

Suggested interventions for the Hon'ble Foreign Minister at the thirty-sixth meeting of the Commonwealth Ministerial Action Group (CMAG) to be held at New York Helmsley Hotel on Thursday, 22 September 2011 from 08:30 – 10:30 hours

[For kind information: Delegates have been requested to bring all necessary documents with them.]

Agenda item 2: Review of Developments in Fiji

[For kind information: Despite announcement, a Working Note on Fiji has not been distributed as of 11 September 2011. However, the latest Communiqué of the 42nd Pacific Islands Forum held in Auckland on 07-08 September 2011 'expressed their continuing deep concern at the deteriorating human rights situation and serious political and economic challenges facing the people of Fiji.' It is expected that Working Note of the Commonwealth Secretariat would contain similar views.]

[A very good morning to you and my distinguished colleagues around this table. Mr. Chairman, I have deep appreciation for your wise leadership over the last one year, during which time this Group has not only discharged its usual duty of the defending the core values of the Commonwealth but also essentially come to a successful conclusion of its deliberations for strengthening its own role. I also convey my sincere thanks to the Secretary General for providing substantive as well as organizational assistance in carrying forward the work of the Group.]

Mr. Chairman, speaking of Fiji, first of all, I express my deep condolence at the sad demise, on 14 August 2011, of Sir Paul Reeves, the Special Representative of the Commonwealth Secretary General to Fiji since 2007 and former Governor General of New Zealand. My sympathies go out for the family and the people of New Zealand in view of this irreparable loss. The best way for us to show respect for the departed soul of Sir Paul Reeves will be to intensify our efforts in re-establishing the rights of the people cross the Commonwealth, which he always stood for.

I thank the Secretary General for presenting an up-to-date working note on the situation in Fiji.

It is disappointing that the intended visit of Sir Paul Reeves to Fiji in 2011 could not take place before his passing away. It is leant that the planned visit of the Ministerial Contact Group (MCG) of the Pacific Islands Forum (PIF) did not happen either. The prime reason for indefinite postponement of these visits appears to be the lack of assurance from the interim government of Fiji that the visitors could meet all the stakeholders. This is actually indicative of the absence of an atmosphere of transparency and liberty in Fiji. We regret to take note of reports of worsening situation in terms of civil and political rights of Fijian people and of lack of genuine progress in the political process for restoration of democratic rule.

The CMAG may not have any other option but to continue the suspension of Fiji for the time being. In any case, it is the steadfast position of Bangladesh that the Commonwealth and international partners should continue to engage with Fiji to support an early return to democracy. Therefore, we endorse the substance in draft concluding statement.

Agenda item 3: Draft CMAG Biennial Report to CHOGM

[For kind information: Despite announcement, the biennial report has not been distributed as of 11 September 2011.]

Mr. Chairman, thanks very much for putting up the draft Biennial Report to CHOGM. The report has been an exhaustive and objective account of the work of CMAG over the last two years. This report carries particular importance as it collates the outcome of all the hard work put in by the distinguished members of this Group as well as the Secretary General, particularly in the endeavour for its reform.

Agenda item 4: Report on Strengthening Role of CMAG and Chair's Presentation to CFAMM

[For kind information: The final draft of the Report on Strengthening the Role of CMAG has been distributed. However, the Chair's Presentation to CFAMM has not been distributed as of 11 September 2011.]

Report on Strengthening Role of CMAG

Mr. Chairman, it is a matter of satisfaction that this Group was able to finalize the substantive content of the Report on Strengthening the Role of CMAG in our last meeting held in London on 28 April 2011. We thank the Secretariat for giving language to the substance of our amendments and producing the latest draft Report under the direction of the Chair. We are particularly happy that the finalized draft report, which we received under Secretary General's covering letter of 24 June 2011, meets our main concern and does differentiate between a situation of structural deficiencies and a case of wilful denial of civil & political rights in member states, and provides room for engagement of the Commonwealth in a constructive manner with a longer response period in situations of such structural deficiencies, without casting any negative shadow on the concerned member states.

The insertion at paragraph 18 (iv) that has been proposed by a member after the last meeting in London does not make any substantive change; rather it clarifies the case in point. My delegation has no problem with this amendment. We hope that today we will be able to put a final seal on this draft before it is presented to the wider membership of the Commonwealth, that is, CFAMM today and CHOGM in October. It is my ardent hope that the leaders will endorse this report and it will become a valuable guideline for the future work of this Group.

Chair's Presentation to CFAMM

Mr. Chairman, thank you for sharing with us the draft of the Chair's Presentation. We find the presentation to be elaborate and appropriate. [Based on actual presentation] We would like to make one humble suggestion. We are aware that Eminent Persons Group (EPG) is also presenting a report on the reform of the Commonwealth to the Heads of Government. The report of EPG contains important recommendations on CMAG also. Most of the recommendations of the EPG on CMAG were already incorporated in our report or raised in our meetings at some stage or other. It might be remiss, if recommendations of EPG on CMAG is ignored in our presentation on strengthening of the role of CMAG. We believe that you have the liberty or discretion to give some comment or, at least, refer to the recommendations of EPG on CMAG, although the report of EPG has not been officially submitted to us. It might in order for you to put the issue of strengthening the role of CMAG in the overall context of the reform of the Commonwealth.