

**13 July 2011 Commonwealth Law Ministers Meeting,  
Sydney, Australia**

**Signing of MoU between Commonwealth Secretariat &  
International Criminal Court**

**Remarks by the Commonwealth Secretary-General, Kamallesh  
Sharma**

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Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen,

We are honoured by your presence to witness the signing of this Memorandum of Understanding formalising the strategic partnership between the Commonwealth Secretariat and the International Criminal Court. We have worked together since the Court was set up in 2002 and the presence of Presiding Judge Song with us here today, and throughout our Commonwealth Law Ministers' Meeting, is testimony to the nature of our relationship. The establishment of the International Criminal Court under the Rome Statute of 1998 was a landmark in the development of international criminal law and towards achieving justice for victims. It signalled a new coming together, internationally, to confront the worst crimes known to mankind, crimes against humanity, war

crimes, genocide and aggression. 116 states are now party to the Rome Statute and the number of ratifications rises steadily. The Court has rapidly established itself as a component in the architecture of international justice and set the stage for a new era of accountability; it promises to make a significant contribution to maintaining global peace and security.

At the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting held in Coolom in 2002, our member states were urged to ratify and implement the Rome Statute. It is therefore pleasing to be back in Australia to conclude this agreement in the context of the Commonwealth Law Ministers Meeting. Over half of the Commonwealth's 54 member states have ratified the Rome Statute.

I express my appreciation to those who have negotiated the terms of this Memorandum of Understanding, and brought us to this culmination. The Memorandum provides the context within which the Commonwealth Secretariat will provide support for those of our member states that are party to the Rome Statute. We are able to share valuable experience and expertise in assisting with the

process of integrating the Statute into domestic law, and have developed a model law for that purpose.

Above all, the conclusion of this Memorandum of Understanding demonstrates our deep-rooted commitment to the rule of law. It is a fundamental Commonwealth value within the new humanism we espouse. In concrete terms, this means providing mutual support in upholding human rights, in providing access to justice for victims and in fighting impunity.

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