

# Commonwealth summit put off

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## Secretariat to discuss new date with Aussie PM

LONDON, Fri: The Commonwealth said today it has postponed its meeting of heads of government in Australia next month, which would have been the largest gathering of global leaders since the Sept 11 attacks on the United States.

The Oct 6-9 meeting of 45 heads of government in Brisbane had been put off "due to unforeseen circumstances", Commonwealth secretary-general Don McKinnon said in a statement.

"It is with a huge feeling of disappointment that I announce this decision, a feeling that I know will be shared right across the Commonwealth and beyond," McKinnon said.

He said it was easy to understand the desire of political leaders to be with their own people at a time of uncertainty.

Doubts had earlier emerged over whether the Brisbane meeting would take place with the US edging towards military action against

Afghanistan's ruling Taliban over the sanctuary they had given to Osama bin Laden, the prime US suspect in the New York and Washington attacks.

"CHOGM (Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting) has been deferred purely for practical reasons," he said.

McKinnon said he will shortly be discussing with Australian Prime Minister John Howard and others when the meeting can be rescheduled.

"Prime Minister

Howard has told me that the Government of Australia is keen to host this meeting in Brisbane early next year and will be consulting Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II, Head of the Commonwealth, in relation to the exact timing," the statement said.

"Naturally, I will also consult with other Commonwealth leaders," McKinnon said.

The queen would have officially opened the Brisbane meeting. ...  
Reuters