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VOICE FILE NAME: COHP Max Gaylard (Part Two)

Key:
SO: Dr Sue Onslow (Interviewer)
MG: Mr Max Gaylard (Respondent)

Part Two:

SO: This is Sue Onslow talking to Mr Max Gaylard for the second time, 6th August 2014. Max, thank you very much indeed for coming back to Senate House to talk further about your time at the Secretariat. I wonder, please, if you could reflect on your first Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting in Kuala Lumpur. This, of course, was an event which Dr Mahathir used very much to Malaysia's advantage. It was also the occasion of Malcolm Fraser's unsuccessful bid to be Secretary General. What were your observations of your former Prime Minister's bid to be Secretary General?

MG: Yes, well, thank you for the opportunity again to have a chat. As an Australian, as you can imagine, I took a pretty close interest – but a neutral one, for obvious reasons, because my direct boss was Chief Anyaoku. I was the Director of Political Affairs Division – later the International Affairs Division – answering to Chief as the Deputy Secretary General (Political). [Chief] was the other person running for the position and, of course, got it. So, I do recall my Australian Foreign Service colleagues consulting me from time to time, asking what I thought the chances might be for Mr Fraser. If anything, I simply commented then that they should not underrate the opposition! [*Laughter*]

SO: Well, indeed! How much do you think there was also an insidious undercurrent that Malcolm Fraser – who was from a 'wider British world' – was not going to be successful in his bid to be SG at an event hosted by Dr Mahathir, who had a reputation for being somewhat suspicious of 'Europeans'?

MG: Clearly, on the day, Chief Anyaoku was the person that they wanted. I think part of it comes down to practicalities, and the Chief almost certainly

networked a lot better than perhaps Malcolm Fraser did. It was not that Malcolm Fraser didn't try. He travelled the Commonwealth with ambassadors and senior officials from Canberra in tow. So, he certainly did the legwork, but there might have been a feeling – according to what I recall – that this is the first ex-Prime Minister that's seeking to become the Secretary General. Before that, they'd been ministers: senior officials of one type or the other. And, of course, Malcolm Fraser wasn't just any Prime Minister. He had been prominent on the Eminent Persons Group for Southern Africa, together with General Obasanjo and others. So, it wasn't that he was not known. He *was* known; he did have 'form' in the sense that he had served on the Eminent Persons Group. At the end of the day, it was decided by secret ballot, and one networked better than the other and for various reasons was more appealing. I think it might have been a surprise to the Australians on the day, at the conference venue in Kuala Lumpur. I was there – not in the room, just outside. Anyway, I remember an Australian friend of mine who was working with Malcolm Fraser's team coming out of one of the early preparatory sessions where it had been decided that the ballot would be secret, saying, "We've got it, we've got it," and I said, "Well, you'd better wait a bit." [*Laughter*] And, of course, they didn't have it, and what had almost certainly happened was that some Heads who had earlier promised their vote to Malcolm Fraser didn't deliver on the day. The secret ballot was probably the deciding factor for the Chief, not Mr Fraser.

SO: I know that before the start of the heads' meeting there was an expectation that the ballot – such as there was – was going to take place at the Retreat, and Dr Mahathir was very keen that it should be got out of the way as soon as possible in the proceedings.

MG: It was. It was a done deal before the Retreat.

SO: Were you aware that Mrs Thatcher approached Dr Mahathir on the eve of the Summit and said, "Please don't let South Africa dominate the proceedings"? Dr Mahathir, too, didn't want it to be a one issue summit.

MG: I wasn't aware of that. But if that was her plea, then it failed, because in addition to the election of the new Secretary General, the issue that really dominated that CHOGM – and these were two week CHOGMs, remember – was South Africa. If it wasn't going to be the most talked about item, there was no going back when the Heads allowed the Commonwealth Committee of Foreign Ministers on South Africa, the CCFMSA, to attend the CHOGM to put together and discuss the South Africa segment of the Communiqué. I should emphasise that, at the CHOGMs then – not so much now, I think – it was the Presidents and Prime Ministers who attended. They guarded jealously 'their' CHOGM, and ministers were not generally welcome. So, the advent of the Commonwealth Committee of Foreign Ministers – there were nine of them, I think, who came – that, in itself, was different.

SO: That was a departure?

MG: It was a departure. And they sat long nights and days and wrestled with the issue of South Africa. It was here, I think, where Mrs Thatcher at one stage said she was in…what was it? A “majority of one”, or a “minority of one”.

SO: [*Laughter*] “A minority of 1 to 45”, I believe was how she described it.

MG: [*Laughter*] Whatever it was.

SO: You referred to that in your first interview. Also, coming out of that particular heads of government meeting was the Langkawi Declaration on Climate Change.

MG: Yes.

SO: The other issue I wanted to ask you about was the High Level Review process. I understand that Malaysia was in the chair and that the group was tasked to review the capacity of the Commonwealth – in particular, also, the capacity of the Secretariat – to achieve current and future tasks. I wondered if you were involved in this in any way. Were you providing the Secretariat support for this officials committee?

MG: Well, I was, nominally, but I recall I had to leave that largely to others because I was wrapped up with the South Africa issue. I was [overseeing] the to-ing and fro-ing on the language and the wrestling with the communiqué, and all that sort of thing. To be honest, I don’t recall too much about the detailed consideration of the High Level Review. But together with the South Africa issue, there was a connecting thread from Kuala Lumpur to the following CHOGM in Harare two years later, where the basic theme was the promotion of democracy and good governance and which spawned the seminal 1991 Harare Declaration. A lot of work went into preparing for Harare and the making of the Declaration.

SO: As an individual personal observation, how effective do you believe Robert Armstrong was as a key British civil servant? He was Secretary to the Cabinet at that particular point…

MG: He was the chief civil servant, yes.

SO: Yes, he was, indeed. Was he an effective contributor to the Commonwealth process?

MG: My recollection is that he was very much involved, and was very available to the Secretary General – certainly to Ramphal, and I think he was still there when the Chief took up the reins at the end of 1990. Very involved. In fact, the British Foreign and Commonwealth Office had a section of officers dealing with the Commonwealth as a concept and as an institution, and [these officers] took a very close interest in everything that we did.

SO: Did you find them helpful, supportive, available? Engaged?

MG: Very available, yes. We wandered across to their offices and they to ours quite frequently.

SO: So. you didn't have a sense of animosity towards a 'jumped-up' institution or anything like that? That it genuinely was a collaborative, interested and engaged relationship?

MG: I thought so. And for the preparation of communiqués – not just [for] the CHOGMs but for any other ministerial meetings, but particularly the CHOGM communiqués – with all of us being in London, they had a bit of head start in a way, I guess, over other Commonwealth bureaucracies. But, in any case, they were very interested and very involved.

SO: This is interesting, because it contrasts sharply with how Don McKinnon describes his relationship with the Permanent Under-Secretary at the Foreign Office, and the relationship between Marlborough House and the FCO during his time after 2000.

MG: Was it combative?

SO: Well, he suggests that there was a particular series of meetings that he had convened but which Sir Michael Jay didn't even – as he put it – "walk across St James' Park" to attend.

MG: No, that wasn't the case in my time. Not because of me! [*Laughter*] At least partly because of Sonny Ramphal and the Chief: they had ready access, as far as I could see.

SO: Max, please, if I could ask you about the Harare Declaration. You said that the work towards good governance, democracy and democratization was initiated at the Kuala Lumpur summit. The Commonwealth's first election observer mission went to Malaysia, which was not altogether comfortable, shall we say? But by October of 1991, the Harare Declaration was pronounced – the second most important document for the Commonwealth, following on from the Singapore Declaration…

MG: Yes.

SO: I have a copy of it here. At the June 2013 witness seminar on the History of the Commonwealth Secretariat, you said that, "The preparation of the document itself had taken place over many months: lots of consultations with lots of debate, argument about content." Please, could you elaborate on its emergence and the "lots of consultation, lots of debate, and lots of argument about content"?

MG: I guess the first point to make is that, by this time, the Chief had taken over as Secretary General. He was very careful that the drafting of the Declaration was seen to be prepared by the Secretariat on behalf of the members, and fully reflecting the range of views. So, he and his colleagues had to be very careful about not being seen to be paying too much attention to any particular

member. And, of course, the UK, being based in London [*Laughter*] – and, we being based in London, along with them – had a bit of a head start. The FCO people contributed a lot of thinking and work on it. They were contributing, but I don't recall that we ever came to blows or serious disagreements, because not only them [but] others through the High Commissions were also interested and active. So, it was, from my perspective, very much a consultative process as we went along. But the Secretariat, led by Chief as the Secretary-General, retained full control over the draft.

By the time we got to Harare – a couple of weeks before the actual event, I suppose, or a week or so – that's where President Mugabe came into play as the host and the Chair of the meeting. So, the final drafting of the Communiqué obviously involved him and one or two of his most senior advisers. Of course, there was plenty of interest from elsewhere – the Indians and the Malaysians, in particular, in addition to the Australians, the British, the New Zealanders and Canadians. The Malaysians were particularly interested. They were playing a very proactive role in Commonwealth affairs at this stage. As I might have reflected before, when it came to the final document, which was being massaged by everyone, there was still a sticking point. The term 'good governance' was not acceptable to most, and so it eventually became 'just and honest government'. And there was quite a debate about this.

SO: Yes, you said that the Malaysians and the Indians objected because they felt it was too nebulous.

MG: Yes, and that's why the terminology became 'just and honest government'. Not good governance, because it was thought that this might have been perceived to be verging on interference – perhaps an attack on sovereignty. At the end of the day, I think it might have been the Chief himself who came up with 'just and honest government'.

SO: So, the Indians were objecting because they too felt that it wasn't sufficiently concrete?

MG: I think so. You see, there was also particular concern about the extent to which an international institution should or should not be interfering in sovereign affairs. So, that issue was always there, particularly as the observer groups started to get underway. There was only one by that stage, but in the next five years we must have done fifteen or twenty. I can't remember exactly how many.

SO: When I interviewed Dr Mahathir, he reflected that he felt that there were democratic processes in place if the opposition was allowed to vote. I wondered if the Malaysian leadership modified, in any way, a commitment to a Commonwealth-wide declaration on 'good governance'?

MG: Well, not just Malaysia. I would say [that], amongst many of the Commonwealth countries, there was still not so much a stiff resistance, but doubts as to where the debate on human rights and democracy would lead.

Some of them were concerned that things might evolve too quickly. There were at least sixteen military dictatorships or one-party states in the Commonwealth at that time, and both during and immediately after the 1991 Harare CHOGM many were beginning to grasp the nettle. Basically, there was a dawning realisation that they had to progress along the line, away from one-party states and away from life-long presidential constitutions and so on. I think what the Harare Declaration represents is the best result for everyone, as a collective. And they were able to use it as a guiding document and inspiration for the next however many years.

SO: That you recall, what was President Robert Mugabe's attitude towards the emerging Harare Declaration and his degree of engagement with it? Obviously, he was host, so he had a particular standing by virtue of the platform of the Harare meeting.

MG: I recall that he was okay with it all. I don't think Zimbabwe made too much fuss about things at the time, unless it was behind the scenes, but I don't think so.

SO: I just wondered if you would have picked up, with your political antennae, any rumbles at, say, the Retreat at Elephant Hills, or anything like that.

MG: I didn't. I think [that], on the Harare Commonwealth Declaration, President Mugabe was happy enough to go along with it at the time.

SO: Max, it's often that declarations and events can seem very significant afterwards.

MG: Right.

SO: At the time, there is not necessarily an appreciation that this was a seminal event…

MG: Yes, absolutely.

SO: …that this was not simply a declaration and an intention to proceed. The Declaration encapsulated genuine commitment to accelerated change.

MG: Yes, very much. [It was] helped considerably by what was evolving in South Africa. Because, by this stage, Nelson Mandela was walking free, and I think I told you how he turned up by accident?

SO: [*Laughter*] Yes, you did.

MG: Well, he didn't turn up in Harare by accident, but he turned up at the Queen's reception by accident. So, there was this 'ex-terrorist' – in the view of one or two of the member states – actually there. So, there was a new world coming, you see what I mean?

SO: Max, this is thinking slightly outside the box, but how much do you think that the Harare Declaration was also, to a degree, trying to forestall resistance within the National Party in South Africa? There had been an acceptance, an awareness, that there had to be negotiated change, but still, within the National Party in South Africa, there was a determination that they were going to manage this process. It was going to be *their* stamp on the negotiations, which were designed for power-sharing, not transfer to black majority rule.

MG: Right.

SO: So, if there was a broader Commonwealth commitment…?

MG: I didn't perceive any such connections. My experience of South Africa was that they accepted the practical Commonwealth help that we provided in the lead-up to the elections – or, to be more precise, the ANC and other parties accepted the involvement of the Secretary General. But the Harare Declaration was, in my view, not seminal for South Africa; rather, it was the other way around. What was happening in South Africa was seminal to Harare. The fall of the Berlin Wall in early November 1989 and the beginnings of the disintegration of the Soviet Union were also key factors.

SO: So, you have the parallel acceleration towards democracy and liberal democratic capitalism – supposedly – in Eastern Europe, and this is also the period in which the Soviet Union started to unravel.

MG: Yes, that was a big factor as well. South Africa and the fall of the Wall, the beginnings of the break-up of the Soviet Union, and quite a lot of these one-party states started to think, "Well, maybe we'd better get on with it and head for multi-party democracy."

At least one Commonwealth state was quite prepared to head for a more democratic, representative system, but not a multi-party one: that was Uganda. I remember a very spirited exchange of views between President Museveni and Secretary General Anyaoku in a tent at the State House at Entebbe, where they debated the pros and cons of multi-party democracy. The Chief spoke very strongly for it; Museveni had his doubts. Democracy, yes, but not necessarily multi-party [democracy]. That was the gist of it, then.

SO: So, his argument was that it should be on a one-party list system, as he had established?

MG: I'm not sure that he was even saying that at the time. I think he was looking at a more grassroots style. In fact, what they did in Uganda around that time was to invite every single adult Ugandan to contribute towards the making of a constitution. On our visit, we were shown a storeroom in Kampala that had 24,000 submissions [*Laughter*] on the constitution. [The] process [was] overseen by an Australian Commonwealth expert on constitutions who had come from the South Pacific and had worked in Fiji, Papua New Guinea, the Solomon Islands and other places. Anyway, so, the main thrust was about multi-party democracy but there were arguments within that. Now, Zambia,

Kenya, Ghana, Lesotho, the Seychelles, Guyana, and maybe Bangladesh, among others, were all starting to accept that it was time for one-party states and/or dictatorships of some form or other to evolve towards representative democracy.

SO: But the question was the speed of that evolution.

MG: Well, some of them moved quite quickly. As I might have you told in the previous interview, some heads of state at Harare actually came and had a discussion with the Secretary General and requested early help, for example, on moving to a constitution that could support a multi-party system, like Kenya. So, a constitutional expert was in Kenya within months of this. [Concerning] the Seychelles, it was something similar with France-Albert René. I'm pretty sure he spoke to the Chief at Harare – if not there, shortly after. So, the interesting thing was [that] the leaders were putting their hands up and saying, "Well, let's go." Including Kaunda – I told you about Kaunda, because he was a celebrated case. He was the first one to lose. [*Laughter*]

SO: Indeed, and the Chief was appalled by the treatment that he received from the victor [Frederick Chiluba].

MG: Well, and then Chief intervened and fixed things – not just for Kaunda, but [he], in fact, set a template for the future: that they [i.e. former leaders] should be looked after by the state and certainly not be put up against a wall.

SO: Max, in addition to the Harare Declaration setting out the core principles and values of the Commonwealth, the document also detailed membership criteria. I am aware that the 1990s was an era when the Commonwealth continued to expand – beyond, it could be said, its natural constituency of former British colonies. It now included Mozambique and also Cameroon, which had acquired observation status in 1989 and which was finally accepted by 1995. Do you recall how much discussion there was about whether there should be very tight criteria on membership applications?

MG: There was such a discussion, and, broadly, the existing membership sought to apply these criteria up until I left the Secretariat in early 1996. Even in the cases of Cameroon and Mozambique, they were still judged against the principles of good governance, the observation of human rights, etc., and they weren't perfect but they were coming through.

In fact, one of the levers that opened the Commonwealth up to expanding membership was the case of Mozambique, and that occurred in the South Africa context. The Commonwealth had formed this Committee – the Commonwealth Committee of Foreign Ministers on Southern Africa – and it was basically the Front Line States to South Africa plus Canada and Australia. So, the Front Line States included Zambia, Zimbabwe, Botswana, Tanzania and one of the West African countries, Nigeria, whereupon Mozambique basically said, "Look, we're a Front Line State and we're affected as much as anyone." So, an agreement was reached sometime in

the mid-1980s that Mozambique would be part of that Commonwealth Committee.

SO: Well, they had already become a part of the negotiating process for the transition of Rhodesia/Zimbabwe, so there was an historical precedent.

MG: Right, okay.

SO: Arnold Smith had reached out to Mozambique in 1974 because of the realisation that once the liberation government instituted sanctions against the rebellious UDI regime – and also given its geographical position – Mozambique was going to need particular Commonwealth assistance. The Commonwealth set up a particular fund for technical assistance to Mozambique after November 1975.

MG: Right, well, that probably led to thinking within the Mozambique body politic that it might be advantageous for Mozambique to join the Commonwealth. So, from 1989, I think, Mozambique started its campaign to be a member of the Commonwealth. I'm pretty sure they were in Kuala Lumpur in 1989 with a delegation, and that the matter of their membership was on the agenda. It certainly was in 1991, 1993 and 1995.

SO: They were formally accepted in November 1995.

MG: That's right. And in 1989, 1991 and 1993, I think – probably all of those times – I was the one to come out and give them the bad news: namely, "Not this time." [*Laughter*] But in 1995 it was different. The item for discussion came up fairly early on the agenda, I think, and the CHOGMs were shortened by this stage anyway. I think it was going to be a week, maximum. So, the item came [up] for discussion, the speakers led off – I think Dr Mahathir probably spoke early, as did John Major, I seem to recall. Anyway, two or three heads of state spoke early and praised Mozambique, because the Civil War was over and there was an on-going process of reconciliation between RENAMO and FRELIMO. So, according to the Harare Declaration template, they weren't doing badly, but they weren't strictly eligible for Commonwealth membership, so they'd have to wait a bit longer. Again. And then Nelson Mandela took the floor. He was there as President of the new, recently-rejoined South Africa. He agreed with the previous speakers – everything they'd said about Mozambique making progress, [and also that it was] not strictly eligible for Commonwealth membership. But he, the President of South Africa, thought the right thing to do was to accept Mozambique immediately into the Commonwealth fold, and that was it! [*Laughter*]

SO: Yes! He was like Churchill after the Second World War. He was a one-man pressure group.

MG: Well, that's what it seemed like to me. The Chief might have told me to go and inform the Mozambicans, and so I slipped out of the room and there they were, waiting outside, slumped down and looking very unhappy. I walked up and…I forget who they were now, I should know, but I walked up and said,

"Congratulations, you're a member of the Commonwealth." And they could not believe it! [*Laughter*]

SO: They looked rather surprised? [*Laughter*]

MG: Yes, so, that was Mozambique. I don't remember the debate about Cameroon. I must have been out of the room, I think. And then, apparently much later, Rwanda [joined], but it was Mozambique that was the precedent for countries which had not really been part of the old Empire.

SO: Rwanda had, of course, experienced the genocide in 1994. Do you recall any discussion after that? This is the year after those appalling events.

MG: I don't, but it would have been quite natural for President Museveni to talk on behalf of Rwanda. But I don't recall any discussions of any import. Rwanda was much later. [Rwanda joined the Commonwealth in March 2005]

SO: Was there any discussion about whether or not Hong Kong should have observer status in the Commonwealth before the return to Chinese sovereignty in 1997? I know that Hong Kong has particular status with Commonwealth professional groups, and particularly with the Commonwealth lawyers, who remain actively engaged and have their Commonwealth designation.

MG: I don't think so. I don't recall one, not from my part.

SO: Were you at all involved in the Commonwealth deliberations over Fiji re-joining the Commonwealth, which it did in 1997?

MG: No, that all came…Fiji was okay in my time. There had been a coup but it had come back.

SO: It had returned to democracy in 1992, and then there was a process of re-engagement with the Commonwealth.

MG: That's right. I think Fiji was at Auckland [in 1995], as a full-fledged member – was it not?

SO: 1st October 1997.

MG: [When] it came back?

SO: Yes. Fiji had been expelled in October 1987, and I have a note that says, "Fiji re-joins the Commonwealth following the adoption of a new constitution more in line with Commonwealth principles."

MG: Okay, in 1995 they must have been out. But there were moves along the way, I remember. I must have left [at the] end of 1995, early 1996, and some time later that year I got an approach that was never followed up, from opposition elements in Fiji, to intervene in some sort of mediation role. But nothing ever happened about that.

SO: In terms of Chief's 'good offices' and his below-the radar attempts to contribute to the mediation of political tensions and dissension, you made mention in the first interview about the ongoing political rivalry and intense friction in Bangladesh. Were you involved in any way in these 'good offices'?

MG: Yes, well, I was broadly involved. I certainly recall being with the Chief when one of the two female leaders and rivals – Begum Khaleda Zia, I think – called on him in Marlborough House. So, he was in contact. He spent a lot of time on it. I don't know if it's reflected in what he's written.

SO: There's an entire detailed chapter in his memoir, *The Inside Story of the Modern Commonwealth*.

MG: He tried very hard. And with both of them, trying to get the two of them to talk to each other – not always successfully, I'm afraid. Around 1994, he asked Sir Zelman Cowen, one of our perhaps lesser known Australian Governors General but a very distinguished one. He went in there at least once as a Special Envoy, and Moses Anafu was with him.

SO: I'll certainly ask Moses about that particular diplomatic mission.

MG: Yes, but I don't think we were too successful. The animosity between the two of them runs pretty deep, for a start.

SO: Indeed. What about the Chief's mediation attempts in the Sri Lankan Civil War in the 1990s?

MG: Yes, I don't recall that he was heavily involved. I think that was the time of the Norwegians, in a way. The Norwegians were taking the lead, and the Chief may well have been involved, but not… I don't recall ever being closely involved in the Sri Lanka negotiations or mediations.

SO: In terms of 'good offices', was there ever any below-the-radar approach to either Pakistan or India, to see if there was any possibility to support tentative, improving steps on the Kashmir issue, and the role that the Secretary General might play in this?

MG: Not to my knowledge. And I doubt it, because particularly [for] the Indians, for them, Kashmir was – and still is – "Hands-off, mind your own business."

SO: Generally, in terms of the Chief's attitude to 'good offices', did he have a particular template or particular framework of behaviour? Or was this very much a question of exploring the possibility of openings, as an ad hoc response to his political antennae picking up tensions in the Commonwealth?

MG: Very much using political antennae [and] his knowledge of the Commonwealth. I don't think there was any particular template. In fact, if you

followed a template in one place, it probably wouldn't work in the one next door.

SO: No, indeed.

MG: No, he reminded me – or reminds me – of what we know as a 'diplomat', doing diplomatic work, and in this case mediation. And he was very good at reaching out. So was Sonny Ramphal, it's just that I didn't have that sort of close experience with Sonny Ramphal. They were both very good.

SO: Was this a reflection of Chief's personality and preference for a discreet, below-the-radar approach?

MG: He certainly kept it below-the-radar. He was very careful.

SO: His discretion was highly deliberate?

MG: Very deliberate, and no press releases; none of that. It was very quiet.

SO: I know that he invited Sitiveni Rabuka to go into the Solomon Islands, where there was a political stand-off and violence between the Malaitan people and those in Guadalcanal. And I asked Sitiveni Rabuka if he got any kudos for this. He said, "Well, I certainly wasn't paid! I went there for a year and I was Chief Emeka's personal envoy."

MG: That's it. That's after me, actually.

SO: I thought that Chief's choice of envoy was interesting, selecting somebody from the region who understood a Pacific way, even if they didn't necessarily speak the indigenous language and would have a broader view of the culture. But this was, again, very discreet.

MG: His special envoys of that nature were always very carefully selected, and most times there would be a small consultative session within the Secretariat, just to bounce names backwards and forwards. For example, he sent on to Bougainville – with me as the bag carrier and assistant – a Nigerian General [named] Haruna. Now, why a Nigerian General? Because he figured that in talking to the young man who was head of the Bougainville Revolutionary Army – an ex-Lieutenant of the Papua New Guinea Defence Force and graduate of an Australian military college [Sam Kauona] – a General would carry weight and status. With, for example, Bangladesh and its political [and] constitutional challenges, we talked about Zelman Cowen, with a background of the judiciary and constitutionalism. He was an authority and recognised as such. So, I would say [that] all of his special envoys were selected with a particular package of talents in mind. He didn't just send anyone to anywhere.

SO: Thank you for that, Max. Where did the Secretary General fit in, then, in terms of international mediation? Was there any role for discussion between the Secretary General of the UNO speaking to the Secretary General of the Commonwealth, with encouragement that the

Commonwealth should use its particular strengths, its 'good offices', contacts and judgement?

MG: Yes, that was there, particularly when Kofi Annan was Head of the UN. But not just then, also when Pérez de Cuéllar was SG.

SO: And Boutros Boutros-Ghali as well?

MG: Oh, Boutros-Ghali, of course. Now, the Chief used to make a point of going to New York every year around General Assembly time for a week or two. I remember Moses and I used to accompany him, along with one or two other officers. So, that was a pretty hectic round of seeing people: Permanent Representatives, senior people within the UN, and the UN Secretary General himself. And on particular issues, the Chief – or Sonny Ramphal before him – would deal with the SG of the UN. On South Africa, there would have been such dealings, and, I think – you'd have to check with Stuart Mole – I think the Chief could claim some sort of leading role in a Security Council resolution on South Africa at the time of the troubles in South Africa in the early 1990s.

SO: Yes, over the violence in KwaZulu-Natal.

MG: Yes, I think Chief was probably behind that, but you'd need to check with Stuart.

SO: This is UN Security Council Resolution 765, adopted in July 1992. The Resolution has come up in other interviews: Moses makes reference to it and Chief also made reference to it. Yes, it was certainly seen as a diplomatic victory. It really was putting down a marker – a permanent marker.

MG: Yes. I guess one of the difficulties of writing, in 2014, about a character such as Chief twenty years ago is that he did do a lot under the radar and was therefore probably a bit more effective for it, most times. Because he was certainly effective.

SO: This has been one of the questions that I've tried to put to people: was the Commonwealth effective precisely because it was more of an invisible actor? That is, did its relative invisibility enhance its diplomatic support system?

MG: Yes, that's one reason it was effective. The second reason was that, I think, then, heads of government were more than happy for their Secretary General to do such things. With the exception of Mr Muldoon, but that's…

SO: [*Laughter*] Oh?

MG: So, the Chief had the support of the presidents and prime ministers. He and Sonny Ramphal could pick up the phone and talk to… As far as I could see, if they needed or wanted to talk to a prime minister, they just did it.

SO: Why was Chief's relationship with Kofi Annan particularly good? As a Ghanaian? As another African?

MG: That could be a factor. A lot of our work was in Africa, including Ghana in the 1990s. But it was also the fact that they were there together at the time, and Chief knew Kofi Annan for a very long time. Kofi Annan was a senior official in the UN Secretariat. So, in the 1980s, when you're talking South Africa and Namibia and all these things, Chief would have dealt with the head of the Department of Peacekeeping Operations, who was then Kofi Annan.

SO: Okay. And possibly because the Chief had selected for his point man in Africa another Ghanaian?

MG: Moses? Not because he was Ghanaian, I don't think. Just because he was seriously bright, [*Laughter*] and could write like a dream.

SO: What about other Secretaries General, such as at the Organisation of African Unity and the Organisation of the Islamic Conference?

MG: Yes, I recall pretty close relations with the Head of the OAU. That was headed by the Ethiopian, wasn't it?

SO: Salim Ahmed Salim?

MG: Yes, indeed, Salim Salim – a Tanzanian, yes. So, I think Chief and Sonny Ramphal were pretty close to him, also. Certainly, when I was in New York with Chief, I remember seeing Salim Salim fairly regularly. So, I think there was no hesitation on the part of those sorts of people – Kofi Annan, Salim Salim. Chief and Sonny were able to simply pick up the phone to them.

SO: Networks, again.

MG: Yes. And, of course, Chief, having been in the Secretariat for quite a long time himself, and as a Minister – he went back and he was a government Minister for a couple of months, but it was aborted, you know…Chief on the networking wasn't too bad either.

SO: The Auckland CHOGM in 1995 was your last?

MG: Yes.

SO: I wonder if you could make a comparison between the protracted process of consultation, debate and arguments on the Harare Declaration and the creation of the Commonwealth Ministerial Action Group.

MG: Right. When they said there's going to be CMAG, that was Auckland?

SO: CMAG was agreed at Auckland. That was when Prime Minister Jim Bolger and also Mandela were particularly effective at the Retreat in Queenstown.

MG: I can't remember too much, to be honest. But I think it was starting to take shape as a successor to bodies that had preceded it, such as the Eminent Persons Group, the Commonwealth Committee on Southern Africa, and the High Level Working Group charged with re-enervating the Commonwealth. So, the template was there, if you like. And the CMAG was going to be a fresh way of dealing with some of the more difficult issues. But I left as it was being formed; [*Laughter*] I'm sure it went well.

SO: Were you at the Retreat?

MG: No. Generally, we didn't go. What used to happen [was that] the Chief would go as the Secretary General; he would take Mary Mackie and Stuart Mole, and that was about it. We were back in the capital, getting the final draft of the Communiqué together, [waiting] on final advice from the Retreat. Anyway, there was plenty to do at headquarters, and the Retreat was kept very close. I think it was only one plus one.

SO: I just wondered if there had been a key national or individual contribution to the drafting the CMAG. Speaking to Jim Bolger, he said that he was tasked with the responsibility of persuading Dr Mahathir of the need to endorse a Commonwealth Ministerial Action Group, and Robert Mugabe was persuaded by Nelson Mandela.

MG: [*Laughter*] Well, as I say, by 1995, the whole land issue in Zimbabwe was starting to really bubble. It was there in 1991, but it was considered a long-term issue.

SO: Yes, it was. There was then a succession of droughts in Zimbabwe in 1992-93, which prompted Mugabe to call for the assessment of food production versus commercial farming.

MG: Yes. With Mahathir, I really think that that issue with Kamil Jaafar and the rejection of him as a Deputy Secretary General… I think they all started to lose interest. Farida might be able to give you a take on that.

SO: Well, I just wondered, because the XVI Commonwealth Games opened in Kuala Lumpur in 1998…

MG: Yes, but that was decided about eight years before.

SO: Yes, Dr Mahathir offered to host the Games at Vancouver in 1987.

MG: Right, so, they weren't going to pull out of it. And the Games is okay, but you see, in my time, Malaysia was not just interested: they were proactive in the Commonwealth issues being dealt with by the Secretariat on behalf of the membership. Out of the fifty members, you probably get ten or twelve that are proactive, and they were one of them. But I guess that died away.

SO: Did you identify a progressive disillusionment, or was it only with the benefit of hindsight?

MG: The benefit of hindsight. All of this happened in my last six months. In fact, I think myself and my colleagues, we were at once amazed and…what's the word? Amazed and disappointed that Kamil Jaafar had not got the job. No reflection on the other fellow, but there was a general feeling of disappointment that he hadn't got it.

SO: Well, he was a highly experienced diplomat and former Ambassador. He had been the head of their Foreign Ministry.

MG: Yes, that's right. Well, the fellow who did get it, as you know, was of the same level. But he [Kris Srinivasan] certainly had a different attitude towards the place of the Secretariat in the wider world, and was quite open about it.

SO: How much do you think, then, at the time, that the appointment of an Indian in the DSG slot was precisely to enhance India's own commitment to the Commonwealth?

MG: I think Chief loved the idea.

SO: Was it Manmohan Singh's idea of a particularly Indian engagement?

MG: Well, Manmohan Singh has always been proactive in various ways towards the Commonwealth – particularly in trade and economic aspects. But, on the political side, I mean, I spoke about Indian reluctance to go along with certain aspects of the Harare Declaration, and reluctance to allow Human Rights to get out of the cage, reluctance to have non-sovereign officials doing anything too much, if you know what I mean.

SO: Moses also identified something like this at the African Regional Heads Meeting in Botswana in 1997, to which the opposition groups were also invited. He reflected that there was uniformity of hostility towards NGOs and, of course, Human Rights activity.

MG: Very dangerous, those Human Rights. [*Laughter*]

SO: Particularly if it was the focus of NGO activity. Not exclusively, but…

Max, you mentioned the Games. We've just had the Games in Glasgow. Were the Games at all political – in any way, shape or form – during your time at the Secretariat?

MG: Not to my knowledge. They didn't affect us very much.

SO: How much did you feel that the Games were a useful showcase for the Commonwealth?

MG: I think we were all a bit too preoccupied with the political and the economic, with democracy and Human Rights. I think [that], collectively, we saw the Games as a nice bit of playtime. [*Laughter*]

SO: A 'family sports day'! [*Laughter*]

MG: Yes. Maybe it will become more significant, I'm not sure, but it wasn't high on our radar screen. The Secretary General went, of course, but… I don't know, I think Jon Sheppard may have managed to get to Edinburgh, but certainly, in my time, it wasn't high on our list of priorities.

SO: So, you didn't go the New Zealand Games in 1990?

MG: No, I haven't been to any of them, actually.

SO: Here you are in the UK, and you could have gone to Glasgow! [*Laughter*] It has been a very successful Games, I have to say, in Scotland.

MG: Yes, I'll say.

SO: Although it's also been used by a certain group to sell their political purpose up there.

Anyway, you mentioned Zimbabwe, the land reform and how the debate was starting to emerge in 1991. The farm invasions don't really kick off until the late 1990s, which also sees the rise of political opposition to Robert Mugabe and ZANU-PF with the Movement for Democratic Change and the creation of the National Constituent Assembly in 1999. Earlier in the 90s, was there any role that the Secretariat or the SG tried play, to assist in and accelerate land reform?

MG: I don't think so. Where we were at in 1991… It wasn't that the Zimbabweans were not addressing it – they were. I think the feeling was that the British, perhaps, were not addressing the matter to the extent that they should have been. Now, to what extent they could have addressed the issues, including compensation, I'm not too sure.

SO: The Commercial Farmers Union of Zimbabwe certainly argued that it had the support of international financial institutions and that there should be no compulsory land reform programme. I understand that one of the reasons for 'going slow' was because of the negotiations in South Africa between 1991 and 1993.

MG: I seem to recall that, in 1991, the issue that was on the table – and certain governments were trying to delay it – was that of some sort of form of compensation. So, it was there for the Zimbabweans, but they were not encouraged to ratchet it up the scale. Not then. And when it did happen, I guess, Mugabe did that with his own government.

SO: So, you weren't aware of any moves to establish any land audit, with a degree of additional funds being made available for land transfer by the mid-90s?

MG: No.

SO: Robert Mugabe has commented that he's always found it easier to get on with Conservative British governments rather than with Labour ones. And I know that Anglo-Zimbabwe relations fell off the cliff after 1997/98.

MG: Right. I don't recall that the whole issue was that severe in 1991. It was there; it was being dealt with. It was only eleven years from independence and would take time. Some accused the British government of being dilatory and so on. I suppose eleven years is not a long time in politics, yet, in some ways, it's a very long time! [*Laughter*]

SO: Indeed. [*Laughter*] Harold Wilson remarked that "a week is a long time in politics."

MG: At that time, I think Mugabe was being seen very much in the context of this Harare Declaration, and as one of the countries of Africa and one of the governments of Africa that could help others along the decolonisation and democratic track. It sounds all very naïve now, but that's where we thought it was.

SO: History is lived forwards and written backwards. There is also the tension and the violence that was erupting in Sierra Leone in the 1990s. The Abidjan Peace Accord was finally brokered in November of 1996. I appreciate that that was after you left, but there had been roiling violence in West Africa.

MG: Yes, right. It started to unravel in my last year, I think – about 1995, am I right? And, I remember… It's not that the Chief and all of us weren't worried. We were very concerned, particularly with Sierra Leone and Foday Sankoh. I think Moses actually went in on an exploratory visit, and he was right up in the jungle somewhere. I think we nearly lost him. And I do remember Australian mining companies coming to see us, and they were all very worried.

SO: They were approaching you?

MG: They were all a bit lost. [*Laughter*] "What are you going to do about it? What's being done?" So, it was cooking in my time, but we didn't have any magic answers, that's for sure.

SO: So, the Political Affairs/International Affairs Division wasn't reaching out to ECOWAS structures or supporting British bilateral or multilateral moves?

MG: In my time, it was still a little bit early, I guess. It's never too early, but you know what I mean. And it sort of started to unfold from 1996, 97, 98, from when it was bubbling. We also had the situation in the Gambia, where this fellow had taken over – Yahya Jammeh. He's still there, isn't he?

SO: He is still there, yes. He took over in a coup in 1994.

MG: Yeah, that was a bit of a worry. And then [in] Nigeria, President Sani Abacha – in the middle of CHOGM – hanged Ken Saro-Wiwa and eight other Ogoni dissidents.

SO: It must have been a particular insult and affront to Mandela, who put in a personal plea for clemency. A deeply shocking moment.

MG: Yes, it put a pall over the place. It was terrible.

SO: Max, can I ask you, please, about leadership and the Commonwealth? There seems to be a common theme running through this interview series of the importance of the personality, the political style and the connections of successive Secretary Generals. You commented early on – in your remarks at the Witness Seminar – that when you arrived at Marlborough House, the place was electric: that it was a dynamic, vigorous organisation and you felt that this was maintained under Chief's leadership.

MG: Yes.

SO: Chief Emeka began his second term as Secretary General in 1995. Had there been any rumblings to try to replace him, or was he still seen as a suitable successor to Ramphal?

MG: I never heard of any rumblings. Probably within the Secretariat – without telling tales out of school – I think there might have been a clique that thought the Secretariat could do better. But I don't agree with it, if it does exist, or if it did exist.

SO: There seems to be another consistent theme, which is that the Secretariat was asked to do more and more on an ever-decreasing budget. And, of course, this was the era in which the Chief instituted a massive inspection of the books, and a recalibration not just of CFTC but of the whole Secretariat.

MG: Yes, we went down considerably, I think, from memory.

SO: And then, of course, Don McKinnon did it again...

MG: Is there anyone left there? [*Laughter*]

SO: I don't think they've quite turned out the lights! But what about other forms of leadership: the leadership of heads? How important is this in terms of the energy, the dynamism, and the profile of the Commonwealth?

MG: Of the heads of government? Oh, look, if you don't have a core of five, six, nine, ten… If there's not that core of heads of government – of presidents and prime ministers – who actually want to drive it a bit, then it's very hard to make it work.

SO: So, during your time, who would you identify as being that core who saw the Commonwealth as an entity, as a valuable vehicle for their own national policies?

MG: Well, [*Laughter*] quite a handful of the prime ministers and presidents, actually. Some of the key movers and shakers – Dr Mahathir… The British Prime Ministers, they certainly didn't ignore it. Whether it was because of Sonny and Chief, I'm not too sure, but the British Prime Ministers were engaged. Canadians; certain Caribbean [countries], i.e. Jamaica. And, of course, there were big issues such as South Africa, decolonisation, Namibia, democratisation… All of them big, exciting, global events, with a Commonwealth Secretariat and Commonwealth Secretary General who actually mattered. These were instruments that the prime ministers and presidents could use, and they did.

SO: The 1990s was a time of revolutionary and accelerating change in the structure of the international system, characterised also by a proliferation of international organisations. In the earlier era, the Commonwealth had a purpose – a utility, a visibility – which, after the end of the Cold War, seems to have dissipated somewhat. Can it be said that after the settlement of the challenge for racial justice in South Africa, that the Commonwealth was, in fact, decreasing in utility at heads level?

MG: Well, clearly, from what I see, because prime ministers and presidents don't turn up en masse like they used to. Before they not only turned up en masse, they wouldn't let any of their ministers come.

SO: I was interviewing Simon Murdoch, who had been the key top civil servant supporting Jim Bolger, and he said in his interview that he was determined that Jim Bolger was not going to go into that Retreat without his official. "He was going to need help!" I thought, I'm sorry, but this does make me smile, because the whole *point* of the Retreat was that they should escape their officials and go off-piste. [*Laughter*]

MG: That's right. [*Laughter*] And the Retreats worked. The ones I knew about [were] in Langkawi and Elephant Hills and…Where did they go in Cyprus? I forget now. I wasn't at any of them, but they worked: things were decided at these venues. Plus, the entire meeting was a two week affair. I'm not sure if you could get away with that in today's world. Certainly, there was always a core of prime ministers and presidents who liked the concept and they wanted to drive it, and they wanted the SG, the institutions of the SG and the Secretariat, and wanted them to work. I think [that], in evolutionary terms, the end of the 1980s [and] early 1990s, we saw the tail end of decolonisation with South Africa and Namibia, and then Harare launched the whole democratisation, human rights and development movement. But from that point – I think I said [this] in my other interview – where I think we fell down as a Secretariat is that we were not really able really to consolidate some of the gains that were made. That's not to say that such gains were not consolidated, but if they were, it tended to be done by others.

SO: You said at the Witness Seminar that, [*Reading*] "By 1995, not too long before I was to leave, we were turning our minds collectively to the states that had come through to some form of multi-party democracy with continuing fragilities, and what we might do as a Secretariat on behalf of the Commonwealth, to try to consolidate and reinforce the gains that had been made. There was, I recall, a lively debate…about how to use CFTC in a very targeted way."

MG: Exactly. In other words, [how to] use very scarce resources to, first of all, address matters which might be easily remedied, and [also] those revealed in and by an election process. With experience, the Secretariat-backed election observer groups became quite clever, because in the final report written and issued before departure from the country in question, there could usually be found the template for making the process better the next time round. Typically, there would be a list of recommendations for the future. Now, what some of us thought was that we should use the CFTC to help implement those recommendations – strengthen electoral systems, introduce better and more appropriate legislation, etc. Also in our favour was that the best electoral experience on the planet is to be found in the Commonwealth – or, it was. And, in my direct experience, our Commonwealth electoral experts were fantastic: from the Caribbean, from India, Australia, the UK, Canada – all over.

SO: Jon Sheppard, your successor, made express reference to this wealth of knowledge, and he had extensive experience as an election observer, involved in election missions. He said that the selection of people to serve on those missions was also part of a knowledge dissemination process.

MG: Absolutely.

SO: So, they would return home having experienced what had worked and what had not worked elsewhere, and they could establish best practice.

MG: Yes. They were learning events for everyone. As I mentioned, most people in the Secretariat could hope at one stage or another to be on one of those missions, which, in turn, was terrific for morale in the Secretariat.

SO: Not only were people not stuck in the office, it was the experience of engagement?

MG: Yes, but it was our inability as a Secretariat to come back and help the most fragile. That's where we did not do so well.

SO: Was that general weakness a function of lack of funds? You say, "any form of sustained follow-up", yet Moses has said that what is extraordinary about the Commonwealth in his time there – before 2000 – was its achievement in comparison to its very modest resources.

MG: That's true, and one institution that was unsung – and I don't know if it still operates – was the Commonwealth Law Ministers Conference. They would

hoover up the experience that we were all going through and put it on the table at Law Ministers Conferences. In turn, guidance would come out of the conferences, or the CHOGMs, or the Special Groups. In the end, I suppose, the resources were just too limited and the decision – if there was one – would have been to continue to spread the CFTC funds available.

SO: You also said at the Witness Seminar that, unfortunately, in any sort of sustained, targeted follow up, part of these efforts suffered from a transition to a different Secretary General. Don McKinnon's tenure has been described, particularly, as a time when the Commonwealth and the Secretariat emphasized trade and economic aspects. Max, you're an international civil servant and have remained an engaged and very knowledgeable Commonwealth observer. Do you think part of issue of impact or visibility is related to the lack of commitment – again, going back to leadership – from a Secretary General, saying, "We need to make sure that our limited resources are focussed on this question of building institutions"?

MG: Well, in defence of any Secretary General on the matter of the spending of funds, that's where the countries did become particularly interested, and they can tie your hands. [*Laughter*] And I think the inclination, as time went on, was to limit the Secretariat's role rather than expand it on the political and human rights and governance side. Maybe the trade and economic side… That was quite strong in my time, as well. But I think, as I said, the argument of some of us – possibly including the Chief and Sonny Ramphal – was to target the ten most fragile and see what we could do. And it just didn't happen on a sustained basis. Look at Kenya.

SO: Indeed. Just to go to a third aspect on this question of leadership, how important is – and what would be your observations on – the role of the Queen as Head of the Commonwealth, and the role of the Monarch as Head of the Commonwealth going forward, once Queen Elizabeth II is no longer with us?

MG: Well, the answer to that is we'd better keep her for as long as possible! [*Laughter*] There's absolutely no doubt that, as a personality in her own right, she's right there. You have to laugh: some of the most leftist politicians in the world – particularly [from the] Caribbean and sometimes Australia and New Zealand – they love going and meeting this Head of the Commonwealth.

SO: At a recent lecture in Lisbon, I described the Queen as having personal charisma, arguing that she was highly astute and adept at using this charisma, because she's a very effective politician – with a small 'p'.

MG: Very; I agree.

SO: And my audience looked me at blankly and said, "How can you say an 87-year-old British monarch has political charisma?"

MG: No, she does; without a doubt. As to what happens, things are already happening. If you look at the Secretariat today, I – as an outsider – would

wonder what its role is. Is the role to make sure that the heads get together and come to agreement on key issues every couple of years? Maybe.

SO: That was the original idea – let's face it – in the debates over setting up the Secretariat and the SG in 1964/65, in the founding Memorandum.

MG: That's absolutely right. And then you could argue that it got out of control in…

SO: It did!

MG: [*Laughter*]…in the 1970s, 1980s and 1990s.

SO: Well, Sonny Ramphal could not have done what he did if Arnold Smith hadn't set up the Secretariat and driven this international organisation forward, using the 'soft' policy space.

MG: That's right, yes. The future is – like everything – an amalgam of a whole lot of things, and I guess whatever form it takes, the Monarch of Great Britain will be the head of it.

SO: Can you see a time in the near future when the Commonwealth decides it has sufficiently grown up and that it doesn't need a head? A formal head, that is. It has a Secretary General.

MG: Good question.

SO: Derek Ingram raised this idea thirty years ago.

MG: Ah, not with the present one: and no reflections on the people who follow. We don't know who that is, anyway. I don't know.

SO: So, how did you perceive and observe the Queen to be particularly effective in her role as Head of the Commonwealth?

MG: Well, firstly, as far as I know, she was always readily available to the Secretary General who – and I think this must still happen – briefs her on a fairly regular basis. I don't know when, but I do seem to remember Chief doing this every so often. Very much was made at the CHOGM of the event when she would not only see the heads collectively but she saw all of them one by one. I suppose it still happens. So, if you're talking about diplomacy under the radar, what she says in those one-on-ones…Well, we have no evidence either way, but I'm sure it's always very wise. But I think just her being there, with that sort of experience… She was there in 1952: none of the others can say that. [*Laughter*] But maybe the position of Head of Commonwealth will lapse; maybe it will.

SO: Please, could I ask about the Commonwealth and development? You've made reference to this: that part of the Commonwealth's 'grand strategy' in a time of change was to support post-independence political institution-building and development, in addition to the other grand

strategy of opposing apartheid. Why do you think CFTC did not get the kudos and recognition that it could be said to deserve?

MG: Yes, it did do good work and possibly still does, I don't know. Why didn't it get the kudos? I think individual governments probably preferred to give the kudos to their own aid organisations and instruments.

SO: Ah, so, the political benefit comes with bilateral aid and grants, loans, etc., in a one-to-one arrangement, rather than contributing to a multilateral pot.

MG: I assume so.

SO: Were you at all involved in any of the discussions about the HIPC, Heavily Indebted Poor Countries, debt relief initiative?

MG: No, but I would like to add one thought in relation of the CFTC and development activities through the Commonwealth. I think where the CFTC was particularly valuable – and possibly still is – is in enabling the smaller countries, of which there are twenty-five or thirty, to be able to cope, for example, with the global discussion on economic development. Right now, we're in the final stages globally of moving from MDGs, Millennium Development Goals, to Sustainable Development Goals – I think that's what they're going to be after 2015. With the best will in the world, it's very difficult for any small country with a small bureaucracy to keep up with the issues involved. Now, I know that during the 1990s and particularly during my time, the CFTC and the economic side of the Secretariat actually did a lot of work in helping small countries come to us in relation to the bigger global issues and the bigger pictures. That actually applied to global political issues, as well. In my time we set up in New York – or, rather, the Secretariat set up – the Commonwealth Small States Office.

SO: Yes, it's still there.

MG: It's still there. Well, that's not a bad reflection of service to small states. But I just wanted to make the point that, right now, I assume that this is a particularly important role for the Secretariat: to help these smaller countries cope. It's capacity building and it's also knowledge transfer.

SO: Yes, which perhaps explains why there are a raft of appointments being advertised by the Secretariat at the moment in the development sector! So, how far do you think, then, from your perspective, that the Commonwealth is indeed the quintessential small states organisation, by virtue of the majority of its members being those – I think you said – 'sovereign mice'?

MG: Right. [*Laughter*]

SO: Is that its unique selling point, that it is a small states organisation?

MG: Well, it's not to be underestimated, because I think, for the Secretariat's existence, it has certainly been a defender and a builder of small states capacity. They don't have too many friends elsewhere, apart from, say, the World Bank and the IMF and neighbouring countries, but sometimes they want someone a bit more neutral.

SO: Yes, indeed. What about the Commonwealth and the question of Human Rights, which, after all, is particularly contentious at the moment? Sir Ronald Sanders has written very cogently about this, saying that there appears to be emerging in the Commonwealth a divide between 'old Commonwealth' – those that are more of a western liberal democratic tradition – and 'new Commonwealth', who don't place quite such emphasis on judiciable rights. So, there's an increasing tension within the association, and it is manifest particularly on this question of the Human Rights Commissioner.

MG: It's been there since the beginning. [*Laughter*] That was one of the big battles in the 1990s: between the western liberal democracies in the Commonwealth – focussing on elections and democracy and constitutions, etc., etc., etc. – and the Malaysias, the Indias and Caribbeans of this world, who said, "Just a moment, rights is more than just the political. It's political and economic." So, Harare might have been a forerunner, but the communiqué from the Cyprus CHOGM in 1993 is revealing in its articulation of the concepts of democracy, Human Rights and development.

SO: You had made mention, earlier, that the communiqué in the Limassol CHOGM in 1993 built on the back of the Vienna meeting.

MG: That's right. The Vienna World Conference on Human Rights. There was a Geneva meeting preceding it, amongst the Commonwealth nations, to bridge this emerging chasm between the political and economic.

SO: Yes, okay. Madhuri talked expressly about that. So, how much of a relationship was there between the Secretariat and the Commonwealth Human Rights initiative, set up at Jaipur in 1989? That was not a product of the Human Rights Unit – it was a separate, autonomous entity?

MG: Right. Well, I think possibly the argument would be that whether you have a Commonwealth Human Rights Unit within the Secretariat or not is neither here nor there. Everyone should be thinking 'rights', and in the UN that's what I have always told my staff. Because there is an office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights in the UN doesn't mean that they're the only ones responsible for the promotion and protection of Human Rights. Rights are universal, and they're not just political. They're economic. So, I think the Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative was partly an attempt to reach out into the non-government world, as well. Most Human Rights are contravened by governments, anyway. The Human Rights Unit [is] a small instrument within the Secretariat, but I would hope that every officer in the Secretariat now thinks 'rights'.

SO: So, what's your view of a Commonwealth Human Rights Commissioner, then? Problematic, in terms of expense? Or in terms of duplication, because of the UN Human Rights Commissioner? Or because it risks interference in the domestic affairs of sovereign nations?

MG: Well, I think my response to that – off the cuff, very much – would be that the Secretary General is that person. Certainly, in the UN, that's the case, whether the Secretary General likes it or not. But the chief of Human Rights in the United Nations is the Secretary General.

SO: Indeed. So, you are saying that, in the Commonwealth, there is already a Human Rights Commissioner in the form of the SG?

MG: Yes, absolutely. It would be interesting to see what the former Secretaries General think of that. They might agree, actually.

SO: It's going to be interesting, too, for the role of the Secretary General and the selection of the next candidate going forward, after Secretary General Sharma has reached the end of his second term in 2016. I know there is discussion now about whether or not there should be established criteria. For instance, is it a question of regionalism and should this be brought into play? Is there a question of circulation around the Commonwealth, or is it, in fact, about finding the best candidate for the job?

MG: There haven't been enough yet to properly look at it on a geographical basis. [*Laughter*] There has only been five.

SO: Max, what would you say, then, for the viability of the Commonwealth going forward?

MG: Well, like any of these things, it will be what people want to make of it. I would say that, of the three or four things that are absolutely critical, one is buy-in from the leaders of the Commonwealth: prime ministers and presidents. I think the second thing that is critical is – whether you like it or not – [that] the Secretary General is not a puppet. So, you have to pick the right person for the job. And the third part of it, I would toss in – it sounds very blasé – is that what should govern the life of the Secretary General are rights and principles. And the ones I served with did. I think they governed and were governed by rights and principles.

SO: So, they should be a public conscience?

MG: I think so. I'm sure there are plenty of people that disagree with that, but I think so. [*Laughter*]

SO: Speaking truth to power?

MG: Yes. Otherwise, then, they just organise the CHOGMs every two years.

SO: Some have said that part of the problem is also the diminution of time [devoted to the CHOGM] and also the acceptance of officials and deputies into the meetings which has further diluted the importance of the Commonwealth in the minds of busy heads. Faced with the multiplicity of international meetings, the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting no longer has the unique quality and space that it once did.

MG: Yes, that sounds right.

SO: So, does that need a complete recalibration then?

MG: It does, and it will come from the new Secretary General. Whoever that will be is going to partly determine what happens, I think.

SO: Do you feel that, in comparison to *La Francophonie* and the new Lusophone group, the Commonwealth in fact still has a residual vitality, despite people saying it will last only because of inertia?

MG: No, I think it does have resilience – both the concept and the reality. The fact that we all have roughly the same sets of laws and rules and regulations and generally speak the same language is an enormous help.

SO: Indeed. Max, thank you very much indeed. I'm really grateful.

[END OF AUDIOFILE PART TWO]