

Appointment of Malcolm Fraser to Commonwealth group on South Africa.



PRIME MINISTER

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The Commonwealth Accord on Southern Africa, concluded at Nassau last week, included as one of its important elements a decision to establish a small group of eminent Commonwealth persons to encourage a process of dialogue and reform in South Africa.

Mr Malcolm Fraser has accepted the Government's request to serve as a member of the group.

The central objective to which I and other Commonwealth leaders addressed ourselves at Nassau was to see an effective process of change and reform begun in South Africa.

The core elements of Australia's approach to the Meeting were a two-pronged strategy of a package of measures of pressure, for implementation against a timetable of action, and mechanisms for dialogue. Those elements were accepted by other leaders and are embodied in the Accord.

The measures agreed on by the Commonwealth against South Africa build effectively on the steps that have been taken in recent weeks by the international community - notably the United States, the European Community, and other countries including Australia.

It was not our purpose at Nassau to impose sanctions measures for their own sake. We all recognised the desirability of the Commonwealth playing its own constructive role to develop proposals to assist the peaceful transition of South Africa to a non-racial society based on universal adult suffrage.

Commonwealth leaders acknowledged that it was for the people of South Africa themselves to work out the details of their own political and constitutional future. We realised that it would not be appropriate for the Commonwealth to be intrusive or prescriptive.

Nevertheless, at a time when some of the major elements of South Africa society have begun to talk to each other across the apartheid barrier in the face of hostility from the South African Government, I and other leaders felt that the Commonwealth could facilitate the process of dialogue.

This was the basis of Australia's initiative to form the group of eminent persons, independent individuals not currently active in politics, which was endorsed by the Meeting.

I am very pleased that Mr Fraser will be a member of the group. He is an Australian whose credentials on South Africa are highly regarded by African leaders and I am confident that he will make a valuable contribution.

His nomination will be communicated to the Governments of Zambia, the Bahamas, India, the United Kingdom and Zimbabwe, as well as to the Commonwealth Secretary General, who along with Australia, are responsible for determining the group's composition and mandate.