

CNS1439

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COMMONWEALTH HEADS RENEW COMMITMENT TO DEMOCRACY, RULE OF LAW

COMMONWEALTH-Declaration

From Kuala Lumpur

① Dr. M - overseas trips.

HARARE, Oct 20 (Bernama) -- The Commonwealth has renewed its commitment to democracy, rule of law, independence of the judiciary and just and honest government in a special declaration endorsed by all its 50 member countries.

The +Harare Commonwealth Declaration+ also reaffirmed the organisation's continuing action to bring about the end of apartheid and the establishment of a free, democratic, non-racial and prosperous South Africa.

The 13-point document was approved by the Commonwealth leaders at the end of their traditional Retreat in Victoria Falls, the largest in the world, some 800 km northwest of here.

Prepared by the High Level Appraisal Group headed by Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad, the declaration sets the course of action and priorities of the organisation for the years ahead.

In the declaration, seen as another +turning point+ in Commonwealth history, the leaders reaffirmed their confidence in the body as a voluntary association of sovereign nations, each responsible for its own policies, consulting and co-operating in the interest of their own people. -- more

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The grouping comprises Britain and its former colonies which together have a quarter of the world's population.

Affirming their commitment to the Commonwealth principles, they pledged to work with renewed vigour in the following areas:-

+the protection and promotion of the fundamental political values of the Commonwealth -- democracy, democratic processes and institution, rule of law and independence of the judiciary, just and honest government and fundamental human rights, including equal rights and opportunities for all citizens, regardless of race, colour, creed or political belief;

+equality for women;

+promotion of sustainable development and alleviation of poverty in Commonwealth countries;

+protection of the environment through respect for the principle of sustainable development as spelled out in the Langkawi Declaration;

+action to combat drug trafficking and abuse and communicable diseases;

+help for the smallest Commonwealth states in tackling their particular economic and security problems, and -- more

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+support for the United Nations and other international institutions in the world's search for peace, disarmament and effective arms control, and in the promotion of international consensus on major global political, economic and social issues.

They reaffirmed that international peace and order, global economic development and the rule of international law were essential to the security and prosperity of Mankind.

The leaders renewed their belief in the liberty of the individual under the law, in equal rights for all citizens regardless of gender, race, colour, creed or political belief, and in the individual's inalienable right to participate in free elections.

They described racial prejudice and intolerance as dangerous sicknesses and threat to healthy development and racial discrimination as an unmitigated evil.

They opposed all forms of racial oppression and were committed to the principles of human dignity and equality. -- more

▼20/10/17-44MST

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They also recognised the importance and urgency of economic and social development to satisfy the basic needs and aspirations of the vast majority of the peoples of the world and to seek progressive removal of the wide disparities in living standards among the member countries.

The Commonwealth leaders noted that many of their members were poor and faced acute problems, including population growth, crushing poverty, debt burdens and environmental degradation.

Only sound and sustainable development could offer these millions the prospect of betterment, and achieving this could require a flow of public and private resources from the developed to the developing world, they said. -- Bernama

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