Pakistan to remain in the cold

DURBAN (South Africa), Friday

Incoming Commonwealth Secretary

General Don McKinnon

confirmed the organisation's

suspension of Pakistan here

today, but he added that it would

maintain the "technical cooperation"

necessary to bring the

country back to democracy.

"There is no question about

the suspension from the councils

of the Commonwealth. That

was certainly re-determined

today," Mr McKinnon told a

press conference after being

unanimously elected by a Heads

of Government Meeting here.

"The issue is now, how can

the Commonwealth best act

through the ministerial action

group to bring Pakistan back,"

he said, referring to the organisation's

democratic watchdog,

the Commonwealth Ministerial

Action Group (CMAG).

"Clearly we are not taking

away the kind of technical

cooperation that may be necessary

to help that democratic

process be returned," said Mr

McKinnon, New Zealand's foreign

minister.

Meanwhile, British Prime

Minister Tony Blair, warning

that the spread of Aids in Africa

will affect Britain too if it is not

halted, pledged 22.7 million

pounds to help fight the disease.

Mr Blair, speaking to journalists

at the summit said there

was a very great danger that

because Aids in Britain was

under control, the growth of the

problem in the developing world

would be forgotten.

"There are some nine countries

in Africa now where life

expectancy has come down from

the 60s to the 40s," he said.

"There are literally millions

of people, including children

and now increasingly women,

with the Aids virus. And if we

don't tackle this problem in a

really concerted way it's going

to grow - it's going to keep

. back the development of all

these nations and in the end it

will affect us as well."

Mr Blair was speaking after

reading a report on the spread of

Aids and HIV, prepared by his

officials, which he said had

shocked him.

He said Commonwealth governments

had to show leadership

in tackling the Aids crisis.

Mr Blair planned to tell the

summit later that Britain would

inject 14 million pounds into a

US-led research effort to find a

vaccine for Aids to be used in

developing countries.

(Agencies)