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PRIME MINISTER

FOR MEDIA

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As members of the Commonwealth all around the world celebrate Commonwealth Day 1990, the Commonwealth has cause to be exceptionally proud of its role, particularly in helping to bring change to southern Africa.

Australia was actively involved in Namibia's transition to democracy and we look forward to welcoming Namibia as the Commonwealth's fiftieth member on its Independence Day on 21 March.

All Commonwealth members have also welcomed Nelson Mandela's release and the recent reforms announced by the de Klerk Government.

This year will also mark the first time that Pakistan celebrates Commonwealth Day since its return to the Commonwealth under the leadership of democratically elected Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto.

Pakistan's entry to the Commonwealth, brought to forty-nine the number of countries that will be celebrating the achievements of this remarkable grouping of countries.

The environment, an issue of growing global concern, was a major topic for discussion at the October 40th anniversary meeting of the Commonwealth Heads of Government in Kuala Lumpur. The Langkawi Declaration provides a clear-sighted program of action for dealing with international environmental problems.

The Commonwealth welcomed Australia's initiative to develop a vital program to provide training for assessing the effects of climate change on rural land productivity.

The achievements of this past year are a clear sign that the Commonwealth will respond positively and creatively to the challenges of the 1990s.