The Round Table hopes the report will help set an agenda for a Commonwealth prepared to be both determined and imaginative in pursuit of its ambition to be... A Great Global Good.

Stuart Mole

Welcome and opening remarks

Chair **Mr Richard Bourne OBE**
Chairman, the Round Table

Speakers **Dr Alastair Niven OBE**
Principal, Cumberland Lodge

Mr Stuart Mole CVO OBE
Conference Organiser

Richard Bourne, opening the conference, outlined four important areas of discussion. First, if the Commonwealth was to be made fit for purpose, what was its purpose to be, he asked. Civil society could provide ideas but it would be governments which would have the central role in determining that question.

Secondly, the Commonwealth was only a portion of the world community but could nonetheless make a difference, he added. Various world leaders had come to Port of Spain for the Commonwealth summit, and this had value. But perhaps it also meant a diversion of Commonwealth purposes and a loss of focus. Rather like Commonwealth Foreign Ministers meeting at the time of the UN General Assembly or Commonwealth Health Ministers gathering in the wings of the World Health Assembly in Geneva, it was merely an opportunity to comment on the international agenda.

Thirdly, he wondered if there was a British problem with the Commonwealth. The UK made a substantial and benevolent contribution to the Commonwealth (providing 30% of the funding, which in some circles might be perceived as a controlling interest). Clearly, this was not the case in the Commonwealth, an organisation committed to the equality of its members. But knowledge of, and support for, the Commonwealth in the UK was very modest. John Simpson, writing in *The Spectator* in 1993, had asserted that there was little British interest in the Commonwealth, arguing that there should be more. Mr Bourne said he had been struck by the fact that the Queen's recent Christmas Broadcast had been devoted to the Commonwealth (at the conclusion of the association's 60th anniversary year) but the media had preferred to report on other comments, notably on Afghanistan. There was an invisibility about the Commonwealth which was a matter of concern.

Fourthly, he asked how more resources and enthusiasm could be mobilised behind the Commonwealth idea. There was a need to move where people were and to enlist their sympathy and enthusiasm for the Commonwealth.

On these and other matters before the conference, he looked

forward to the Round Table making an impact on the Commonwealth's forthcoming review.

Alastair Niven began by congratulating the Round Table on its 100th birthday and remarked on its achievement in transforming itself from an imperial into a Commonwealth organisation. In welcoming participants to Cumberland Lodge, he talked of the creation of the Foundation of St Katharine in 1947, with its particular interest in the development of young people. At the same time, the Commonwealth mission was also enshrined in the Foundation's trust deeds and Cumberland Lodge had sought to remain true to that commitment over the last 60 years. This included organising an annual Commonwealth conference at the Lodge and seeking to add a Commonwealth dimension to other conferences (whether, for example, that be on restorative justice or on the future of the Antarctic Treaty). A particular focus from 16-18 June 2010, under the title *Empire and Me: Personal Recollections of Imperialism in Reality and Imagination*, would be a conference involving the personal exploration of imperialism in literature, through the genres of memoir, autobiography, diaries and other forms of remembrance. It would be an opportunity to ask whether imperialism was a thing of the past or was manifesting itself today under other guises and in different languages. This would be a joint conference with the Round Table as one of its centenary events. He concluded by wishing all present a comfortable stay.

Stuart Mole said that the Round Table was both a publication (produced six times a year) and a discussion forum or Moot. One of the perils of publishing the journal was the time-lag involved in addressing topical issues. By contrast, the Moot was in a position to redress the balance and the highly topical theme for the conference had in fact been determined two years ago. This was thanks to the shrewd good sense of one of the Round Table's former editors, Peter Lyon, who sadly was himself not able to attend the conference.

In June 2009, the Moot had also held a discussion on whether

the time was right for a further review of the Commonwealth and its purposes. The 1991 High-Level Review, whose report was considered at the Harare Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM) of that year, led to a decade of democratic renewal and development, and new purpose for the Commonwealth with the ending of apartheid in South Africa. The 2001/2002 High-Level Review, reporting to the Coolum CHOGM of 2002, had a particular impact on the flowering of the relationship between the Commonwealth and civil society.

Nearly ten years later, and with a new Secretary-General in post, it was therefore not surprising that the Trinidad and Tobago

CHOGM should have taken a variety of decisions of high relevance to the conference theme, including launching a review of Commonwealth institutions and processes. At the same time, there were important policy and priority issues (as well as questions of image and profile) which would inevitably – and rightly – form part of the conference discussions. He therefore hoped that the conference, being the first meeting to address these matters since Trinidad, could set the agenda for new lines of research and enquiry and could lay the groundwork for the Round Table's own submission to the review process.

Extract from the Trinidad and Tobago Affirmation on Commonwealth Values and Principles

13. We note the need to strengthen Commonwealth processes, institutional frameworks and capacities for delivering collective action and global public goods as highlighted by the Report of the High-Level Group in 2001/2 and the 'Commonwealth Conversation'. We call for the creation of an Eminent Persons Group to undertake an examination of options for reform in order to bring the Commonwealth's many institutions into a stronger and more effective framework of cooperation and partnership. We are committed to securing a greater level of coordination and collaboration between all Commonwealth contributors and stakeholders, particularly including governments, civil society, business, the diversity of Commonwealth professional and other associations that bring together our citizens, academia and others.

14. We call for the Commonwealth Secretary-General to consolidate and further strengthen ongoing efforts to improve the Secretariat's governance, its responsiveness to changing priorities and needs, and its ability to enhance the public profile of the organisation. We commit ourselves to supporting the Secretariat in this endeavour. We also underline the importance we attach to intensifying the Secretariat's commitment to strategic partnerships with other international organisations and partners in order to promote the Commonwealth's values and principles.

15. We call for the Eminent Persons Group to examine, *inter alia*, the format, frequency, and content of Ministerial meetings in order to ensure that these continue to support the Commonwealth's values and principles, and provide the greatest possible addition of value and cost-effectiveness. We affirm that such meetings should also continue to have mandates that are focused; time-bound; affordable; of the highest possible relevance at the national level and in international exchanges; and are delivered.

16. By these and other practical measures, we believe that the Commonwealth will build a stronger and more resilient and progressive family of nations founded on enduring values and principles. By such measures, we also believe that the Commonwealth will remain relevant to its times and people in future.

*Port of Spain
Republic of Trinidad & Tobago*

29 November 2009

Session 1

The Foundation and the unofficial Commonwealth: the flowering of civil society?

Chair	Mrs Patsy Robertson <i>Chair, the Commonwealth Association</i>
Speakers	Dr Mark Collins <i>Director, Commonwealth Foundation</i>
	Dr Victoria te Velde <i>Director, Commonwealth Policy Studies Unit (CPSU)</i>
Respondent	Ms Zoe Ware <i>Commonwealth Affairs Manager, Royal Commonwealth Society (RCS)</i>

Patsy Robertson, from the chair, began by reflecting on the title of the session. She said that civil society organisations had flourished in the last half of the 20th century because of the belated encouragement of governments. The remit of the Commonwealth Foundation was to support civil society and this role had been expanded by successive Directors. Today, the Commonwealth was blessed with an impressive array of Civil Society Organisations (CSOs). In the past, governments had held CSOs at bay – but times had changed and CSOs were now an important part of all Commonwealth meetings. Indeed, taken collectively, Commonwealth civil society bodies probably had more financial and intellectual resources available to them than the Commonwealth’s official institutions. In partnership, and with the support of the Commonwealth Foundation, could CSOs help make the Commonwealth a great global good?

PRESENTATIONS

Dr. Mark Collins opened his remarks by referring to the recent Commonwealth People’s Forum, held at the Cascadia Hotel in Port of Spain. Around seven hundred people were involved in this event but at least double those numbers were engaged overall, including through national and regional consultations beforehand. The final statement adopted by the Forum followed the successful model used at Kampala.

He said that the impact of the statement and of civil society on Heads of Government was difficult to measure, given the lack of direct access to them. (Access to Foreign Ministers was limited to a joint session on the Saturday morning.) He noted, however, that access was given to young people at the highest level and he found this inappropriate and inequitable. Access should be

transparent and representative, so that all parties could be properly represented. That said, he emphasised that the Foundation was supportive of young people, and that their views were incorporated into the civil society statement.

The Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM) communiqué was also a strong document, containing several innovations, and resolving a number of longstanding issues of importance to civil society. Rwanda was accepted as the association’s 54th member, which was a controversial matter for some CSOs, and one that would certainly put Rwanda in the human rights spotlight. At last, the Commonwealth Ministerial Action Group (CMAG) had received a strengthened mandate following civil society’s loud calls for change in Kampala two years previously. CMAG also had had some new members elected, following periodic rotation. But civil society wanted to see more routine monitoring and reporting on human rights, country by country, as the backdrop to CMAG’s work. If that did not happen officially, civil society organisations would probably undertake the role themselves.

Everyone was delighted that Zimbabwe was discussed by Heads of Government and that the communiqué looked forward to Zimbabwe’s eventual return to the Commonwealth. This built on ground-breaking work by civil society’s Commonwealth Organisations Committee on Zimbabwe and last July’s Roundtable in Johannesburg that led to an emerging Commonwealth Programme of Action for Zimbabwe. There was now a need to build fellowships and people-to-people links, and the Foundation had committed resources to that end. The newly-constituted Commonwealth Media Group had been awarded a scholarship to support a young Zimbabwean journalist.

The central issue of recovery from recession received much

attention in Port of Spain, with the Commonwealth Foundation's paper *The Road to Recovery: Mapping a Sustainable Economy* having some influence on the call of Heads for 'an holistic and comprehensive approach to the global economic recovery process'. Heads also urged a push to achieve the Millennium Development Goals but were unable satisfactorily to see the major issues of climate change, sustainable development, and energy and food security as a series of inter-related issues caused by lack of respect for the environment and failure to achieve social justice.

He gave full credit to the Commonwealth Secretariat for its management of the climate change debate. Following calls from civil society in Malta for progress on the issue, the *Kampala Action Plan* was welcome, but this had now been trumped by the Port of Spain climate change consensus: the *Commonwealth Climate Change Declaration*. Building consensus was a major achievement, and was a factor in achieving the *Copenhagen Accord*, albeit without the hoped-for targets.

Dr Collins said that Heads had called for the Secretariat to do more for education on respect and understanding, but believed that, without more resources officially, the role of education in the Commonwealth would continue to rest largely with civil society, the Commonwealth of Learning, the Commonwealth Scholarships Commissions and perhaps in due course the Commonwealth Education Trust.

On health, governments had firmly expanded their priorities with a bold *Statement on Commonwealth Action to Combat Non-Communicable Diseases*, and by calling for civil society to join governments in a campaign of prevention, monitoring and community awareness-raising. The expectation was that this would lead to a summit on the issue at the UN in 2011. The development of this mandate was not yet a priority for CSOs who had some concern that it might detract attention from HIV/AIDs.

The communiqué's paragraphs on gender expressed support for the *Commonwealth Plan of Action on Gender Equality* and the Mid-Term Review, but had failed to achieve the paradigm shift sought by civil society in expanding the still important women's agenda to the problems of male stereotyping and lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender rights. These were issues firmly addressed in the civil society statement but it might take a year or two more before Heads faced the reality of change on these matters.

Cultural rights were mentioned (perhaps for the first time in a Commonwealth document) in the *Trinidad and Tobago Affirmation on Commonwealth Values and Principles*, but the full importance of culture in sustainable development remained to be properly recognised. A statement on culture should have been considered but the call for the Commonwealth Foundation to undertake a feasibility study of a Commonwealth Cultural Festival might provide the opportunity to give culture the primacy it deserved.

The values and principles document was welcome, but it was a pity that the idea could not have been floated earlier, thereby providing the people's Commonwealth with the opportunity to

be involved. An Eminent Persons Group would do some more work and it was to be hoped that the group would be appointed and operate in a transparent manner. In particular, it needed to be in listening mode - civil society wanted to be involved in a process of joint consultative meetings, not through a top-down, set-piece affair.

In addressing the process for injecting civil society inputs into the CHOGM, Dr Collins pointed to a number of possible improvements. There were inconsistencies in dealing with statements and handling submissions (such as between the Business Forum and the People's Forum, for example) and neither CSOs nor the Foundation were able to make presentations to the Committee of the Whole (COW) as he would have wished.

The representatives of six CSOs made a presentation to Foreign Ministers but were disappointed by the lack of response. His recommendation was that in future the CSO statement should be in final draft for the Foreign Ministers' Meeting normally held in September, should then be finalised for the COW in October, and should be circulated to Heads of Government well before CHOGM. This would bring the whole consultation and drafting process forward by two months.

Looking ahead, Dr Collins raised the possibility of the Commonwealth People's Forum taking the form of a pre-CHOGM dialogue between civil society, youth and business on matters of common interest, with the outcome being taken to the Foreign Ministers' roundtable that followed. In Perth, the People's Forum might be smaller, with fewer pan-Commonwealth CSOs and host country organisations present, but perhaps including more organisations working on scholarships.

In concluding, he mentioned two reports. First, a report on *Democracy in the Commonwealth*, produced jointly by the Electoral Reform International Services (ERIS) and the Commonwealth Policy Studies Unit (CPSU) which showed commendable in-depth research and concluded that there was a democratic deficit in the Commonwealth which should be addressed, for fear that the organisation might become irrelevant.

The second report, *Common What?*, came from the Royal Commonwealth Society's *Commonwealth Conversation* project. The initial findings showed that people were largely unaware of the Commonwealth, and urged a focus on principles, priorities, and people.

Finally, Dr Collins said that at the heart of the Commonwealth was the powerful bond that existed between the people of the Commonwealth. In Zimbabwe, for example, Commonwealth citizens had maintained contact with Zimbabweans and expressed solidarity, despite the government's withdrawal from Commonwealth membership.

Despite the enormous diversity of identities in the Commonwealth, he argued that all Commonwealth citizens shared a single, 'civic identity', representing their fundamental right to express themselves through democratic means. This, he argued, was a fundamental concept and should be the new

platform for social dialogue with Commonwealth governments.

Summing up, he made three points. First, that the People's Commonwealth was a reality and was integral to the Commonwealth brand and its future success – it needed to be treated with greater respect; second, that the Commonwealth Foundation needed more support and must be allowed to do its job properly; and, third, that the relationship between peoples and governments in the Commonwealth needed to be renewed in the context of the idea of a 'Commonwealth social contract'.

Dr Victoria te Velde, in referring to the theme of the session, presented what she described as a 'reluctant critique' of the Commonwealth Foundation, covering three areas, namely: institutions, human resources, and financial resources.

As regards institutions, she said that there needed to be joined-up thinking between the various Commonwealth actors. This included re-thinking the CSO accreditation process and how it worked. She asked why accreditation was dealt with by the Secretariat and not by the Foundation, and whether accredited CSOs were monitored to ensure they continued to meet accreditation criteria and demonstrate best practice. She questioned how the inter-governmental Commonwealth could help strengthen Commonwealth CSOs. At the same time, if CSOs had the honour of being accredited to the Commonwealth, and thereby gained access to Ministers, she asked what benefit the Commonwealth family derived from the accredited CSOs. In summary, there needed to be more transparency in the accreditation process.

Turning to the relationship between the Secretariat and the Foundation, she said that there used to be a Civil Society Liaison Officer, jointly appointed and paid for by the Secretariat and Foundation, which had proved useful to CSOs and to the link between the two bodies. However, the agreement had been dissolved and a gap remained unfilled (though the Secretariat continued to fund a Civil Society Liaison Manager unilaterally). Shortcomings were apparent at the Trinidad & Tobago CHOGM, where CSOs received too little information, too late. Such an officer was also important in helping CSOs engage at ministerial meetings (apart from the Foreign Ministers' meeting).

Dr teVelde then addressed what she described as 'blind spots' for the Commonwealth Foundation, where either it or the Commonwealth generally was not doing enough. These were as follows:

- Rights - of gay, lesbian, and indigenous peoples. She gave credit to the Foundation for drawing attention to the issues of gay, lesbian and trans-gender rights, but it was generally acknowledged that not enough was being done.
- Youth – The Commonwealth Youth Programme was very much a 'top-down' network, and there was no money available for grass-roots projects with young people. No Commonwealth organisation 'did' youth properly.
- Wealth creation (and linking this with young people). There had been encouragement from the Secretary-General (SG) but no action.

- Grassroots politics
- The relationship between the Foundation and CSOs was not good.
- Faith, migration and terrorism – was the Commonwealth scared to explore the links, she wondered.
- Status / location – She queried why the Foundation was still based in London and felt that a move elsewhere in the Commonwealth would be beneficial.
- Media / communications – She felt that this particular area still needed improvement. The Commonwealth Foundation website was static, rather than being interactive. It needed to provide resources for CSOs, and could also have a youth element.

Moving on to the twice-yearly consultations for CSOs organised by the Secretariat, Dr teVelde felt that these did not work for CSOs. They were not actually consulted at these meetings – rather, they were spoken to – nor did they have input into the agenda. The same few people tended to ask the questions. She felt that they were a waste of money for the Secretariat, and would be surprised if the Foundation derived any benefit from them either.

Regional consultations (that informed the drafting of the Civil Society statement to CHOGM) needed to be improved too. Two people from Papua New Guinea, or two people from any other country, were not representative of civil society in that country or region. The Foundation should use the CSOs' own existing networks.

On climate change, she considered that the Foundation had done too little, too late. It could have been more involved in the subject at an earlier date. It needed to be more flexible in responding to new and emerging issues.

Zoe Ware, responding to the presentations, began by remarking that the Royal Commonwealth Society was running a *My Commonwealth* competition; the question was: 'If you were Secretary-General in 2049, what would the Commonwealth look like?' One entrant said that he would be living on the moon, working on inter-planetary dialogue.

The Civil Society Statement to CHOGM was, at forty pages, too long; no-one would read it. Drafting was rushed, and the editing was poor, due to very limited timing. The drafting process should be brought forward and dissociated from CHOGM and should include a much wider variety of people – and not just those from CSOs with the word 'Commonwealth' in their title. A draft statement could be posted on-line, to which people could contribute and edit sections. The consultation process could use video-conferencing or Skype, to include those who were physically remote.

At CHOGM, CSOs were frustrated by their lack of access to official proceedings. Young people from the Youth Forum were thrilled at their meeting with Heads of Government and this should be a high point to aim for; CSOs needed that same degree of access.

The Commonwealth People's Forum (CPF) should be dissociated from CHOGM; but it did give rise to the question: in that eventuality, what would CSOs then do at the CHOGM?

The influence of CSOs was greatest in the corridors, rather than through the CSO statement. If CSOs were to increase their influence, they needed to develop greater capacity to conduct 'behind the scenes' lobbying on specific issues. They also needed to be more concise and focused in their dealings with governments.

Patsy Robertson, from the chair, reminded the conference that the Retreat was for Heads of Government to talk to each other. They had a huge agenda to address. While CSOs undoubtedly needed access, Heads must have enough time to get through all their business. She then invited questions and comments from the floor.

DISCUSSION

One participant questioned Mark Collins on his views on separating the CPF from CHOGM. She added that she did not support the training of CSOs in lobbying techniques, as lobbying was not transparent.

Mark Collins replied that he would like the CSO statement to be completed before the Committee of the Whole meeting in October. He disagreed with Dr te Velde on the effectiveness of regional consultations – in his view, these were substantive.

He posed the question why, at CHOGMs, the meetings of government, civil society, youth and business were so separate. He felt that there should still be a meeting of civil society but it should be smaller and should focus on ensuring that the CSO statement was better integrated into the CHOGM process.

Another participant said that the interconnectedness of the meeting was the real issue. He thought the Commonwealth Business Forum (CBF) was 'stand off-ish' in its attitude to CSOs.

A further participant supported the suggestion that the CPF should be held a year in advance of the CHOGM. This could even result in greater impact and publicity. He agreed that the Retreat was for Heads exclusively – in just over two days, there was no time for them to be diverted.

Victoria te Velde turned back a question to the first questioner and asked whether she would attend, and have the money for, an earlier event

The first questioner responded that she would attend such an event and that it would be easier for her to do so. She added that her organisation could run an event in the same location at the same time, a year before CHOGM. However, she would not dare do so at the same time as CHOGM, in the host country, when there were no hotels available, when flights were expensive, and so on.

Another participant made three points. First, she asked about the Foundation's long-term view. It was now working

programmatically, as opposed to its previous role as a responsive and grant-making organisation. What had been gained or lost from moving in that direction, she asked. Second, regarding the suggested move from London, she reminded the meeting that there were cost implications of moving out of 'grace and favour' (that is, 'free') accommodation in Marlborough House. Third, regarding the civil society liaison post, she considered that this had never ceased to work from a Secretariat point of view. The position had originally been established in response to the High Level Review Group (HLRG) recommendations of 2002 and the Secretariat had always considered it a valuable working arrangement.

Mark Collins responded that the Foundation's grant-making had actually increased so the move to a programme structure had not detracted from that aspect. In fact, in response to the economic crisis, more money had recently been put into grant-making, at the expense of programmatic work. It was a question of balance.

Regarding the relationship between the Secretariat and the Foundation, and the liaison officer position, the Foundation considered that its relationship with the Secretariat was warm but did not agree that a single point of liaison was appropriate. Civil society and the Foundation needed direct links with all divisions of the Secretariat.

A questioner asked how civil society could be made more representative.

Another participant said there appeared to be some blurring and overlap between the work of the Secretariat and the Foundation. He hoped that, in the setting up of the proposed Eminent Persons Group (EPG), the Foundation and civil society would be consulted on names.

He added that the arrangements for the Committee of the Whole were unsatisfactory. He understood that only six members from capitals were involved, with the rest being London-based High Commissioners or their representatives. He gathered that this had resulted in some considerable re-writing of the Communiqué in Port of Spain.

In any event, he mused, it could be a matter of luck whether or not a civil society proposal was included in the communiqué. For example, a good proposal was included by the COW in 2007, and was knocked out in Kampala. Ahead of the 2009 CHOGM, the Foundation, CPSU and the Commonwealth Human Ecology Council (CHEC) had commissioned work on fisheries. Namibia supported the idea of a strong statement on the subject at CHOGM. It was unfortunate that they were then faced with an election – and with Namibia absent the reference to fisheries was watered down. It led him to wonder whether the COW was up to the job of preparing the Communiqué.

One participant interjected with a historical clarification: when the COW was originally established, it was intended to be a meeting of Cabinet secretaries.

Another participant supported changing the timing of the CPF. He agreed that accredited CSOs needed to be effectively

monitored, arguing that being 'civil' did not mean being 'good'. CSOs could be inexperienced, personally motivated, and corrupt. One way to monitor CSOs would be to test them: let a small group of CSOs be established to lobby at CHOGM and then there could be an assessment of how successful they had been.

A questioner made two points. First, he supported attempts to create greater synergies between the different meetings – CHOGM, the Commonwealth Youth Forum, the Business and People's Forums - and welcomed potential changes. Secondly, he argued that young people were poorly resourced. The Commonwealth Youth Programme (CYP), the Foundation and young people needed to work better together. The Youth Forum's interaction with Heads of Government had been very important, but he understood the frustrations of CSOs in not having similar access.

A participant asked who were the civil society organisations that had been newly accredited to the Commonwealth. How were they chosen? The regional architecture of the Commonwealth – and the possible establishment of regional offices – should be given greater emphasis.

He recalled that the Diplomatic Science Club had been started by Commonwealth members and asked about the role of science advisers in some of the major issues facing the Commonwealth today.

Another participant asked whether the Commonwealth Business Council (CBC) was part of civil society or not? He said that the CBC had about 82-86 members, all paying a membership fee of between £3,000 and £10,000. In dealing with the issue of fisheries, business was important. In the area of reconstruction, business was also important. The Commonwealth civil society Round Table meeting on Zimbabwe the previous July had missed the boat – it should have had business representatives there.

A questioner wanted to know Mark Collins' view on whether the Foundation should be moved outside London?

SPEAKERS' RESPONSES TO THE DISCUSSION

Mark Collins, responding to the debate, said that the civil society statement was a two-year, 'living' statement. In it, civil society bodies established their priorities for the next two years. This was an innovation first introduced in Kampala in 2007. The Foundation had also helped CSOs to improve their advocacy skills by running a training course in Uganda in 2007.

He reminded the meeting that the accreditation process was run by the Secretariat. The process had been volatile. The Foundation had questions about how CSOs were monitored and supported the accreditation of competent organisations, whether or not they had the word 'Commonwealth' in their title.

On science, he noted that *Science, Technology and Society* was to be the 2010 Commonwealth Day theme. Science gave rise to moral dilemmas for its citizens, for example police forces' storage and use of fingerprints, and agreed that science advisers should have more say, including in the Commonwealth Secretariat.

He agreed that more integration was needed between CSOs, youth, business and governments, and reaffirmed the Foundation's commitment to this objective.

On the question of the Foundation's relocation, he said that not a single member country had suggested that the Foundation should move abroad.

Victoria te Velde said that the compliance of CSOs with Commonwealth values should be evidence-based and evaluated independently. Newly accredited organisations should be listed on the website. Civil society needed to be able to offer something of interest to business if it wanted greater integration and dialogue with business. She added her congratulations to Rwanda on becoming the Commonwealth's 54th member.

Zoe Ware agreed that a better audit of CSOs and their achievements was necessary. This in turn could help CSOs be proud of their achievements.

Session 2

The three high offices of the Commonwealth: A Holy Trinity?

Chair	Ms Keshini Navaratnam <i>Former BBC World Presenter</i>
Speakers	Mr Simon Gimson LVO <i>Director, Office of the Secretary-General, Commonwealth Secretariat</i>
	Baroness Falkner of Margravine <i>Foreign Affairs team, Liberal Democrats</i>
Respondent	Professor Philip Murphy <i>Director, Institute of Commonwealth Studies, University of London</i>

Keshini Navaratnam began proceedings by applauding the work of the Round Table in its special, centenary year and expressed the hope that it would continue for many more centuries. She then turned to the topic of the session, and the particular focus on the three principal offices of the Commonwealth, and introduced each of the speakers.

PRESENTATIONS

Simon Gimson, in opening, explained that he and his Secretariat colleagues had only just arrived at the conference, having spent much of the morning in a directors' retreat, discussing how to carry forward the CHOGM agenda. He felt some diffidence in addressing the subject of the session, though he had had experience working for the Queen and for various Commonwealth Secretaries-General; and was at the Durban summit of 1999 when the third office – the Chairperson-in-Office – had been established. But he disclaimed any expert knowledge of the three offices and emphasised that his presentation was a series of personal reflections, in part informed, and certainly enhanced, by the wisdom of others.

In taking each of the offices in turn, he explained that the role of Head went back to the London Declaration of 1949 and the momentous decisions which altered the basis for Commonwealth membership. In those circumstances, it would have been very difficult to think of anyone other than King George VI who could have been nominated for this role. He was essentially the glue holding the agreement together. The 1931 Statute of Westminster had spoken of 'allegiance to the Crown' whereas the 1949 agreement recognised the King as the 'symbol of free association'. From the outset, the position of Head was a personal one. That said, in 1952 there was a sense of automaticity about the Queen succeeding her father as Head (on the initiative of

Prime Minister Nehru). After all, five years earlier – on her 21st birthday – Princess Elizabeth had committed her whole life to the service of the Commonwealth. In the circumstances, for Commonwealth leaders to have acted otherwise would have been difficult to envisage, and would have greatly damaged the fledgling 'modern' Commonwealth.

In terms of function, the role of the Head was not unlike that of the modern British Monarch: 'being', rather than 'doing'; a source of advice and possessing reserve powers but essentially serving as a constitutionally-endowed safety net. Just as this had facilitated the UK's transition from Empire to a modern European nation, so it had helped other Realms consider new republican constitutional arrangements, secure in the knowledge that links to the Crown would be sustained through the Commonwealth and its Head.

Even so, there had been uncertainties about the precise nature and limits of the role. In 1949, the Prime Minister of South Africa sought a specific assurance that the post held no constitutional responsibilities, while the first Commonwealth Secretary-General, Arnold Smith, insisted that it was his duty to advise the Queen in her role as Head of the Commonwealth. The reality was that the Queen herself had helped make her role what it now was. Since 1997, the Queen had not only attended the Opening Ceremony of CHOGM but had delivered a keynote address as well. In other respects, she 'reigned' with a light touch, though her interventions had sometimes had a decisive impact. After the first multi-faith Commonwealth Day Observance in St Martin-in-the-Fields (which the Queen and the Duke of Edinburgh attended), the fierce reaction from the Archbishop of Canterbury and the Bishop of London, among others in the Church of England, forced the Observance into use of a secular venue, namely the Guildhall in the City of London. After several years, the Queen indicated her preference for a religious-based

Observance and offered her 'royal peculiar' of Westminster Abbey for the ceremony. More than thirty years later, this was still the practice.

Regarding the future, there had been two seminal reports in recent years that had together provided one signpost. The first of these, in 1997, was the report of the *Intergovernmental Group on Commonwealth Membership* which indicated that accession to membership would include 'acceptance of Commonwealth norms and conventions'. This was further defined as including recognition of the 'British Monarch' as Head, apparently suggesting an automaticity about the choice of future incumbents (though this was not an interpretation which leaders would have wished). The second report, in 2007, also on Commonwealth membership, revisited the same phraseology of 'norms and conventions' but returned the definition of the Headship to its earlier form, making clear the personal nature of the appointment.

The question of who would succeed the Queen as Head therefore remained in a state of suspended animation. Prince Charles had always taken an active interest in the Commonwealth and his involvement in the wings of the 2007 Kampala CHOGM was a clear demonstration of his commitment (as was his appointment of an Assistant Private Secretary in his private office to deal with Commonwealth matters). On the other hand, the Commonwealth was now a much larger association (of 54 nations), possessing elaborate political sensitivities, and the only certainty was that the near-automaticity of the 1952 decision was very unlikely to be repeated.

On the office of the Commonwealth Secretary-General, Mr Gimson said that he found Stuart Mole's chapter in the recently-published book *The Contemporary Commonwealth* a good description. Even so, the various facets of the role – administrative, political, and representational – had remained lightly defined. The founding *Agreed Memorandum* of the Secretariat, of 1965, had been cautious and conservative about the SG and the Secretariat, warning that it must not 'arrogate to itself executive functions'. The same document also launched a review of existing Commonwealth organisations and their relevance, while excluding the new Secretary-General from playing a part in the process. By contrast, in 2002, the new Secretary-General, Don McKinnon, played an active part in the 2002-3 High Level Review, and was key to the successful implementation of its recommendations.

Back in 1965, the *Agreed Memorandum* had envisaged the post as having the rank of a senior High Commissioner. In fact, the role had grown enormously – from Secretary to General, as it were – with the SG interacting personally with Heads of Government, and widely recognised as commanding a similar status.

As regards the Chairperson-in-Office, the post (though very new) had also evolved. Leaders undoubtedly showed traditional reticence in the early stages about the Chair's possible representational role, and the extent to which it could provide advocacy and raise the profile and stature of the organisation. There has also been caution about the extent to which the Chair

could reinforce the good offices role of the Secretary-General. Confronted with a vexed political issue, Zimbabwe, leaders in 2002 preferred to operate through a 'troika' of past, present and future Chairs. In 2007, at the Uganda CHOGM, the notion of a troika of Chairs was used for administrative purposes – to provide a review mechanism for the Secretary-General's emoluments; and the Trinidad & Tobago CHOGM indicated that there would be an expanded administrative role for the troika, in particular in support of the Secretary-General.

In conclusion, Mr Gimson returned to the original question posed by the session – whether the three offices were a 'Holy Trinity'? To the extent that they collectively constituted the leadership of the Commonwealth, in a mutually reinforcing way, his answer was 'yes'; but insofar as each was separate and autonomous, and deliberately designed to operate within checks and balances, they could not be said to be different facets of an indivisible whole. In summary, they indicated a practical approach to leadership, rather than a celestial one.

Baroness Falkner opened her presentation by saying how struck she had been that the three offices were all designed to be ineffectual – in effect, a *fait accompli* (Head); a sinecure (Chair); and an overseer of very little (SG).

The Head was revered by those over a certain age but failed to register with younger people – there was no YouTube visibility, she asserted. The Head had no role beyond ceremony but had nonetheless managed to reinforce ties of history, law, language and sport. As regards the future, precedent did not mean continuity and there was a case for not replacing the Head or perhaps electing a Head/President instead, from outside the UK. Britain was now a post-deferential society. The rotation of offices, such as in the EU and at the UN, was not a terribly good or efficient system either but both the UN and the EU seemed to be none the worse for not having permanent 'Heads'.

The Chairperson-in-Office, by contrast, was a role which would always be blighted by geopolitics, and the huge disparities in the world. While all would recognise the need for local interests not to trump the overall interest, nonetheless on key issues its impact had been all too evident (such as in the case of South Africa and Zimbabwe). There was the question of suitable terms: the EU used a sixth-month rotation and the Chair served for two years. The latter was probably too long, especially when things started going wrong. The issue of the Chair was probably best left to its own obscurity.

The Secretary-General had been described in the 1965 *Agreed Memorandum* as equivalent in rank to a senior High Commissioner but she was glad that the role had not been reduced to that of a post office, as some had originally feared. Nonetheless, it was an office exclusively held by men (to date) and characterised by activity without achievement, in an organisation described as being one of 'option rather than obligation'. While what an SG could achieve would always be limited, Shridath Ramphal had had the best of times, with a cause to fight for, and few interlocutors otherwise for articulating concerns across the North-South divide. Don McKinnon, by

contrast, had faced the worst of times. He was not favoured by events, especially developments in Zimbabwe, and expectations of his good offices role only led to disappointment, with the quietest of quiet diplomacy and little leverage which could be employed. The Commonwealth Ministerial Action Group (CMAG) had turned out to be ineffectual, tackling only the most overt of violations and subsequently instructed to wait for the use of the SG's good offices first.

There were further constraints evident in the Secretariat itself (with the SG its Chief Executive). The Secretariat was testimony to the lack of ambition of member governments for the organisation, with a lack of resources and problematic recruitment, which left staff of very differing ability unable to punch their weight. The 'buggins turn' approach to senior recruitment and use of national quotas needed to change, she asserted.

Concluding, Baroness Falkner said that the three offices were not of equal merit. The Chair was redundant; the Head might well be contemplating retirement; and it was only in the Secretary-General that the potential for something worthwhile for the Commonwealth lay.

Professor Philip Murphy, responding to the presentations, began by posing the question as to how an organisation based on the principles of equality and independence could have a Head. In 1949, it seemed to many that the British monarch was the only glue available, there not yet being a Secretary-General. Yet Patrick Gordon Walker, who was much involved in the negotiations, had thought it might be possible to lose the monarchical link and work instead on the basis that it was a 'common act of will' that united the organisation. In private correspondence, Gordon Walker was sceptical about the Headship, though had toyed with other titles such as 'Protector', or even 'Lord Protector' each of which had drawbacks. The Headship of the Commonwealth was not designed to be ineffectual but it was intended to be minimalist: it was the Queen herself who had made the role what it was. The acceptance of the post of Secretary-General by the British in 1965 displayed a similar reluctance to create a substantive office, but successive Secretaries-General had pushed at the boundaries. Indeed, there had been an interesting alliance between the Palace and Secretariat which had served to augment both roles.

The Headship was not merely ceremonial; it was the symbol of the free association of the members of the Commonwealth. In 1949, this was meaningful in the context of what had been described as British Shintoism: a veneration of the royal family as embodying family life. Indeed, the Coronation of 1953 was described in the Round Table as 'a sublime spiritual experience'. Nowadays, many viewed the Crown as a reminder of British Imperialism but, in 1949, as in subsequent decades, the dilemma was: if not the House of Windsor, then what? But there were also similar problems with the office of Chair, with the incumbent inevitably being perceived as a partisan figure and representing his own nation, rather than the Commonwealth.

In inviting general discussion, **Keshini Navaratnam** said that there seemed to be a united view that the Queen played an important role in the Commonwealth through the force of her own personality and the dedication she brought to the Headship. She suggested that the discussion might look at succession and also explore some of the issues about the Chair raised by Baroness Falkner.

DISCUSSION

One participant agreed that all three roles had initially been established in 'minimalist' terms. The Queen's role had developed enormously: prior to 1997, she did not attend – much less address – the CHOGM; and her various messages and statements had developed clear substance on important issues of the day. She was certainly not beholden to the British government, nor did she rely exclusively on the SG for her Commonwealth advice. As regards succession, the personality and temperament of the Head was important and it was clear that Charles was different from the Queen in this respect. Certainly, it was unlikely that succession could be contemplated in the absence of a proper procedure. The near-automaticity of the 1952 decision, prompted by Nehru, was improbable.

Another participant said that the role of Chair had potential but had not yet been properly exercised. It needed the right personality to supersede national interests.

One participant asked if the Chair should be a person or a country. There could be a vacuum in leadership and there could be uses in a country taking forward an agenda in different ministerial meetings and other fora.

A questioner said that the Chair was initially about profile. It was still a young post, and evolving. The Chair's foreign minister had become ex officio the ninth member of CMAG. But there was still nervousness about an activist Chair.

A participant remarked on the similarity of the role of the President of the UN General Assembly. The term was for a year but the effectiveness would depend on the personality of the office-holder and how much time he or she had to devote to the task. He added that, in the Commonwealth, it would be perfectly possible to have a Chair who had not been a leader at the preceding CHOGM and who might never have attended one.

A further participant agreed that there were practical difficulties with electoral cycles. He reminded the meeting of Shridath Ramphal speaking at the 20th anniversary of the Commonwealth Secretariat in 1985 when he asked: 'why is it always left to me to speak for the Commonwealth – what is wrong with Heads of Government?'. The Commonwealth needed a higher profile, however, and undoubtedly Ramphal spoke for the Commonwealth better than anyone else could. In those circumstances, with a good SG, the Chair was really redundant and should be dropped altogether.

A questioner said there was a fundamental misunderstanding regarding the Chair. It was not about providing strategic direction but about using the country's role as a member of other international organisations to promote Commonwealth interests and raise important issues. Examples were the way that Nigeria was able to support Commonwealth initiatives at the UN and Malta in the European Union.

Another questioner said that there might be a situation where the Secretary-General was not able to mediate (such as over Zimbabwe) but where the Chair (say, former President Obasanjo) might be able to play a role of considerable potential. While the use of the troika produced a messy outcome, retaining the Chair to supplement the SG's role had value.

Baroness Falkner pointed out that, since the Chair assumed office automatically following the hosting of CHOGM, this limited the choice of who might be Chair. It was not therefore a selection made on merit. This was in contrast to the President of the UN General Assembly, who was properly elected by a majority of member states and therefore possessed an authority not given to the CHOGM host. She added that President Obasanjo's mediation in Zimbabwe had in fact been at its most useful before the Abuja CHOGM of 2003 (i.e. before he became Chair). Finding mediators from among the member countries of the Commonwealth should always be possible. Chairs had a watching brief over the SG, and therefore a limiting role. The reverse should be the case: there should be a stronger SG and a stronger Secretariat.

A participant highlighted the role of personality and circumstance in how SGs were able to deal with issues before them. Certainly, Don McKinnon had been dealt a difficult hand in very trying times, while also needing to address challenging managerial and housekeeping issues in the Secretariat.

Keshini Navaratnam remarked that the recent CHOGM had been one of the most politicised of recent years, with the involvement of leaders like President Sarkozy and Ban Ki-Moon, and coming just before the Copenhagen summit. It gave the Commonwealth legitimacy in the eyes of other countries.

One participant referred to the *Commonwealth Conversation* and said that there had been a recurring view that the Commonwealth lacked leadership. On the issue of the Headship, the Royal Commonwealth Society's polling showed that not many people wanted Prince Charles, instead preferring a rotating Head or no Head at all. As regards the process, there seemed to be a shyness about making any decisions before the inevitable happened. Yet when the Queen eventually died, there would only be two days before the proclamation of full titles of the new monarch. Would the title of Head of the Commonwealth be included? It would be far better to have a wide discussion of these issues in advance.

Another participant commented that, in his view, rotation was not the answer. There was in fact no need for a Head – there was

a Secretary-General who could perform the role quite adequately. Up to the present, the Queen had performed the task amazingly well, (covering the whole period of decolonisation), but the job was now done and the Commonwealth established.

A questioner mused that perhaps one of the reasons why the office of Chair had been conceived in 1999 was to provide something to fall back on, in the event that there was no longer a need for a Head. The question could be asked why all three offices were needed; certainly, it caused a lot of confusion among the public. He agreed with Baroness Falkner about the drawback of tying the choice of Chair to the venue of the CHOGM. A country could be chosen as host for 2011 and 2013 CHOGMs but one could not predict who might be the Chair, given the vagaries of elections. Individual personality was very important to the effectiveness of the role. The troika experience over Zimbabwe had not been very successful, largely because the Chair had not sufficiently distinguished between his role as Head of Government of his country and Chair of the Commonwealth.

Simon Gimson remarked that Prince Charles was now far more active in planning his travel programme to include Commonwealth countries. For some years now, he had included in his office an officer with specific Commonwealth responsibilities (at a time when there was no longer a Commonwealth secondee in the Queen's office). When the moment came to choose the next Head, there would be many more players involved than was the case in 1949 or 1952. The odds were that, at that point, there might well be an election going on somewhere in the Commonwealth and this might impact on the result.

Invited to comment, the **Secretary-General** (H.E. Kamallesh Sharma) said that he would be extremely prudent on the subject. It would be for Heads of Government to take a view on these issues. If a case were to be made for the new British Monarch to succeed as Head, it could not have been better made than by the Queen.

Baroness Falkner said that a unique aspect of the British constitution was the rapidity of the succession: 'the King is dead – long live the King'. There were only two days to fix the monarch's titles but the Commonwealth could not be bounced into a decision by this British constitutional process.

Philip Murphy said there had been articles in the press suggesting that the Commonwealth Secretariat were persuading Charles to do more. It had recently been suggested that one of the secrets of the monarchy's survival in Canada was that its supporters encouraged the public to think of the Crown as an abstract entity, and tended to play down associations with the actual British royal family. That was not possible with the Headship of the Commonwealth – it was intrinsically concrete and personal - and Charles was therefore in a real bind, either playing an active role and calling attention to the British nature of the Headship, or doing nothing and being accused of indifference.

A participant said that the device of proclaiming the new monarch in two days was a tradition dating back 1000 years. But it was absurd that the Commonwealth should have to follow the practices of one member country. In any case, the issue of personality could not be excluded. People in the UK were divided about whether Charles should be the next King (let alone Head of the Commonwealth) and in those circumstances there was little chance of him playing a unifying role in the whole Commonwealth.

Another participant reminded the meeting that the Commonwealth had no agreed constitutional process for choosing the Head. In 1952, it had all been based on the note Nehru sent to the Queen.

SPEAKERS' RESPONSES TO DISCUSSION

Baroness Falkner, summing up, said that, sixty years from its rebirth in modern form, the Commonwealth needed to be more relevant. It was unique and valuable but in danger of being

forgotten. It needed a better focus on people, and a stronger Secretariat and SG.

Simon Gimson said that, on that last issue at least, he agreed with Baroness Falkner (while disagreeing with much of the rest of her comments). He thought that the Commonwealth was very relevant and very contemporary in its approach. All three leadership roles reflected an organisation which was cautious and evolutionary in its approach, adept at adapting to the times.

Philip Murphy said that in the 60 years since 1949, the Commonwealth might have developed in very different ways and could have disappeared altogether. It had been the charisma and moral authority of a series of independence leaders, the reflected glory of Mandela in the 1990s and the wisdom and leadership of the Queen that had brought us to this point. The Queen had made the best possible case for a British monarch to be the next Head. The problem was to find the charisma and moral authority needed as we progressed into the 21st century.

Session 3

Serving a Changing Commonwealth

Chair **Mr Richard Bourne OBE**
Chairman, the Round Table

Speakers **H.E. Kamallesh Sharma**
Commonwealth Secretary-General

Richard Bourne opened the session by introducing the Commonwealth Secretary-General and expressing his appreciation to him for his willingness to deliver a keynote address at the conference.

PRESENTATION

The **Secretary-General** began by echoing comments about the Round Table's centenary and the honour he felt personally in speaking at these celebrations. The Round Table was ranked fifth in the laurels of Commonwealth history (after the Royal Commonwealth Society, the Commonwealth Press Union, the League for the Exchange of Commonwealth Teachers and the Victoria League), and though it had changed a lot since its first editorial in 1910, it still performed a tremendous service to the modern Commonwealth.

The SG went on to speak about three key areas currently before the conference, namely: Commonwealth civil society; the high offices of the Commonwealth; and CHOGM. Thereafter, the SG said he would speak more broadly about the future.

1. Civil Society

The SG spoke about the Commonwealth as akin to a three-legged stool: the private sector, public sector and civil society. Perhaps civil society was sometimes seen as the awkward leg, but he reassured the audience that the inter-governmental Commonwealth listened carefully to all that civil society placed before it, and that this relationship was very important.

Governments might not be in a position to adopt the sort of positions that civil society organisations could, and there would always be some tension in this relationship. However, he thought this healthy and hoped it would long continue.

2. The High Offices of the Commonwealth

Speaking about the Head of the Commonwealth, the Queen, the SG said that she always took a very active interest in the association's work, demonstrated by her personal involvement in

the writing of her Commonwealth Day Message. Her latest Christmas broadcast was also a clear demonstration of the power of the Commonwealth, proving that it had relevance beyond its own borders. The future of the headship of the Commonwealth was for Heads of Government to decide when the time came, but he thought that the Queen had certainly made the best possible case for her successor to be a member of the British Royal Family. Speaking about the Commonwealth Chairperson-in-Office, the SG said that this role was primarily symbolic, but that the Chair could also play a political role. This was demonstrated by the 'troika' of three chairs (past, present and future) which had acted together over Zimbabwe in 2002/3. He said that his relationship with both the former Chair (President Museveni of Uganda) and the current Chair (Prime Minister Manning of Trinidad & Tobago) had been 'quite close'. The Chair had no need to worry about the Secretariat – it was a safe pair of hands – but it was helpful to have the strong involvement of leaders where possible.

Speaking about his own role as Secretary-General, Mr Sharma said that his immediate duty was to the 54 Heads of Commonwealth Governments; and thereafter to the wider Commonwealth family, particularly to those ¾ billion Commonwealth citizens who lived on under US\$1 a day. After two years in the job, the task still inspired and energised him every day. He also possessed the mandate and networks to do the job, which was an excellent starting point in leveraging influence and achieving outcomes for the Commonwealth as a whole.

3. CHOGM

The SG then went into more detail on the issues emerging from the 2009 CHOGM in Port of Spain which, although it was 'as fractious a meeting as ever undertaken', was very successful nonetheless. He highlighted the following:

a) Rwanda: It was a great achievement for a country that had emerged from genocide in 1994 to have become part of the Commonwealth. In some of its problems, Rwanda was no different to other Commonwealth countries. The SG revealed that

he was going to Rwanda the week after the Round Table conference to establish and set the tone for a new and beneficial member relationship.

b) Zimbabwe: In Kampala, Commonwealth leaders did not want to discuss the issue of Zimbabwe. However, in advance of this CHOGM, the SG said that he went to South Africa to push for the inclusion of Zimbabwe in CHOGM discussions, which was achieved. The Secretariat had maintained contacts with the Zimbabwe government, and if Zimbabwe wished to reapply for membership at an appropriate point, he felt this would be warmly welcomed.

c) Eminent Persons Group: This was an idea put forward by the UK, and it was unclear as yet how it would evolve (the Terms of Reference were currently being developed). Previous reviews of a similar nature (for example, the 2001-2002 High-Level Review Group) provided important context. One issue that would clearly be considered would be the format and content of ministerial meetings. But whether the group would re-examine the Commonwealth's 'raison d'être' was not yet clear. While the review could be as broad as governments wished, in his view 'we largely know the road ahead but we need to equip ourselves better to go on it'. The membership of the group would become clearer when the Terms of Reference were completed.

d) Global Interface: The CHOGM was unique in involving dialogue partners, like President Sarkozy of France, UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon and Prime Minister Rasmussen (as chair of the Copenhagen conference). Participation by the latter two had been vital in providing insight into the global context upon which the Commonwealth position on a climate change deal could be built, while President Sarkozy's presence had other benefits. This interaction with the rest of the world mattered for the Commonwealth as there was a need to create a Commonwealth interface on certain subjects. The achievement on climate change that came out of CHOGM was a necessity, and engagement should be widened and deepened. This could involve an 'environmental good offices' role for the SG in future (rather similar to his 'good offices for peace' and other facilitating and intermediary work on trade issues).

e) Reaffirmation of values: The 'Affirmation' statement about fundamental values and principles was essential, and created a new benchmark that built on past declarations and statements. It included a commitment to examining reform of both the working practices of the Commonwealth Ministerial Action Group (CMAG) and the further strengthening of responses to serious or persistent violation of principles as well. The SG remarked that the fact that so many newer Commonwealth countries had not fractured over the issue of stronger adherence to values and principles should be seen as an achievement.

f) Election Commissioners: The setting up of a network of election commissioners was designed to reduce the opportunity for domestic interference in their work by developing a mutually-supportive network of peers and by the

Commonwealth's work in this area becoming a 'gold standard'. He was delighted by this advance.

g) CP3: The Commonwealth Partnership Platform Portal (CP3) was endorsed by leaders at CHOGM, and this was important because the Commonwealth needed to be seen to be aligning itself with opportunities around it offered especially by the potential of information technologies. The Commonwealth should move away from aspiring to be a 'boutique' organisation, and must leverage partnerships to gain results.

h) Youth: This was an obvious theme as half of the Commonwealth's population was under the age of 25. A separate statement was agreed on youth issues with a particular focus on youth enterprise development and the mainstreaming of youth concerns and needs into all aspects of public policy.

i) Commonwealth resources: It was pleasing that CHOGM should have confirmed its continued commitment to support increases in the Commonwealth Fund for Technical Development (CFTD). It was also a great relief, after twenty years, that CHOGM should have agreed to a revised scale of contributions for the assessed budget of the Secretariat; this was the product of an immense amount of hard work and this pain had been worthwhile.

4. The Commonwealth's Future

The SG then moved on to the broader picture. He began by posing a few questions at the start of this final topic: What were the signature challenges of our times? Where did the Commonwealth fit in? How did the Commonwealth achieve greater strengths? The SG said that the beauty of the Commonwealth was that it could create global value that transcended parochial value. It was a 'tipping point' organisation, but the SG asked: 'where do we want to tip?' Were we leveraging our convening power? Could we solve unique problems that the rest of the world could not? (like linking up legal and health professionals in the HIV/AIDS debate, for example).

In assessing the Commonwealth's role in a changing world, it was important to take into account four new realities:

I. Morphing Multilateralism: Multilateralism had returned, but not in its old form, and collective action was returning. The SG said that, rather than multilateralism, we should perhaps talk about 'mini-lateralism' i.e. when so many people were talking at the same time, finding a way to make sure that everyone's voice was heard without them all necessarily needing to be present in a particular meeting or decision-making body. The Commonwealth's advocacy in global settings was not hot air, as proven by the inclusiveness and practical, collective value of the *Marlborough House Statement on Reform of International Institutions*. The SG was told recently that by the head of UNEP that the best paper available on reform of international environmental governance was that prepared by the Commonwealth.

II. Recalibration of Global Power: The SG said he was now engaging with all members of the G20 (having written to them all) as this grouping assumed increased importance, and had received a two page response from the UK Prime Minister, Gordon Brown, after the London Summit of the G20. With global power recalibrating, the Commonwealth's role and potential was also changing. For example, Commonwealth members now account for one-quarter of the G20 membership and could thus convey collective Commonwealth perspectives. The Commonwealth's annual Finance Ministers' Meeting consequently would now be held in the margins of the autumn meetings of the World Bank and IMF. This would facilitate the participation of all Commonwealth ministers, including those who were also members of the G20, thereby providing a better focus and impact on G20 agenda items by the Commonwealth.

III. Denser Global Interface: The SG was impressed by a recent conference on this issue and had done some calculations. Between the time of the Malta and the Trinidad CHOGMs (4 years), YouTube had been created, and was now one of the most popular websites globally. Internet users in Africa had quadrupled. The amount of information generated in the next 12 months would soon be equal to all the information published before it. What was once visionary was now realistic; and the Commonwealth should be navigating this flow for its own purposes.

IV. Values: the Commonwealth was clearly a values-based organisation and would continue that way.

The SG talked about the conversations he had had with leaders at the CHOGM in Trinidad & Tobago. He asked both President Zuma (of South Africa) and Prime Minister Rudd (of Australia) if the Commonwealth was relevant and they had responded in the affirmative. Rudd was particularly enthusiastic, and said that no other organisation had the friendship, camaraderie, and ability to tackle the challenges of our time. President Nasheed of the Maldives praised the Commonwealth when talking about the Maldives' success story – describing it as a trusted, practical and effective partner. This kind of thinking was essential to promoting the association effectively.

The SG concluded by saying that the needs of member countries and their circumstances would determine the future direction of the Commonwealth; and he declared that the association would remain both constant and flexible in the future. When he became SG, he recalled that he had described the Commonwealth as a 'great global good'. He stood by that description but added: where it is great it can be better, where it is global it must be more so, and where it is good it must improve.

DISCUSSION

A questioner commented on the need to raise the Commonwealth's profile.

The SG applauded the work of media organisations in working together with this aim. The *Commonwealth Conversation* showed

that this was required. He said that the organisation needed to sell its achievements better, and added that he was developing a media plan to do this, and to monitor how well the Secretariat was playing its part.

Another questioner said he found the proposal for an Eminent Persons Group to take forward the review of institutions and processes an intriguing prospect. Like the previous EPG, did this imply that its members would be those who owed the SG only their judgement, and were not beholden to governments, and could work openly if need be?

The SG replied that these matters were not yet determined but that the EPG had the potential to be different from what went before it.

A participant asked about the earthquake in Haiti; whether the SG was going to make a statement, and whether the Commonwealth was in a strong position to respond if such a disaster struck a Commonwealth country.

The SG said he had been moved to make a statement (some of his friends and former UN colleagues had died in the tragedy), but as Haiti was not a Commonwealth country he had decided not to, since this could otherwise mean that he would need to comment on every global disaster all over the world.

A questioner asked whether the Commonwealth's climate change statement had had an impact in advance of Copenhagen.

The SG said that what the Commonwealth did was very important. The urgency and priority given to environmental governance issues were particularly relevant; and, coming just before Copenhagen, CHOGM drew attention to these issues.

A participant said she had no doubt about the relevance of the Commonwealth but she felt there was a gap between the institutional level and ordinary people. She asked how the Commonwealth could better communicate its priorities, and in particular engage the attention of young people.

Another participant, in picking up on the previous question, gave the example of successive Youth Ministers' Meetings as an example of how the Commonwealth tried to be 'all things to all people', with shifting priorities and no follow-up. This certainly had a detrimental effect on the Commonwealth Youth Programme.

The SG responded by emphasising that the engagement of young people was crucial. Previously that link had been about providing privileges – education, lower fees, and visas – but that had largely gone and there was a huge dissociation which the Commonwealth had to overcome. It could not be all things to all people. On youth issues specifically, there were two priorities: first, focusing on resources for bringing young people into national policy making; and, secondly, developing youth enterprise, so that young people were job creators, rather than job seekers.

A questioner asked how Commonwealth leaders had come to take the decision to include Zimbabwe in the communiqué, and whether there was a roadmap for Zimbabwe's return to the Commonwealth.

The SG replied by mentioning his discussions with President Zuma in South Africa. He said that he had asked the President to make a presentation to Heads on current developments in Zimbabwe. Following that presentation, there was not one dissenting voice about the Zimbabwe statement for inclusion in the communiqué. He reminded the meeting that Prime Minister Gordon Brown had written an article on Zimbabwe during the time of CHOGM. The Secretariat had maintained regular contacts with Zimbabwe, particularly in the area of development, and this would be sustained.

Another questioner remarked on the length of Communiqués and questioned the need for 117 paragraphs.

The SG said that he definitely would aim for a shorter document next time, but he needed to be respectful of the wishes of Heads.

A participant asked whether the Commonwealth should be tapping into emerging trends, for example, green technology, and whether this would provide a focus for the media.

The SG agreed that green technology lay at the heart of development and would excite the attention of the media. He added that all global technological challenges should be addressed globally – it was hard to believe that the world working together could not resolve these issues, he felt.

Another participant asked about 'grey area' Commonwealth countries, especially Fiji.

The SG responded that the situation in Fiji was very difficult at present. The government had refused to accept help for the moment and matters were moving in the opposite direction. On Sri Lanka, the SG said that he had had meetings with the Foreign Minister whose end-of-year message was encouraging in that it talked of reconciliation and healing community divisions. He thought the formation of the new government in Sri Lanka following the elections might assist the process and he stood ready to offer any Commonwealth assistance that could be helpful.

Richard Bourne then concluded the discussion and thanked the SG for providing his thoughts in such a candid and engaging way.

After-dinner Speech

Speaker

Sir Peter Marshall KCMG CVO

Sir Peter Marshall said it was both a great privilege and a real pleasure to propose the toast to the Round Table at the beginning of its centenary year. It had an extraordinary record of unique innovation and imaginativeness. Leopold Amery, unquestionably the British statesman most committed to the notion of a Commonwealth emerging from Empire, said about the Round Table: 'it attracted interest from the first by the authoritative and well-informed character of its always anonymous articles, and did much to form Empire opinion in the next few years'. Sir Peter congratulated the members of the Round Table on their plans for 2010, and looked forward to the outcome of the various centenary conferences and events.

As a former Trustee of the Foundation of St Katharine at Cumberland Lodge, he was particularly pleased that the Lodge should be the venue for such an important Commonwealth conference, coming a few weeks after the end of the celebrations of the modern Commonwealth's 60th year. In 1999, when Chairman of the Joint Commonwealth Societies' Council, he had tried to encourage the marking of the 50th anniversary, writing about the event in the Round Table and encouraging the Indian High Commissioner to host a reception. But enthusiasm had been limited and he had vowed that the 60th anniversary would be different. When the time came, he found that he was pushing at a largely open door. Indeed, he never imagined that the 60th anniversary would in fact be marked so amply and so profoundly. He regarded the *Commonwealth Conversation* as a stroke of genius and the 2009 CHOGM had yielded a cornucopia of statements, comments and insights. *The Trinidad and Tobago Affirmation* made the point that the special strength of the Commonwealth lay in the diversity of its membership, bound

together not only by shared history and tradition, but also by an ethos of respect for all states and peoples, of shared values and principles, and of concern for the vulnerable.

He then asked what it was that gave the Commonwealth its practical uniqueness, and suggested a number of possibilities. First, there were successive declarations of values and principles, to which the Commonwealth Ministerial Action Group gave a cutting edge, and which the United Nations, indispensable as it was for the management of world-wide interdependence, could not by its nature possess. Secondly, there was the flourishing non-governmental Commonwealth, eye-catchingly contributing to the fruitful and harmonious co-operation between the governmental and non-governmental components, an asset unmatched by any other significant international organisation. Thirdly, there was loyalty and commitment to the major issues of the age, most notably expressed in the work of the raft of independent expert groups established by successive Secretaries-General under the authority of Heads of Government. None of these developments would have burgeoned in the way that they had without being rooted in an organisation which was essentially organic in character. The most significant advantage of the organic element was the capacity beneficially to encompass continuity within change.

In music, this was a process of key change known technically as 'enharmonic modulation'. What ensued was new, and existed meaningfully in its own right. Yet it did not renounce nor reject what had gone before: it was built upon it. Continuity was thus embodied in change. By such means, the London Declaration of 1949, with no obvious change of tone, enabled Empire to transmute into modern Commonwealth.

Session 4

The Commonwealth Secretariat and the intergovernmental Commonwealth: fit for purpose?

Chair	Sir Peter Marshall KCMG CVO
Speakers	Mrs Mmasekgoa Masire-Mwamba <i>Deputy Secretary-General, Commonwealth Secretariat</i>
	Ms Missouri Sherman-Peter <i>Permanent Secretary, Government of the Bahamas</i>
	Mr Anwar Choudhury <i>Director, International Institutional Reform, Foreign and Commonwealth Office, UK</i>
Respondent	Mr Mark Robinson <i>UK Chair, Commonwealth Consortium for Education; Treasurer of the Round Table</i>

Sir Peter Marshall, in the Chair, explained that he was standing in for Sir Humphrey Maud, who had sent his apologies for being unable to attend. He welcomed participants and introduced the speakers.

PRESENTATIONS

Mmasekgoa Masire-Mwamba spoke first. In reflecting on the reasons why Commonwealth member countries had joined the association, she noted that most had done so on attaining national independence. They had seen Commonwealth membership as part of their new identity, an organisation they joined voluntarily in their own right and one to which they felt they had something valuable to contribute. They attached importance to the Commonwealth in its dual roles as a pillar of democracy and a pillar of development.

She proposed using human rights as the filter in addressing the session's theme and in examining the Commonwealth's aspiration to be a force for good and its role in advocacy. Its contribution to strengthening human rights could be seen as a touchstone of the Commonwealth's fitness for purpose.

Human rights abuses on a large scale were evident everywhere: the grossest manifestations of ethnic violence and discrimination readily made the headlines. Although Africa often figured in this publicity, the African continent also had a good story to tell, both in the championing of human rights in the anti-colonial and anti-apartheid struggles and through countries like Botswana and Ghana which were for differing reasons often cited as bastions of

democracy. National human rights institutions were springing up. Uganda, to take another example, had substantial human rights legislation and institutions alongside some searing publicity.

The Commonwealth Secretariat had developed a stocktaking methodology on human rights through a universal periodic review mechanism. It was ready to work with countries that asked for help in working out appropriate responses to any weaknesses revealed by such reviews. Swaziland was one country that had approached the Secretariat for help.

Mrs Masire-Mwamba concluded by referring to Rwanda's welcome and successful application to join the Commonwealth. As it emerged from its recent traumas Rwanda was showcasing many progressive practices – a constitution based on inclusiveness and co-operation rather than a 'winner-takes-all' system; important developments in the advancement of youth and women; and a higher proportion of women in its parliament than in any other country.

Missouri Sherman-Peter said that her period of service at the Commonwealth Secretariat in the 1990s had convinced her of the Secretariat's professionalism and heavy work loads, and had left her in no doubt about its fitness for purpose.

The Commonwealth was similar to other international organisations in having a Secretary-General and international staff, but it was different from them in some of the work it undertook, and in other respects. This did not mean it should be immune from questions about its relevance.

The Commonwealth's fitness for purpose was partly determined by the adequacy of resources, and at present funding for Commonwealth activities was precarious. It was reassuring that member governments, who wanted to see value for their money, had been able to agree a new scale of contributions for the Commonwealth Secretariat's assessed budget. Good leadership was critical in making sure that the Commonwealth sent clear messages and that the mandates it had been given were fulfilled. Present circumstances were conducive to the Secretary-General playing a more activist role – this was one of the possibilities that could usefully be examined by the proposed Eminent Persons Group.

In its consensus-building role, the Commonwealth should seek to ensure that there were not separate developed-country and developing-country agendas, and should avoid giving precedence to developed-country concerns. It should be careful not to focus on 'easy', non-contentious issues, staying away from the contentious ones.

On the subject of the Secretariat, Ms Sherman-Peters said that realistically the composition of its staff had to balance efficiency and geographical representation, and to give due weight to experience and to the need for institutional memory. Although the Commonwealth of Learning had operated successfully out of Vancouver, there were many advantages to being in London for the Secretariat itself, and the present was not an opportune time for it to relocate elsewhere. The possible establishment of regional and country offices was also an issue for another day.

Anwar Choudhury said he was speaking from the standpoint of one member state and one individual. The UK's short answer to the question posed about the Secretariat's fitness for purpose was a definite 'No' (and the longer answer was even more emphatic).

It was necessary to ask about the purpose of the Commonwealth, given that there was a wide array of international institutions, and ones specifically focused on the major global challenges of our time – economic and financial, environmental, and developmental. There was a lot of history to the Commonwealth, but what, he asked, was its strategic fit in the bigger picture of the contemporary global institutional architecture, where many of the gaps were filled by bodies like the UN and NATO. Why should it exist for another sixty years?

Surely the defining 'signature' of the Commonwealth was principally as a defender of democracy, good governance and human rights, he suggested. If there was a Commonwealth 'brand', this was surely it. Yet the Commonwealth had been slow to make this clear and it had to be admitted that it had a very weak 'brand value', unlikely to be easily recognisable by the under-25 generation. The only people who knew much about the Commonwealth tended to be middle-aged and middle-class people in pro-Commonwealth countries. A brand connected to democracy, on the other hand, would resonate with young people.

The very title of Commonwealth 'Secretariat' reflected the lack of fitness for purpose. There was a Secretary-General but no

chief operating officer whose job was delivery against assigned tasks and who could be held to account.

The Heads of Government Meetings were a vehicle through which the Commonwealth could organise for effective action. In the context of delivery, the recent Trinidad CHOGM was one of the strongest of recent times, with victory plucked out of the jaws of defeat. It was seen to be connected to the challenges of our time and aspiring to be a pre-eminent network of soft power. Yet the successes it achieved on some signature issues – climate change and Fiji among them – owed as much to good fortune with the international calendar (such as proximity to the Copenhagen climate change summit) as to careful advance preparations by the Secretariat. One should not count on the same luck another time.

Mr Choudhury said he was a great believer in the Commonwealth, but a pessimistic one. He doubted if there was the right mindset to put the Commonwealth at the centre of a global organisational network. There was a need for the Commonwealth to throw away history and affirm what it stands for here and how: a global force for good on the signature issues of our time.

All this had implications for the composition and remit of the Eminent Persons Group to examine inter alia the future role and nature of Commonwealth ministerial meetings. The last thing needed for the EPG was for it to be a band of Commonwealth 'luvvies'. It required hard-headed, independent and objective outsiders – led by a Richard Branson or by the Chairman of Tata – examining the evidence of the relevance of the Commonwealth in action. They did not need to know much about the Commonwealth – but they did need to know what it was to be a success. The Group should not have a protracted life. It should be asked to report within 60 or 90 days and to convey their conclusions in a brief report of a very few pages. The Commonwealth was undoubtedly vibrant – but it needed to make itself relevant through its actions, he concluded.

Mark Robinson, responding to the presentations, welcomed the challenges posed by the three speakers. The Commonwealth had to adapt to changing circumstances all the time and could not afford to be complacent.

His own periods of service in the secretariats of both the Commonwealth and the UN had convinced him that the Commonwealth did have a special reach, and did not merely duplicate the UN. An instance was the Secretary-General's 'good offices' role in mediating disputes. This was often highly effective but could not be trumpeted to the world. The Commonwealth had proved itself to be remarkably effective in dealing with difficult issues like the establishment of an independent Belize.

While noting what Anwar Choudhury had said about the role of a chief operating officer, and recognising the need for the Secretariat to organise more effectively in delivering against its mandates, Mr Robinson thought it was unrealistic to expect the head of the Secretariat to make programme implementation his or her own main role. The Secretary-General's in-tray was

always so full of urgent concerns of international relations and consensus-building on key issues that management decisions were liable to sink to the bottom of the pile.

DISCUSSION

A participant observed that actual 'delivery' was not a function of people's titles. A lot of delivery was taking place in the Secretariat, irrespective of what people were called.

There might well be a need to adjust CHOGM mechanisms and there was virtue in careful preparation. However, the fact of advance nervousness about outcomes and a sense that the agenda had not been completely pre-cooked should not be a reason to criticise CHOGM processes. The structure of the meeting should not be too tight: there was advantage in leaving room for unforeseen issues and developments to be accommodated, and for the creative chemistry of the meeting itself to produce a resolution of issues. Many CHOGMs prior to Trinidad had been rescued from the brink of disaster by such alchemy.

With reference to Anwar Choudhury's comments on the EPG, it was important that the group's members 'got' what the Commonwealth was about and how it worked. There was a risk in confining Group membership to complete 'outsiders'.

Another participant said that the developing Commonwealth seemed to 'get' the Commonwealth better than its more developed members. For example, when the recent *Democracy in the Commonwealth* report was launched in the UK, only two British media representatives attended and there was no coverage at all in the British press. The FCO could be much more supportive. The UK had responsibility for taking a Commonwealth lead.

Anwar Choudhury agreed with Stuart Mole about the value of constructive 'angst' at CHOGMs but thought it could be overdone. Matters should not be left to chance – there was very nearly no climate change statement from the Trinidad CHOGM. He reiterated his criticism that the Commonwealth Secretariat lacked a delivery culture, with a focus on product and delivery. In this respect the seriously inefficient UN was certainly not a model. The difference was that the UN had to exist, but there was no necessity for there to be a Commonwealth. In reply to the previous questioner, he said that while the UK would do its bit in Commonwealth councils, it was only one member state among 54 and could not take responsibility for the Commonwealth as a whole.

A questioner opined that the elevation of 'democracy' as the defining Commonwealth concern was problematic. For one thing the association and its members were not necessarily to be regarded as beacons of democracy – he could name nine states where there had been no change of government in all the decades since their achievement of independence. There was a lot of work to be done everywhere to make democracy real. Secondly,

if the Commonwealth was to 'go nap' on democracy, staking all, might it not neglect the all-important issue of development? As had been pointed out many times, 'you cannot eat democracy'. The Commonwealth had a good record on development on such issues as Heavily-Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) and the write-down of developing country debt; on support for small states facing economic crisis; on issues of tourism in small and poor countries, and so on.

A participant suggested that the idea of democracy needed unpicking. It was based on a social contract between the people and their government. But ordinary people, and especially the young, had been increasingly disenfranchised and needed to re-engage with the processes of decision-making in their societies. It was thus not enough for the Secretariat and other Commonwealth institutions to work with governments. They should also work with peoples and help to redevelop their sense of citizenship.

Another participant likened working at the Secretariat to a love affair. In the initial stage, the new recruit was enthusiastic and uncritical, captivated by the wonderful atmosphere and the organisation's noble aims and aspirations. In the next phase, this was followed by greater realism as one became familiar with the Secretariat's bad habits. This was followed by a third stage where one had to decide whether to stay or to go. Many did decide to leave voluntarily. Others stayed, either because they wanted to make a difference: or in some cases, sadly, because they were trapped by personal family and economic considerations and could not afford to leave. It was easy to become demotivated in the Secretariat but in her experience it contained a solid core of people striving to make the world a better place.

A youth participant referred to the challenge of informing people about what the Commonwealth did. Young people were unaware of the Commonwealth and often its messages failed to reach those who mattered. Taking recent events as an example, young people never finally heard what was decided at CHOGM in Trinidad, but everybody got to know what was decided in Copenhagen at the climate change summit.

A questioner reminded colleagues of the suggestion made the previous day by Baroness Falkner that a civil service-type examination might be introduced as the basis for selection to Secretariat posts. She asked whether this would bring benefit in terms of fitness for purpose.

Another questioner raised the issue of Commonwealth profile, and the fact that so few people, including especially young people, were at all well informed about the organisation.

Another youth participant pointed to the difference between the Commonwealth as an organisation and the Commonwealth as a network. New forms of networking, for example Facebook and Twitter, were emerging and attention should be paid to these new opportunities for linking as well as to established

institutions. Democracy involved respect for ordinary people and their lives. Was the Commonwealth supporting people on the ground?

Missouri Sherman-Peter agreed that the development side of the Commonwealth's work was important. Her own country, the Bahamas, might have a per capita GNP of \$US18,000 p.a. but wealth was very unevenly distributed and the country faced many of the same development problems as other Commonwealth Caribbean countries. She had no problems with identifying Commonwealth 'signature' issues but it was important to ensure they were the most relevant and appropriate.

Mmasegkoa Masire-Mwamba agreed about the need to give the Commonwealth's work greater visibility. One problem was that in some instances – for example, the Secretariat's 'good offices' role – the condition for being able to deliver was that those involved kept out of the limelight.

Anwar Choudhury said he was a huge fan of development. The problem was that the development field was very crowded and the Commonwealth had to be seen as an important organisation doing something valuable and distinctive. That was why he advocated democracy as a signature theme.

Mark Robinson emphasised the need for the Commonwealth to be relevant to youth.

A participant said that in his country, Sierra Leone, democracy and human rights meant access to safe drinking water for the whole population. His own experience of working with Commonwealth organisations – he instanced support from the Commonwealth Foundation for the promotion of school PEN clubs – led him to wonder whether the Commonwealth did enough to label its projects and make them visible on the ground.

Another participant addressed the Secretariat's information functions. When the Secretariat was set up in 1965, it was said that it did not need an Information Department but it quickly became apparent that this was a mistake. The Secretariat had often failed to project to member countries what it was doing. The Commonwealth had had a higher profile in the past than today. The situation in Trinidad at CHOGM was particularly lamentable: there was a dearth of media briefings by the Secretariat so that journalists at CHOGM learned of important developments - like the accession of Rwanda to membership - from the BBC World Service. The Secretariat's media team did not even distribute the communiqué to journalists.

A questioner reminded participants that for most of the Commonwealth's 32 small states the Commonwealth was the most important organisation to which they belonged. More generally, governments did have the responsibility to speak up for the Commonwealth if they claimed to attach importance to it. As for the link between democracy and development, discussed at some length by the Manmohan Singh report, there was clearly a close relationship even though the presence of one did not

guarantee the other. He agreed that things had gone wrong on the press side in Trinidad and thought lessons had been learned. One area where there had been significant improvement in recent times was the Commonwealth Secretariat's website.

A further questioner agreed that member countries could do more to help with communication, but thought that the Secretariat's information operations had deteriorated considerably. The media arrangements in Trinidad were abysmal. Admittedly the Commonwealth was difficult to project because it was historically unprecedented. It was a remarkable organisation where members were not bound to belong by treaty and where anybody could walk out at any time, if they so chose.

A youth participant agreed with Anwar Choudhury's assessment that where the Commonwealth had comparative advantage was in the area of democracy, and that the development field was already crowded. If the Commonwealth was to carve out a special identity for itself, and demonstrate beneficial outcomes from its work, it should most advantageously stick to the area of democracy.

SPEAKERS' RESPONSES TO DISCUSSION

Mmasegkoa Masire-Mwamba argued that democracy and development were two sides of the same coin and that it was very difficult to deliver the one independently of the other, even though, as had been said, they did not guarantee each other. She agreed with Stuart Mole's point that the EPG would need to include people who 'get' the Commonwealth. In considering fitness for purpose of Secretariat staff, it was true that the Secretariat did not always have people with the requisite background and skills. It was a challenge to management to get the best out of staff, and overall staff morale was a key element in improving effectiveness. Finally she endorsed the call to make the Secretariat's publicity more effective, but also emphasised the need for member states to play their part in promoting knowledge of the Commonwealth and its achievements.

Missouri Sherman-Peter instanced the Commonwealth of Learning as a part of the Commonwealth infrastructure that was working particularly well with, and for, member countries. Rather than a 'signature' theme, she would like to see the Commonwealth focus on those priorities of particular concern to member states. In the Caribbean for example the UN had been proactive in responding to the threat that crime posed to member countries' development. She agreed that originality should be shown in determining membership of the EPG and they should look beyond the 'usual suspects'.

Anwar Choudhury said that the Commonwealth needed to develop a strategic communication function – a quite different task from organising press conferences. This required a clear sense of whom one was trying to reach (how could one hardwire the youth to the Commonwealth for example?) and a good product to publicise. He did not think that an entry exam for

Commonwealth Secretariat staff was the way to enhance their quality – the UN was full of overqualified people. The UK had shifted in its policy towards international bodies to supporting candidates with a proven capacity to deliver, irrespective of their nationality.

The Commonwealth should show itself to be an actor on the issues of our times. It could be proud of the fact that the Commonwealth through its Trinidad meetings had played a major part in shaping two of the major positive commitments to come out of Copenhagen two weeks later – but then, typically, failed to communicate to the world its role in that regard. Clearly for the future the Commonwealth could make a focused effort to ensure that small countries were protected against threats of climate change.

Finally Mr Choudhury urged the Commonwealth to listen to the opinions and ideas of outsiders. Some 35,000 had engaged in

the *Commonwealth Conversation* and had said what they thought about the Commonwealth. If the Commonwealth lacked the courage to take on board what these people were saying, this would signify that it was a dying organisation.

Mark Robinson observed that the Commonwealth was extraordinarily good at hiding its light under a bushel. It had very good stories to tell about its work for small states, including through its small states offices in New York and Geneva; about the Commonwealth of Learning, whose work had so enthused Foreign Ministers in Trinidad; about CMAG with its virtually unique powers to suspend countries from Commonwealth membership; and about its valuable work in giving prominence to women's issues. A particular area where he would like the Commonwealth to do more was in the promotion of press freedom.

Session 5

Summits and consultation: life-blood or ritual?

Chair	Mr Kayode Soyinka <i>Editor, Africa Today</i>
Speakers	Mr Amitav Banerji <i>Director, Political Affairs Division, Commonwealth Secretariat</i>
	Ms Rita Payne <i>UK Chair, Commonwealth Journalists Association</i>
Respondent	Mr Vic Craggs OBE <i>Chief Executive, Commonwealth Youth Exchange Council</i>

Kayode Soyinka, in the chair, began by reflecting that 44 years ago, at the end of the emergency CHOGM in Lagos, and as the British Prime Minister, Harold Wilson, was leaving, the Nigerian Prime Minister was warned that there would be a military coup the next day (and one which, as it happened, would cost him his life). That summit marked a flashpoint in Commonwealth affairs, but there were other notable summits: Lusaka, in 1979, on the issue of Rhodesia; the 1987 Vancouver CHOGM, with pressure on apartheid South Africa intensifying and a crisis in Fiji; and the Auckland CHOGM of 1995, overshadowed by the execution of Ken Saro-Wiwa and his fellow Ogoni activists, and by the suspension of Nigeria from the Commonwealth. Similarly, the Abuja summit of 2003 was dominated by the issue of Zimbabwe, and he recalled the frustration of the Zambian president with Robert Mugabe.

Overall, the Commonwealth's record of acting against dictators was much better than the United Nations and invariably Commonwealth summits were prepared carefully, as a platform for attracting world attention to Commonwealth problems and priorities. That was also true of the consultative process generally, with ministerial and other meetings in the main responding to the agenda of a majority of members.

PRESENTATIONS

Amitav Banerji opened his remarks by reminding the meeting of the reference in the 1965 *Agreed Memorandum* (and the link to the session's title) that 'consultation is the life-blood of the Commonwealth'. The Trinidad & Tobago CHOGM, where he had been Conference Secretary, was in fact his tenth CHOGM and over that period there had been a considerable evolution. It was now inconceivable that a Head of Government could spend two

weeks attending an international summit (as was the case originally); and, in his own experience, the CHOGM had shrunk from five days duration to two-and-a-half. The structure of the meeting had also changed. The Retreat was now the major part of the meeting, but it was not really the kind of retreat originally envisaged by Pierre Trudeau in 1973. It used to be the case that Heads were removed to an entirely different venue, where they could spend quality time with one another, without distractions. In Port of Spain, the 'retreat' was undermined by the fact that it took place under the same roof as the Executive Sessions and there was a multitude of officials and support staff not far away. Despite hiccups, the T&T CHOGM proved to be a success, with its heightened profile due to the fortuitous timing of the Copenhagen climate summit shortly afterwards. As a result, it attracted the participation of the French President, the UN Secretary-General and the Danish Prime Minister, circumstances which it would be difficult to replicate in future.

More generally, CHOGMs by and large succeeded because of the unique chemistry that existed between Commonwealth leaders. The Commonwealth's various conventions also encouraged direct engagement and dialogue (such as the absence of prepared speeches and interpreters, the commitment to finding consensus, and the physical set-up of the meeting room). All of this made the CHOGM anything but a ritual.

Evidence of this could be found in the number of leaders attending CHOGM and their largely positive impressions of the summit. The proof of the pudding was in the product: no mere talking shop, a number of summits had resulted in very important outcomes, with a significant impact on world opinion. This was true of the Commonwealth's contribution to the ending of apartheid; its initiatives on tackling debt; its protection of the rights of migrant teachers; and of course its recognition of the

special vulnerabilities of small states, to name but a few. Copenhagen did not succeed but this should not detract from the useful and positive contribution the Commonwealth made to the climate change debate.

The nature and sanctity of the Retreat had changed, of course, and the scope for social networking by Heads had been squeezed. Perhaps the meeting was now too retreat-focussed and therefore gave the impression of being closed to outsiders, he mused. At the end of the day, however, Heads were happy with the format, which is what mattered. Undoubtedly, there was frenetic activity, with a sports breakfast, youth dialogue and bilateral meetings adding to intense pressures on the time of leaders.

He also questioned whether it was necessary to decide a theme for the CHOGM eighteen months in advance, with the danger that other issues might emerge as more pressing nearer the time.

In considering the work of the 'sheepas', Mr Banerji did not really feel that the communiqué could be said to reflect the actual discussions of Heads any more. Rather, the 'Christmas tree' effect invited all sorts of issues to be hung on it and as a result the T&T communiqué ran to 117 paragraphs. He very much hoped it could be scaled back in size at future CHOGMs.

He was pleased that in the last fifteen years space had been created for civil society. But he shared the view that the People's Forum (CPF) could not expect to influence the CHOGM if it submitted material on the eve of the summit. There was clearly a case for an earlier meeting, with a pithier outcome. Elected Heads of Government did not like the suggestion that only civil society spoke for 'the people' and that they themselves were divorced from popular opinion. If representations were packaged differently, there could be more traction, and he did not preclude further dialogue on the fringes of the CHOGM.

In summary, he declared himself firmly of the view that summits and consultation were the Commonwealth's life-blood – and blocking it (medics advised) would result in 'myocardial infarction', with potentially fatal consequences.

Rita Payne began by recalling her twenty nine years working for the BBC and the impact of summits on a 24 hour newsroom. In assigning journalists to cover CHOGMs, it was hoped that a correspondent would be selected who knew the Commonwealth (like James Robbins, Mike Wooldridge and Brian Hanrahan) and that a proactive producer, with an eye for good stories, would also be on the team. There was little time to read reports. Instead, the team would try and link developments at the summit to what was happening in the news. Inevitably, there was therefore a tension between what the journalists covering the summit were looking for, and the issues and outcomes which the organisers of the meeting were keen to push.

From the point of view of the Commonwealth Journalists Association (CJA), they were fortunate to be guided by hugely talented and experienced people like Derek Ingram and Kaye Whiteman, who were veterans of innumerable CHOGMs. Had she been aware of this expertise while at the BBC, she was sure

she would have made better use of such people and their advice.

Turning to the Trinidad & Tobago CHOGM itself, she agreed with those who considered it a success in terms of climate change, and other issues. The media was looking for a focus and, with so many Heads attending the summit, climate change provided an important point of connection. One of the more notable contributions on the issue came from the new President of the Maldives and this demonstrated that the voices of the weak and vulnerable could be heard, despite disparities in membership. While reactions were positive, much would now depend on what happened over the next two years.

There were lows, however. There were complaints by the media about lack of access and poor logistics (despite excellent facilities otherwise). For journalists it proved a frustrating affair, with very little information, the absence of draft texts, press conferences cancelled and no access to Heads. Reporters have deadlines to meet and most complained about the arrangements (though it was good that media freedom was mentioned). Another complaint centred on the cost to Trinidad & Tobago. After the Summit of the Americas, there was a perception that Prime Minister Manning was spending a fortune to rub shoulders with world leaders. The cost of what many saw as a junket was reported to be T&T\$500million.

The admission of Rwanda to Commonwealth membership was newsworthy but naturally human rights organisations wanted to see much more progress.

Concluding, Rita Payne said she had not addressed a range of issues, due to lack of time, but hoped to have provided some points for discussion.

Vic Craggs, in responding to the presentations, spoke about the parallel events to CHOGM and in particular his experience, since 1997, in helping host countries stage the Commonwealth Youth Forum. CHOGM itself had changed over the last ten years, with a number of innovations and an opening up of parallel events. This extension into a 'people's dimension' had brought with it new energy and dynamism. In the same period, the Youth and People's Forums had evolved also, with a much greater emphasis on the primacy of stakeholders. This was to be applauded. He added that the general focus of a CHOGM was its capacity to enable all to network. This marked out the Commonwealth as different to other international organisations. He knew at first hand the impact the Youth Forum had on those taking part; and the people-to-people dimension generally was very important. As regards the meeting of Heads, the powerful proximity of the Trinidad summit to Copenhagen demonstrated the importance of flexibility and of keeping the agenda open.

That said, he added some concerns: first, in an era of crowded summitry, he felt that some of the magic and chemistry between leaders had been lost. Second, agendas were crowded and communiqués over-long. Finally, there were logistical issues, with the Youth Forum growing from 100 to 500 participants, most of them local. This had its impact on the character of the meeting.

DISCUSSION

A participant remarked that Commonwealth summits were not solely about CHOGM but involved a range of parallel events. It was rather like a series of railway lines travelling in the same direction and then converging on Clapham Junction, only to separate out again once they had left the station. While these parallel events were stand-alone meetings, there was nonetheless increasing interaction between them: youth representatives joined the CHOGM for an exchange with Heads, and the proceedings of the youth, business and people's forums were fed into the Foreign Ministers' Meeting. But there was clearly a need to reconcile and integrate these various meetings more closely, and modern technology offered increasing opportunities for maintaining consultation between summits. Intruding into the Retreat was not an option: leaders were very busy, and some could not even stay for the whole day.

Another participant posed the question whether the idea of choosing a CHOGM theme should be abandoned altogether. There was an increasing view that themes were no longer a good idea, with the meeting often bound to an arbitrary and sometimes opaque title that reduced the summit's flexibility and ability to react.

Amitav Banerji agreed that modern technology had an important part to play and would help a greater focus on what happened in the periods between summits. One of the challenges, even for a meeting of CMAG, was that sensitive subjects needed those involved to be in the same room, and this meant overcoming time-zone and other challenges. As regards themes, he did not advocate their abandonment altogether. Every country that hosted a CHOGM wanted to make best use of the occasion in a way that was relevant to their nation. Thus, President Museveni, of Uganda, wanted an emphasis on the transformation of societies (even if this effectively edged out the Sen Report on respect and understanding). The host could not be denied the right to frame the theme but nor should this deflect the Commonwealth from addressing the vital issues of the day (and this was the case in Trinidad & Tobago, where climate change was also covered). The key was the need to retain flexibility, and that could become a problem when the theme was decided too far in advance.

Rita Payne said that the T&T theme was neither attractive nor media-friendly. Journalists picked up on the *Democracy in the Commonwealth* and *Commonwealth Conversation* reports, which were intended to kick-start the Commonwealth. But the media interpreted these documents as criticisms of the Commonwealth, partly because the official Commonwealth stuck to its agreed lines and themes. It was important to get the headlines right, and be seen to listen.

A questioner said that in terms of the participation of Heads of Government, many of the key players were there but some of the smaller countries were not represented. Every Commonwealth

leader should try and attend, she believed. As regards the media, the BBC World debate on *the Commonwealth at 60* almost did not happen because the Trinidadians were not keen on the idea. Yet the programme had 100 million viewers.

Amitav Banerji responded that it was never possible to get all Commonwealth Heads to a summit, given that there were bound to be elections or crises that kept a few away. But a lot of countries were represented by their leaders, and the turnout was high compared to some other summits.

Another questioner wondered whether there was a third element to summits – ritual, life-blood ..or school? To a considerable extent, these various fora involved capacity-building. People came to meetings often not knowing much about the Commonwealth and yet they learnt from each other. The Commonwealth should be proud that it was a forum for best practice. As regards the media, the possibilities were huge: The Queen's message received an audience of 700 million, and it was important to find other ways of promoting the Commonwealth.

A participant spoke about the relationship between CHOGM and CMAG. For fourteen years, the latter had been at the cutting edge of the Commonwealth and had been involved in sanctions and suspensions. But the original intention was that it should do more, though its mandate clearly stated that it was not an executive committee.

Another participant remarked that it was a question of balancing product with cost. Ultimately, what would enable the Commonwealth to survive was if the product was worth the cost.

Vic Craggs, on the question of capacity-building, said that the youth forum was a mechanism for young adults becoming aware of the Commonwealth and the future roles they might play. Because of the theme for the year, the Queen's message did impact on young people.

Amitav Banerji reminded the meeting that the cost to the host country for staging CHOGM was huge. In the case of Trinidad & Tobago, the Prime Minister needed to justify holding two international summits in a single year. Every other President and Prime Minister had also to justify to their public their involvement: what was the relevance of the Commonwealth to their national concerns, and what tangible evidence of benefit to the country could be demonstrated? As regards CMAG, its establishment, at the Auckland CHOGM of 1995, actually followed the suspension of Nigeria by Commonwealth Heads the previous day. It had to be a representative body (of nine) since having all 54 member countries represented in the committee would be impossible. CMAG reported to Heads at each CHOGM but had considerable leeway and authority otherwise. That said it had proved difficult for CMAG to be proactive before a crisis broke and an unconstitutional change in government had taken place. However, CMAG was looking at how it could work more effectively, even though there were governments with reservations about how much scope CMAG should have. In

cases where a serious violation of Commonwealth principles was evident, there was already provision that it was first the task of the SG to deploy his good offices role. If that did not succeed, the matter was referred to the Chairperson-in Office. Only finally could the issue be passed on to CMAG.

Kayode Soyinka said that the CMAG issue was of key importance to the Commonwealth. Auckland, in 1995, was a low point for Nigeria in relation to the Commonwealth and the Commonwealth showed maturity in keeping its Nigerian Secretary-General, Emeka Anyaoku, in post during this period.

A questioner, referring back to the CHOGM, said that the change to the SG's press reception in Port of Spain was a grave loss: he hoped the original intention had not disappeared for good. He referred back to the title of the session and reminded colleagues that other ministerial meetings should be included in the discussion, as well as CHOGMs. He said that in sectoral fields, it was difficult to carry forward agendas over time, particular when there was a high turnover of ministers from one meeting to the next. Little over one-quarter of education ministers had been to a Commonwealth Education Ministers' Meeting previously.

SPEAKERS' RESPONSE TO THE DISCUSSION

Vic Craggs said that Commonwealth Youth Ministers' meetings were broadly concerned with the governance of the

Commonwealth Youth Programme. It was true of some ministerial meetings that there was a tendency to lurch from meeting to meeting without very much thought of what happened in between. The key issue here was how passionate member governments themselves felt about working through the Commonwealth.

Rita Payne said that, generally, it would be good to demonstrate that all these ideas had been properly taken on board. From the point of view of media organisations, they were looking for big stories, though increasing awareness and understanding was a constant battle.

Amitav Banerji said that the joint reception hosted by the T&T Prime Minister and the Secretary-General, in Port of Spain, had been at the request of the host government. It was possible that the original format could be restored in future but the host country's views could not be ignored. On another point raised, he said that the emphasis of the session had been on consultation – but once this had taken place, implementation had to follow. Only if this occurred could faith in the Commonwealth be sustained. This required the positive involvement of member governments, as well as work by the Secretariat: and the building of strategic partnerships – within and beyond the Commonwealth – was crucial.

Concluding Remarks

Chair **Mr Richard Bourne OBE**
Chairman, the Round Table

Speakers **Mr Steve Cutts**
Director Strategic Planning and Evaluation Division, Commonwealth Secretariat

Mr Stuart Mole CVO OBE
Conference Organiser

Richard Bourne remarked that he had enjoyed the honesty of the discussions throughout the conference. This had not been the traditional post-CHOGM reflection as had previously been the focus of Round Table conferences at Cumberland Lodge. Instead, the meeting had looked at Commonwealth structures and processes. He recalled the report of the 2005 conference on *Commonwealth institutions in a globalised world* (organised by the Royal Commonwealth Society, in partnership with the Round Table, and others) and had been struck that many of the issues raised then were still on the Commonwealth agenda. He felt the conference had had a useful debate on CHOGMs, and on the Committee of the Whole and on communiqués. The question of signature themes had also been explored (and the link between democracy and development). The Commonwealth had to be able to respond to immediate crises while also remaining in touch with the range of international issues (though, as had been pointed out, the international agenda was not necessarily the Commonwealth one). He also touched on the formation of a new Eminent Persons Group and concurred with the view that its chosen members needed to be prominent and independent people who would pursue a transparent consultative process. Finally, he thought that the point about ‘CHOGM as a school’ was an interesting one and commented that it was probably unreasonable to expect expertise on the Commonwealth from those who were new to its ways.

Steve Cutts, who as Director of Strategic Planning in the Commonwealth Secretariat had a particular role in following up the decisions of the recent CHOGM, noted that the Secretariat had constructed a matrix of all mandates emanating from the Port of Spain meeting, highlighting which divisions of the Secretariat would be taking the lead on particular mandates. These mandates would also be incorporated into the Secretariat’s 4 year Strategic Plan through the Mid-Term Review process currently under way. In addition, there would be regular reporting on the implementation of CHOGM mandates both to the Executive Committee and to the Board of Governors.

As far as the EPG was concerned, the Secretariat had

undertaken a review of the previous high-level reviews (reporting in 1991 and 2002 respectively). The Secretary-General intended to consult widely about the EPG’s terms of reference and on the membership of the group (including on the EPG chair). While the group’s mandate was rather ambiguous in some respects, it was clear from CHOGM that the EPG would be looking at ministerial meetings and how the Commonwealth’s many institutions could work together more effectively.

Stuart Mole said that he believed that the conference had been rich in content (with the benefit of much relevant expertise) and had also enjoyed a valuable breadth of perspective (particularly with the involvement of young people and participants from the wider Commonwealth). There had also been a frankness of discussion which may have been uncomfortable at times but which served to test arguments and challenge orthodoxies. In his view, this had made for a good conference but that was only his view: more important were the views of participants. That is why he invited all to complete the available evaluation forms so that the organisers could do better next time and could also improve the expected outputs of the conference.

In that regard, he would be producing a post-conference report which would be available in both electronic and hard copy form. The report, which would be circulated to all participants in draft for comment, would not only be a summary record of proceedings but would seek to highlight key issues. The final report would be circulated widely, including to Commonwealth governments, institutions and organisations, as well as to Round Table members. It would be particularly useful for possible meetings in Bangladesh and Australia, organised by the respective Round Table chapters in each country. Along with expected articles in the journal, he hoped the report could make a substantial contribution to the Round Table’s own submission to the current Commonwealth review. For all these reasons, he saw the conclusion of the conference as the beginning, rather than the end, of an important process of new thinking.

Participants List

Name		Position	Organisation
Modupe	ADEFESO	Trustee & youth participant (Nigeria)	Commonwealth Youth Exchange Council
Matthew	ALBERT	Chair	Pan-Commonwealth Youth Caucus
Amitav	BANERJI	Director, Political Affairs Division	Commonwealth Secretariat
Terry	BARRINGER	Assistant Editor	The Round Table & Senior Member, Wolfson College
Richard	BOURNE	Chairman	The Round Table
Anwar	CHOUDHURY	Director, International Institutional Reform	Foreign & Commonwealth Office
Mark	COLLINS	Director	Commonwealth Foundation
Daisy	COOPER	Stragic Planning Officer	Commonwealth Secretariat & Round Table
Vic	CRAGGS	Chief Executive	Commonwealth Youth Exchange Council
Steve	CUTTS	Director, Stragic Planning & Evaluation Division	Commonwealth Secretariat
Richard	DELAHUNTY	Managing Editor, The Round Table	Taylor & Francis
Cheryl	DORALL	Secretary	Commonwealth Association/ & CJA-UK
Stacey	DORAN	Publishing Editor, The Round Table	Taylor & Francis
Baroness	FALKNER	Foreign Affairs team	Liberal Democrats
Paul	FLATHER	Secretary-General	Europaeum & Fellow, Mansfield College, Oxford
Simon	GIMSON	Director, Office of the SG	Commonwealth Secretariat
Meredith	HOOPER	Senior Academic Visitor	Wolfson College, Cambridge
Derek	INGRAM	Editorial Board Member	The Round Table
Alexandra	JONES	Director-designate of Corporate Services	The Gaelic Board and Round Table
David	KALETE	Civil Society Liaison Manager	Commonwealth Secretariat
Doug	KING	Assistant Private Secretary to The Queen	Buckingham Palace
Vijay	KRISHNARAYAN	Deputy Director	Commonwealth Foundation
Sir Peter	MARSHALL	Former Chair	Council of Commonwealth Societies
Mmasekgoa	MASIRE-MWAMBA	Deputy Secretary-General	Commonwealth Secretariat
Alex	MAY	Hon. Secretary	The Round Table
Stuart	MOLE	Conference Organiser	The Round Table & Sarlsdown Associates
Philip	MURPHY	Director	Institute of Commonwealth Studies
Midhfa	NAEEM	youth participant	The Maldives
Keshini	NAVARATNAM	Former Presenter	BBC World & Round Table
Alastair	NIVEN	Principal	Cumberland Lodge & Round Table
Helen	NIVEN	spouse	
Richard	O'DONNELL	Communications Officer	Commonwealth Human Ecology Council
Valeria	OKAI	youth participant (Ghana)	EU Delegation to Ghana (programme officer)
Rita	PAYNE	Chair (UK branch)	Commonwealth Journalists Association
Patsy	ROBERTSON	Chair	The Commonwealth Association
Mark	ROBINSON	Chair (UK)	Commonwealth Consortium for Education
Prue	SCARLETT	Honorary Consul	Samoa (and the Round Table)
Victoria	SCHOFIELD	Editorial Board Member	The Round Table
H E Kamallesh	SHARMA	Commonwealth Secretary-General	Commonwealth Secretariat
Mohamed	SHERIFF	Executive Director	Pampana Communications, Sierra Leone
Missouri	SHERMAN-PETER	Permanent Secretary	Ministry of Internal Security, Bahamas
Nicholas	SIMS	Reader in International Relations	LSE & Round Table
Derek	SMAIL	Trustee	Commonwealth Press Union Media Trust
Elizabeth	SMITH	Secretary-General	Commonwealth Broadcasting Association
Kayode	SOYINKA	Editor	Africa Today' & Round Table
Victoria	TE VELDE	Director	Commonwealth Policy Studies Unit
Gavin	TENCH	Head, Commonwealth Co-ordination Team	Foreign & Commonwealth Office
Mélanie	TORRENT	Lecturer in British History	Université Paris Diderot and the Round Table
Zoe	WARE	Commonwealth Affairs Manager	Royal Commonwealth Society & Round Table
Nicholas	WATTS	Education Adviser	Commonwealth Human Ecology Council
Peter	WILLIAMS	Hon. Secretary	Commonwealth Consortium of Education

