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PRIME MINISTER'S STATEMENT
AT OPENING SESSION OF
COMMONWEALTH HEADS OF GOVERNMENT MEETING
LUSAKA, WEDNESDAY 1 AUGUST 1979

Mr. Chairman, ~~Follow Heads of Government, Mr. Secretary-General,~~ ^{Colleague} (it is
an honour to speak at this opening session.

And it is a particular pleasure, Mr. President, to meet
here in Zambia under your chairmanship.

You yourself have for many years played a notable role in
Commonwealth affairs.

Your country is deeply involved in some of the most difficult
problems the Commonwealth faces today.

I look forward to interesting and useful days in Lusaka, and,
Mr. Chairman, to enjoying your generous hospitality.

We are all very conscious of the unsparing efforts which you
have made for our comfort and of the meticulous preparations
to which the Secretary-General and his staff have devoted
so much time.

Mr. Chairman, I begin by joining in the welcome for the four Commonwealth
countries represented here for the first time: the Solomon
Islands, Dominica, St. Lucia and Kiribati.

And I am glad, too, to see Uganda resume her place with us.

/Mr. Chairman

Mr. Chairman, you and many of our colleagues have attended Commonwealth Heads of Government meetings in the past.

Although I have attended other Commonwealth gatherings, this is the first Heads of Government meeting in which I have taken part and I look forward to adding, in Lusaka, to my experience of how the Commonwealth works.

Together, our countries make up a quarter of the world's population and of its nations.

Our peoples come from different religions, races and cultures.

They live under very dissimilar political and economic systems.

What is it that brings us together?

The first and obvious answer is: history.

History brought our nations together in the past.

It was a random process and each of us may interpret it in different and even incompatible ways.

Our shared history has given us some common ideas about politics and a common language in which to communicate.

No other international gathering of comparable size has these advantages.

/But shared

But shared history and shared language are of little use on their own.

I doubt if any of us come here simply out of sentimental regard for the past.

Moreover, it is not enough for us just to exchange views on the issues of the day.

It is not enough for the Commonwealth to operate simply as a worldwide communications network.

Nor is it enough that the Commonwealth should be merely one of the many international bodies for the provision of economic aid between developed and developing countries -- although 90 per cent of our Commonwealth members belong to the latter category.

Important though all these functions are, the Commonwealth must stand for something more if it is to endure.

Our predecessors publicly committed the Commonwealth to the ideals of democracy, individual liberty and equality for all under the rule of law.

/It is not

It is not the exclusive prerogative of any one constitutional system to promote these ideals.

They can - as I hope they do - exist within the wide variety of political arrangements under which we have variously chosen to live.

But in a world in which these beliefs are under constant attack, I believe that the Commonwealth has a duty to proclaim them, to protect them and to practise them.

(Practise is not always showed on Britain. Practise should be shown on all systems and that will be a Commonwealth which is relevant and relevant to all.)

Mr. Chairman, I should like to refer briefly to some topics which *have all* concern us all and which will be central to our discussions *just* this week. *included.*

First, the world economy.

Here the prospects are not encouraging. We face slower growth, rising inflation, persistent unemployment and balance of payments problems.

Our difficulties have been made worse by the latest round of oil price increases *and by recent sudden Arabian action which will alter the oil market.* *opines*
The developing countries will be doubly hard hit.

/In the first place

In the first place, directly: but then, too, because many developed countries will be less able to give help or to provide the expanding markets which the developing countries need for their prosperity.

In the short term, we each need to adopt sensible domestic policies, and to make the best use of existing international institutions for economic cooperation.

In the longer term, we must find ways of using the world's limited supplies of fossil fuel more effectively, and to develop alternative and preferably renewable sources of energy.

The Tokyo Summit was an important step.

Our discussions here could take the process further.

Second, I refer to the tragic plight of those caught up in the latest example of man's inhumanity to man: the refugees from Vietnam.

Refugees are nothing new to some members of the Commonwealth, who have for years grappled with the problems they pose. Now others, too, notably Malaysia, are faced with very heavy social burdens not of their own making.

/Both the

Both the Commonwealth and the world community must constantly focus on the real source of the crisis, which is the policy pursued by the Vietnamese Government.

Only if there is a genuine change of policy there can we hope to stop the appalling suffering.

In the meantime, we have a practical as well as a humanitarian and political problem to solve.

That is why Britain proposed to the United Nations that a Conference should be convened which would cover all these aspects.

The Geneva Conference, at which a number of Commonwealth countries were represented, marked an important first step.

But there is much more to do, and it is vital that the international community should maintain the solidarity it displayed at Geneva in following up the decisions reached there.

Third, the problems of Southern Africa.

We are all conscious of the ever more urgent need for a settlement of the Rhodesia problem.

/ My colleagues

My colleagues and I have greatly benefited from the consultations we have been pursuing within the Commonwealth and with other African governments.

I am grateful to all those who have given us their advice and have expressed their views so clearly.

I shall listen with the greatest attention to what is said at this meeting in Lusaka.

The United Kingdom has pledged itself to exercise its constitutional responsibility for Rhodesia.

The aim is to bring Rhodesia to legal independence on a basis which the Commonwealth and the international community as a whole will find acceptable; and which offers the prospect of peace for people of Rhodesia and its neighbours.

M I said in the House of Commons last week
~~I should like to make it clear, once and for all, that~~
the British Government ^{is wholly} ~~are totally~~ committed to genuine black majority rule in Rhodesia.

The value of these days in Lusaka will lie not only in the outcome of our discussions round the table.

It will lie equally, or perhaps even mainly, in the friendships which we are able to renew and in the fresh contacts which we are able to make during our time together.

The informality of the Commonwealth style is its great strength.

/ By this

By this time next week there may, I dare say, still remain some differences of view between us, and on more than one issue. But I know, too, that we shall - each one of us - be confirmed in our recognition of the sincerity of purpose of our Commonwealth partners and of their fundamental goodwill and commitment to the Commonwealth's ideals.