



**DEPARTMENT OF
FOREIGN
AFFAIRS**

NO

DATE

M/118

3 August 1973

COMMONWEALTH HEADS OF GOVERNMENT MEETING

The following is the text of a statement issued in Ottawa on 2 August (Ottawa time) by the Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs, Mr Whitlam, at the opening of the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting:

"The Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs, Mr Whitlam, said in Ottawa this morning that he looked forward to wide-ranging and substantial discussions about present political trends in the world, economic issues including trade, monetary and development questions and also on intra-Commonwealth relations, at the Commonwealth Meeting which starts in Ottawa today.

Mr Whitlam reiterated that the Australian Government intended to adopt a more constructive and helpful approach towards the Commonwealth in the future.

Although it was fashionable in some quarters to disparage the Commonwealth, Mr Whitlam said, he hoped the Ottawa meeting would give a new stimulus to constructive cooperation and consultation between the diverse members of the Commonwealth.

.../2

More than half of these members were, he added, littoral states of the Indian and Pacific Oceans.

Mr Whitlam said he saw in the Commonwealth a very valuable forum for cooperation, contacts and exchanges of views at all levels.

He was, he added, looking forward to establishing personal contact with a number of Heads of Government, especially from African and Caribbean countries and to renewing personal contacts with others, including the host Prime Minister, Mr Trudeau.

Senator Willesee's visit in June to a number of Commonwealth countries in Africa, the first such visit by an Australian Minister for many years, and his own visits to India, New Zealand, Britain and Mauritius earlier in the year, as well as his contacts with the Prime Minister of Fiji and his recent correspondence with the Prime Minister of Malaysia and Singapore, Tun Razak and Mr Lee Kuan Yew, had, Mr Whitlam said, been valuable in paving the way for effective Australian participation in the conference."