



PRIME MINISTER

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COMMONWEALTH REGIONAL MEETING - MELBOURNE, FEBRUARY 1978

A meeting of Commonwealth regional Heads of Government, which was an Australian initiative at the Commonwealth Heads of Government meeting in London, is to take place in Melbourne early next year.

Present planning is proceeding on the basis of a meeting in Melbourne next February.

Invitations have been extended to the Heads of Government of eleven regional Commonwealth countries - Bangladesh, Fiji, India, Malaysia, Nauru, New Zealand, Papua New Guinea, Singapore, Sri Lanka, Tonga and Western Samoa.

The agenda for the meeting will consist of international and Commonwealth matters of interest to the region, and is expected to include, subject to consultations with the Governments concerned, regional economic and functional co-operation, international economic issues and regional political trends.

The agenda will be discussed in detail at an officials' meeting in London next month, and will then be submitted to the participating Heads of Government for approval.

The communique issued after the Commonwealth Heads of Government meeting in London in June endorsed the concept of informal regional consultative arrangements among Commonwealth countries.

The matter was one on which I spoke in London suggesting that informal consultations among regional leaders would have a number of advantages. I am pleased at the progress made in recent weeks.

The Commonwealth Secretary General, Mr. Ramphal, has been encouraging in his reaction to a regional meeting, and has accepted an invitation to attend.

In London, the Commonwealth Heads of Government meeting saw regional consultation as enhancing co-operation on matters of Commonwealth interest and furthering collective Commonwealth objectives.

The Australian initiative for a Commonwealth regional meeting has been taken in this spirit.